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Food for thought: Relevance of food narratives in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*

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Abstract
Food has been integral to literary interpretation of texts although its relevance has often been eclipsed. It is usually considered as an appendage to the main argument. If probed carefully, food is a metaphor that lends a special dimension to the theme. What the writer cannot emphasize through narrative is conveyed through food narrative. The present paper discusses two works of eminence which have hardly been looked at from the perspective of food. In both these works, food is a potent literary tool to evocate theme and also to delineate the characters. As food narratives tell a lot about a culture, the present study is an endeavor to highlight its importance in thematic and aesthetic parlance thus engaging with the area of Cultural Studies also.

Keywords: food narrative, probed, tool, culture, thematic, aesthetic

Introduction

Food is an oft-mentioned part of many literary narratives. It is not just the ingredients, preparation and serving of special food on certain occasions, but also as a cultural construct that food connotes a multiplicity of meanings. Considerations such as caste, class, gender, and ethnicity are vital to evaluation of food. Food narratives are also potent literary tools through which the post-colonial assertion is vocalized as also the independent identity of a nation gets posited. It is equally an articulation of the woman's singular privilege as the matriarch has been largely associated with cooking and serving of food. Food narratives have this dichotomous attribute because at times the cultural image of food creates a racial and ethnic polarity and at other times food imagery imbibes defiance of structural norms in order to assert class mobility. Food does not imply certain edible articles. It has larger socio-political ramifications also as the recent controversies regarding food substantiate. In fact food has always had political undertones. The colonial powers captured and reigned in our country on the pretext of procuring spices. A fabrication of India and Indian spices (food) helped them colonize the country for centuries. The act of fabrication continues even till date when Indian curry powder is deemed as one-mixture-fits-all concoction. By the same line of argument, a variety of sub continental cultural and political voices are conflated into a homogenous expression. The impression that foods from the South Asian subcontinent – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh – are all the same is an illustration of the reductionist desire of the west to simplify and homogenize an area which has a multitudinous variety. This paper aims at analyzing these varied dimensions related to food and the socio-political equations related to it through the passage of time.

Interdisciplinary Relevance

The study of food, cooking and eating was once a concern of anthropologists and sociologists evaluating its symbolic value to familiarize themselves with indigenous people and their lifestyle. It has now evolved into a cultural site of interdisciplinary interest for scholars of Women's Studies. Larger numbers of books are being written and published and seminars and conferences being hosted on the theme. More importantly, within the context of the postmodern question of 'realities', understanding food and related issues helps to situate with concrete evidence, the nature of life of ordinary people. From the perspective of Women's Studies, there are meanings embedded in women's relationship to food. Historians also have acknowledged the importance of food in understanding the development of civilization. Food has been employed as a cultural pattern to trace the growth from 'primitive' to 'exotic' culture. The well-known anthropologists, the French Claude Levi-Strauss and the British Mary Douglas also use food as illustrative tool. Whereas Strauss deciphers patterns from the 'raw' to the 'cooked' stage, Douglas refers to food taboos which bind together the tribal societies and also segregate them as distinct entities from others.

In the present times, food has assumed political and communal meaning as well. People from different faiths observe different taboos related to food and flouting them means not just encroachment of rights and privileges but also disrupting social and cultural norms. In India food has always had singular significance. Whereas only some kinds of food are considered good enough to be used as 'prasadam' there are some other items such as sattu (Bihar), daal batti churma (Rajasthan) makki di roti and saag (Punjab) which are the common individual's mainstay. However there is commercialization of nearly all kinds of food and what was once considered the home produced meal is now available as 'Thaali' at eateries.

Literary writers have used food – its production, growth, distribution, consumption etc., as backdrop to evocate themes, to unweave plots and to delineate characters/dramatis

personae. Food habits, food rites and rituals, help a writer to knit a pattern which highlights not just literary trends but also the culture of a place and time – including woman's position in society, inter-personal relationship, social norms, prohibitions and much more.

> "Tell me what you eat, I'll tell you who you are", avers Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.

Of course food is essential to all life, but universally, it is also an indulgence, even a passion, that more are exploring. But the gastronomical juices are dripping into so many areas of life and study that it is hard to ignore. Food research is growing in new ways—out of the literal context of production and consumption, into the colossal role it plays in culture-crisscrossing the domains of anthropology, sociology, arts, and humanities. Delmer Davis suggests in "Food as Literary Theme," that "the centrality of food to human experience and to personal and cultural identity is mirrored in the food preoccupations of literature." The usage of food in literature is undeniably significant, and the study of food imagery in literature is gaining recognition and momentum as a way of understanding characters, actions, and cultures represented in literature.

Food is a salient concept in understanding the Post-modern condition and the logistics of globalization. The Post- modern enquiry skeptically questions the world, considering truth and reality as relative and not fixed. It rejects boundaries and promotes hybridity and plurality, encouraging juxtaposition and fragmentation. Frederic Jameson (1934), the renowned American literary critic, made an analysis of contemporary cultural trends. Jameson's well-known works include *Marxism* and Form (1971), The Political Unconscious(1981) and Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (1991). He expanded postmodern theory into the study of late capitalist culture which extends to globalization theories. Globalization is significant as a key representation of the inclusiveness of postmodern theory and culture.

Douglass Kellner explains in "Globalization and the Postmodern Turn" how some theorists see globalization as "eroding local cultures and traditions through a global culture", whereas others see it as "a lever to produce positive social goods like environmental action, democratization, and humanization" [24]. Some see it as positive progress into the future, whereas others as a link to the past—"a replacement for imperialism... a cover to neutralize the horrorsof colonialism" [25]. Globalization is easily linked to colonialism, as, historically, many foods and eating practices have been exchanged in colonial rule. Kellner further contends, "In addition to the development of a new global market economy and shifting system of nation-states, the rise of global culture is a especially salient feature of contemporary globalization" [28]. Globalization, he asserts, "involves the dissemination of new technologies that have tremendous impact on the economy, polity, society, culture, and everyday life" [28]. Food is one area of culture and everyday life that has been greatly impacted by globalization. Another critic, Amy Bentley writes:

> Scholars across disciplines have studied food for a long time, most notably anthropologists and folklorists, but it is only in the last ten to fifteen years or so that food as a focus for scholarly study has gained real acceptance.As early as 1888, anthropologists Garrick Mallery and William Robertson Smith published writing on food and eating (Food and Foodways 114)

Among literary and cultural theorists, Roland Barthes was one of the first to explore the semiotics of food and culture in *Mythologies* (1957), in which he wrote of food. "It is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour (167).

In the mid-1960s, the study of food and eating developed more significantly with the writings on food and foodways by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglass (Mintz and Du Bois100). But it was not until 1982 when Jack Goody published Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology that food studies began to gain recognition and grow as an area of research (Mintz and Du Bois 100).

Although food imagery has been used in literature throughout the ages, scholars have just recently initiated the study of texts for the significance of foods and eating. Keeling and Pollard attest that "Food has not always been deemed a subject worthy of literary study, despite its omnipresence in literature uisine is not a serious art form. It's far too trivial for academic study." (*Critical Approaches to Food* 6). However, as food studies grow, as well as cultural studies in general, literary theorists are increasingly seeing the value of studying literature on food for various reasons, as food serves several different purposes in literature.At the very literal level, food related images, particularly when used with rich details and descriptions, appeal to the senses of the reader, enhancing the realism of the work. They provide sensory images readers can relate to — especially sights, smells, and tastes that may be familiar. They may also evoke curiosity to know about hitherto unknown cultures through their cuisine.

Food as Metaphor

Food is usually used in literature as a metaphor because it is a commonplace, universal substance that is recognizable and understandable when used as representation. Rüdiger Kunow, Professor Emeritus at the American Studies Program at Potsdam University, is a founding member of ENAS, the European Network in Aging Studies. His major research interests and publications focus on cultural constructions of illness and aging, Cultural critique, Transnational American Studies and the South Asian diaspora in the United States. Kunow describes the semiotic quality of representation as "a stand-in, a sign of something that is (or was made to be) absent" [151]. He contends that Food has, of course, always functioned as representation: ethnographers and cultural studies specialists have long been demonstrating how food not only feeds but also organizes us, how the making, taking, and disposing of edible ingredients are socially and culturally inflected [151].

Food is naturally rich with symbolism, and has been since ancient times, because of its centrality to life. Foods provide

an instant, strong visual image when used in language, and in different cultures, various foods may carry different connotations that create instant mental connections when referenced. Food-related language uses these associations by providing concrete wording to describe experiences, events, people, and emotions, often abstract ideas that seem to be completely unrelated to the food itself. In literature, food may represent many different things, such as power or social status, religion, family or relationships, gender, sexuality, wealth, and group identity. Throughout history, food has functioned as metaphor in some of our most ancient texts. The concept of *satvik, rajsik* and *tamsik* food consumed in accordance with the social status, behavioral disposition and body types has often been mentioned. The idea of *chappanbhoj* offered to the rulers signified their prosperity and clout. The instances of Shabbari offering the humble berries to Lord Rama referred to in the *Ramayana* or Sudama's loving offering of beaten rice to his friend Lord Krishna in the *Mahabharata* accentuate the underlying emotion in such interactions.

Early Christianity also created some of the most enduring and recognizable food metaphors which are preserved in the Bible and serve as foundations of religious beliefs. As early as in the *Book of Genesis*, there is reference to Adam and Eve consuming fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. The tree and the fruit represent temptation, indulgence, pleasure, and sin. This well-known metaphor is commonly referenced to in culture, even outside the realm of religion. "Forbidden fruit" is a common metaphorical phrase which refers to this Biblical account and describes an object of desire that should not be acquired because it is immoral or possibly harmful. Even in the larynx, the lump protruding prominently in men's throats is referred to as the "Adam's apple" in remembrance of Adam's snack.

One of the most important Biblical metaphors is the usage of bread, particularly with reference to Jesus. John 6:35 says, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (*King James Version*). In this passage, Jesus compares himself to bread, representing nourishment and fulfillment. Bread is used repeatedly throughout the Bible.This metaphorical representation is recreated in Christian churches as it is shared through the sacrament of the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, in which members of the church partake of bread and wine, metaphorically ingesting Jesus in remembrance of the Last Supper.

Food imagery helps readers to understand the true identities of characters, because in many ways, food defines people and cultures. Recent psychoanalytic theory suggests that eating practices are essential to self-identity and are instrumental in defining family, class, and even ethnic identity. Although food and related imagery have long been part of literature, psychoanalysis has led to the examination of food and eating as a universal experience. Food can serve to signify the belief systems, religious rules, and complex ideologies of a particular person or character, or that of an entire community or culture, that may not be explained explicitly in a text. French Sociologist Claude Fischle gives a convincing argument in "Food, Self and Identity" which states that food constitutes the self.... The saying, 'You are what you eat,' bespeaks not only the biochemical relationship between us and our food but also the extent to which food practices determine our systems of beliefs and representations" [276]. He states in one of his well known quotations, "If we are what we eat, and we don't know what we are eating, then do we still know who we are?" [277].So, in a way we can infer that our food is directly proportionate to our identity.

Indian View towards Food

Food and eating practices are essentially ways of defining ethnic identity.The ways in which food connects to cultural and personal identity is unique and particularly significant for the Indian context, creating many avenues for study. The diversity of religions in the country leads to a range of diets, which also includes food taboo as some kinds of food are viewed as either profane or unclean. Universally, food means more in culture and to individual identity than merely substance. However, in India, food acts as a social, political, and religious statement of personal belief, as well as a demarcating barrier between cultures.

The present paper will explore how, in two postcolonial Indian novels, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, food evokes multiple meanings beyond the literal and denotative understanding and is used to enunciate various dimensions of the plot, characters, and cultures within the texts. An endeavor will also be made to identify the symbolism implied by the food imagery, as well as to explain the literary interpretation of usage of food articles. The two novels employ food and eating as metaphor for emotions, culture, and relationships. These metaphors serve to drive the action of the novels, assist in characterization, and most importantly, reflect on aspects of Indian culture as represented.

Verbal Chutney in *Midnight's Children*

Rushdie's historical novel, published in 1981, was assembled as an extended allegory of the turbulent history of India's political condition from the time shortly before the country gained independence through the following thirty years. The narrative is told by Saleem Sinai, whose own autobiographical account parallels that of the nation's story. Born at midnight on August 15, 1947, the exact time of Indian independence, Saleem's entire life is full of turmoil and angst that mirrors the political conditions in which the country was mired for the next thirty years. The story of his life also seems to be filled with a never-ending list of delicious descriptions of Indian foods: mango pickles, samosas, sweetmeats, cucumber kasaundies, lime chutneys, coconut milk, masala cheese pakoras, and pathoras (to name only a few). Within the overlying metaphor comparing Saleem to India itself, Rushdie has filled the thirty chapters with colorful representations of characters, emotions, relationships, and culture, many of which are shown through the usage of vibrant food imagery. Near the beginning of the novel, the reader learns quickly that Saleem has several impressive gifts including telepathic powers which he uses to connect with the other midnight's children (he and the one thousand other children born within the first hour of India's independence) and a powerful sense of smell. Although his "cucumber nose" is stopped up for half of

the novel, through most of the novel he is able to sniff out the slightest smells, as well as emotions. Readers also learn early in the text that now (at the end of his life story) he manages a pickle factory, but like the character himself, there is nothing ordinary about this fact. This introduces a metaphor that runs through the background of the entire novel, Not only is Saleem recording his familial and personal history on paper to preserve and pass on the facts of his life story, he is also creating chutney to preserve them. Saleem states:

> I, Saleem Sinai, possessor of the most delicately-gifted olfactory organ in history, have dedicated my latter days to the large-scale preparation of condiments. And my chutneys and kasaundies are, after all, connected to my nocturnal scribbling-by day amongst the pickle vats, by night within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks [37].

The author uses pickling and preservation-of fruits, vegetables, vinegar, spices, and herbs—as metaphor for the conservation of memory, an attempt to immortalize his magical stories and recollections through the "chutnification" of history. Saleem describes how each of the thirty chapters he has written correspond to a label on a jar of chutney he has filled with his "special blends" of "memories, dreams, ideas, so that once they enter mass-production all who consume them will know" what he has lived through, what he has seen, and how it felt [530]. He shares precisely how he preserves his memories for future generations, "Every pickle-jar …contains, therefore, the most exalted of possibilities: the feasibility of the chutnification of history; the grand hope of the pickling of time! I, however, have pickled chapters. in words and pickles, I have immortalized my memories" [529].The reason for and importance of his work is also clearly stated at the end, as he must fill the jars (except for one he leaves empty for the future) and finish his stories before it is too late:

To pickle is to give immortality... One day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth... that they are, despite everything, acts of love" [531].

It is clearly stated that the pickling of chutney is a metaphor for the attempt to preserve history. However, why would Rushdie choose chutney as a metaphor? What representations are there behind this common Indian condiment? Judith Plotz describes Saleem's chutney as a narrative account of India's political history, identity, and state. She states, "The astringent mixture of pickled mangoes—thirty years of Indian history, thirty chapters of narrative-epitomizes Rushdie's programmatically promiscuous contribution to the modern Indian historical novel" [28]. She argues, '[C]hutney' suggests the difficult unification more or less harmoniously, more orless positively, of powerfully different elements. At the same time, pickling is also a metaphor that is bound to be contested, bound to offend.... the ingredients resist bland assimilation but retain powerfully astringent differences. Yet if those differences are not safely 'bottled,' not contained in some medium, then there can be no 'chutnified history,' no possible solutions for the diversity of modern India [29].

Plotz describes Rushdie's narrative as a "form of performative nation building" and his task and the purpose of Saleem's "chutnifying history" as "representing postcolonial Indianness in self – reflective postmodern [text] organized in extravagant, exigent, and hybrid metaphors of nationality" [29]. This metaphor opens a window for readers into the cultural identity of India-one that is as fragmented and unwilling to assimilate as the ingredients of chutney. Not only is modern Indian culture fragmented, but Saleem's family and life are also fragmented between India and Pakistan, between two families whose babies were switched, between political parties, good and evil, and in the end, into six million specks of dust.

Powerful Foods, Powerful Women

Food imagery in *Midnight's Children* is also a signifier of power. Interestingly, the characters empowered by food in this novel are women, and the characters often subjected to are the male characters. In the traditionally patriarchal culture of Muslim India in which Saleem's family lives, this gender norm reversal represents a resistance by the characters to traditional cultural norms within the society. In this way, it assists in characterizing these female characters as endowed with power through their prerogative over food and cooking. The first woman who uses food as a potent tool in the text is Reverend Mother, Naseem Aziz, who bars her kitchen doors after her husband, Aadam Aziz insults her by offering to help with the cooking during her pregnancy. Reverend Mother threatens to bash Aadam's head in with a weighty pot if he entered the kitchen, determined not to allow Aadam any say in what she would cook, and refusing to serve dinner at the dinner table. But when she is further angered by him, she completely denies him food and thus the "war of starvation" begins [43]. Both character is willing to give up power, and Aadam begins to grow thin until their daughter Emerald asks, "Will you be able to vanish completely?" [43] Although Reverend Mother certainly holds sway over her husband,she is concerned about him and finally acquiesces to his dining needs. Their daughter Alia "extended the olive branch to her father, in the shape of a bowl of chicken soup" [43].

Reverend Mother again takes control of the situation when she and Aadam stay with Amina during the time that Ahmed is "sick" in bed: she decides to run Amina's kitchen for her to which Amina agrees, giving Reverend Mother a certain power over the household and on all those who eat her food. Saleem states, "Reverend Mother doled out the curries and meat balls of intransigence, dishes imbued with the personality of their creator; Amina ate the fish salans of stubbornness and the *birianis* of determination," [158] influencing the eaters in various ways.

The usage of food characterizes Reverend Mother as strong, opinionated and determined. She would not give in to her husband and family, and seemed unconcerned about any sort of gender expectations within the doors of her kitchen.

Rushdie's colorful food imagery serves multiple purposes in *Midnight's Children*. He uses food and the preparation of food, particularly pickling, to describe a nation that is made up of various discordant ingredients, trying to create a unified

whole; characters who resist or accept traditional culture and are also fragmented or repressed; and women who are powerful, evil, epitomizing sexual desire. They are ready to raise emotions and trigger memories through their cooking. Some foods represent emotions, love, or cultural identity, and some drive the action by spurring the reactions of other characters and events in the plot. Beautifully and vividly worded, *Midnight's Children* exhibits Rushdie's mastery of using food as figurative language in this intense, unforgettable novel.

Forbidden Fruit in*The God of Small Things*

This Booker Award winner work was published in 1997. A shocking yet memorable novel presents the nonlinear, intricate story of a middle class, Syrian Christian family in the southern Indian state of Kerala. The plot centers around Estha and Rahel, the twin daughter and son of Ammu, who together at the age of seven experience tragic, life-changing events and have now, at thirty-one years of age, returned to their family home in Ayemenem. The narrative jumps between the "then" and "now,"describing the various pieces of the puzzle that led to the weighty and unforgettable denouement. The novel is known for its vivid imagery, poetic language, and mastery at creating a kaleidoscopic effect. Food imagery and metaphor is woven through the novel, adding depth and multiple layers to the plot, providing dramatic images that reflect on emotions and personalities of characters, revealing intense cultural truths.

Cultural Preservation or Resistance

Casting a shadow over the plot as a whole is the family's former food business, "Paradise Pickles & Preserves." The factory looms in the background of the entire plot line, serving as a metaphor. It is symbolic of something more than the jars of jams and pickled fruits Mammachi, the twins' maternal grandmother, began making years ago. The idea of preservation itself is of extreme importance to the characters in the novel, especially the oldest generation in the family — Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, the grand aunt. Certain ideals and traditions are meticulously preserved by the Kerala society and passed down to future generations by the elders. These include the laws concerning matters of love and the maintaining of caste rules, both critical aspects of the Kerala culture that Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are devoted to conform to and protect.

The metaphor of food preservation as the attempt to conserve societal expectations through the Love Laws and the caste system drives the action through the novel as different characters decide to either adhere to the laws and culture or to resist. After having divorced her alcoholic, abusive husband, a rare disgrace in the Indian culture, Ammu returns to her parents' home with her two children, Rahel and Estha, where she is scrutinized by disapproval. However, she persists to reject the preservation of the cultural expectations of her society. Ammu struggles with these "normative rules of kinship in Kerala" that Mammachi and her family try to preserve, in the same way as the pickles and jams in their factory. It ultimately leads to her forbidden love affair with an Untouchable, the god of small things, Velutha [359].

Secrets Sealed and Secrets Spilt

The preservation metaphor in *The God of Small Things* continues as a representation of the many secrets that are "bottled up" throughout the novel and hidden from sight whether out of shame or due to protective care. The narrator describes the hiding of a secret: "It was pickled, sealed and put away. A red, tender-mango-shaped secret in a vat" [191]. Just as the preserves, fruits, and pickles are jarred and stored away, the family's pickle factory as well symbolizes the desire to keep the secrets "bottled" and scandals hidden from the outsiders. As a young boy, Estha does not tell anyone about what the Orange-drink Lemon-drink man did to him at the cinema. Estha and Rahel secretly visit Velutha, getting to know and love him. Ammu makes her own secret trips to see Velutha. However, as Mark Stein explains, "[S] ecrets are found out... barrels crack open. Roy's narrative is interested in such leaks and spillage. Meaning... may in fact lie in the spillage. It may lie in that which is not pickled and preserved and instead oozes out and covers everything in reach" [145].

Similarly, Mammachi once thinks back on her first days in the pickling business, remembering how her first batch of "professional pickles" leaked, "Bottled and sealed, standing on a table near the head of the bed,... The pickle bottles stood in a pool ofoil.... The pickled mangoes had absorbed oil and expanded, making the bottles leak" [159].

She continues, "Even now, after all those years, Paradise Pickles' bottles still leaked a little" [159]. This serves as a metaphor and foreshadows how secrets in the family will also be leaked. When Mammachi and Baby Kochamma learn about Ammu's scandalous relationship with Velutha, the Untouchable, they resort to drastic measures to keep the secret affair "bottled" and their family name untarnished. Baby Kochamma even convinces Estha to lie about Velutha to the police in order to save the children's mother (although they were actually saving Baby Kochamma herself). Baby Kochamma tries to preserve the family's reputation, but in the end, she is most concerned about protecting herself.

Kinship and Gender Issues

In *The God of Small Things* "Paradise Pickles & Preserves" also reflects kinship and gender issues which also serve to drive the action and define several characters. Although Mammachi had begun the company many years ago as a modest pickle and jam kitchen, the twins' uncle Chacko has since returned to take over the running of the factory, demoting Mammachi to be a "Sleeping Partner" [55]. He invests in expensive equipment, takes over the running of the small factory, and attempts to manage the workers, including Velutha. The hierarchy of leadership in the Company reflects the family's organization with Chacko at the top of the ladder. Chacko does not hesitate to take control of the pickle factory, and he immediately sees the company as his property. This reflects the normal gender expectation in this South Indian community that Ammu calls a "wonderful male chauvinist society" to which Chacko responds,"What's yours is mine, and what's mine is also mine" [56].

In many ways, the Kochamma family, and perhaps the Keralite state in general, seems to be in love with the English culture and people. Nowhere in the novel is the high regard

for English culture more apparent than in the details surrounding Sophie Mol's and Maragaret Kochamma's arrival to India to the Ayemenem House. The duo are Chacko's estranged family. In this scene, the tall, carefully iced "Welcome Home Our Sophie Mol" cake serves as a symbol of the effort and Anglo- phallic affection extended to Sophie Mol and Margaret Kochamma. The cake has been prepared especially by Kochu Maria, the family cook, for the reception of Sophie Mol, Chacko's Anglo-Indian daughter, who is described as "Loved from theBeginning" [176]. By the time Kochu Maria finishes baking and icing the "tall, double-deckered" cake that says "Welcome Home Our Sophie Mol," the reader is well- familiar with Kochu Maria's contrastive, grouchy behavior towards the twins [161] and her blatant display of affection for the white kid. Kochu Maria smiles benevolently at Sophie Mol and serves the cake celebrating her arrival. Kochu Maria and Baby Kochamma despise the children- Rahel and Estha, who are most like them, instead embracing Sophie for her beauty and attributed moral qualities. Comically, the narrator describes the apparent difference between the twins and Sophie Mol, or at least how the twins must have been feeling: "Little angels were beach-colored and wore bell-bottoms. Little demons were mud brown in Airport-Fairy frocks with fore-head bumps that might turn into horn [170]

As part of the play planned for Sophie Mol, Mammachi plays a special song on the violin, and cake is served to everyone. However, Rahel and Estha do not eat any. By using the imagery of the cake, the reader clearly comes to understand how the Ayemenem women (Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, and Kochu Maria) endeavor to welcome, impress, and even ingest Sophie Mol into their culture.

Throughout the novel, Roy uses vibrant food images to delineate the characters, to drive the action of the plot forward, and to reflect on the personal and cultural identity within the text. Various foods and preparation of foods represent the desire, either to keep secrets and preserve tradition or to discriminate the affluent from the lesser privileged lot. In turn they also reflect secrets that are revealed and the frequent resistance to cultural norms.

Food images often represent sexuality, but in *Midnight's Children* and *The God of Small Things*, food imagery seems to signify repressed longings. Rushdie uses the images of men and women in a film kissing opposite sides of apples, mangoes, and cups of tea to represent their passion and desire for each other. In *The God of Small Things*, Roy uses more obvious food images to represent the sexual feelings Ammu has for Velutha and the attraction Rahel feels towards Estha. By using sweet images of chocolate, honey, and coffee to describe the skin of Velutha and Estha, readers are treated to images that stimulate the senses and the imagination—a velvety, smooth touch, an intoxicatingly sweet smell, a dark, rich, creamy taste. These images are tempting to the characters and represent their ill attempts to repress these feelings. Through the literal and metaphorical usage of food images, including food preparation, serving, and consuming, these two significant works of Indian fiction are spiced up by multiple layers of meaning to be consumed by the critical reader's mind. The food representations not only make these textual treats more inviting and colorful, they also add a robust seasoning to create a more satisfying and memorable meal.

Study of food has always generated interest amongst scholars from different disciplines. As culinary memoirs, food narratives are a type of ethnographic discourses. Study of food has always generated interest amongst scholars from different disciplines. As culinary memoirs, food narratives are a type of ethnographic discourses. In the present globalized world food has assumed greater significance. It is no longer the woman's domain and a large number of chefs are men reminding of the cooking by a 'Maharaj' (khansama) in earlier times. The kitchen is no longer the clean and Spartan domain of the lady of the house, instead it is a highly mechanized, gadget-driven commercial activity spot. Food is cooked for consumption by all and sundry with professional colleges training youngsters, competitions being hosted by T V channels and even child chefs joining the race. With five and seven star hotels catering to the whims of billionaire clients, there are joints such as the KFC, Mac Donald, Burger King, the cuisines from South India, Maharashtra, Punjab and even more the Italian, Japanese, French, Middle East delicacies that are in great demand. The humble 'dabba- wallas' add yet another dimension to the culinary world. There are dedicated food channels which beam the most colourful, exotic and tempting stuff to the international viewers. Then there is the fad of organic food with tall claims of a clean and unadulterated produce. At the same time it is important to look at the underlying similarities in so many dishes, cooking styles, ingredients and so on. When the American Presidents, be it Bill Clinton or Barack Obama, show their undisguised greed for Indian curries, it testifies to the fact that good food is a shared human emotion. So food can be a diplomatic tool, a placatory strategy or a reconciliatory gesture as well. Not only literature but also world polity can use food to its advantage.

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