



Iaclals



(Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies in India)

ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

on

Food and Food Cultures in the Global South: Aesthetics, Intersections and Mediations

12-14 February, 2026

Hosted by the

The Department of English

Bangalore University

Jnanabharathi campus, Bengaluru – 560056

Booklet Prepared by

Prof. Shobha M.

Prof. Sindhu J.

Dr. Raghavendra H. K.

Designed by: Dr. Raghavendra H. K.

Technical Assistance: Dr. Raghavendra H. K.

Prof. Dr. JAYAKARA S.M.

MDS., FDS., RCPS(Glasg), D IMPLANT (France), FFPA

VICE CHANCELLOR



Message

I am very happy to note that Bangalore University Jnanabharathi Campus is hosting the IACLALS Annual International Conference 2026. I have great pleasure in welcoming scholars, students and academics from across India and abroad to this prestigious conference. One of Bangalore University's strengths is its multidisciplinary approach to academics and hosting this conference complements the institution's image as a dialogic and intellectual space.

In an age where artificial intelligence and digital cultures are gaining ground, it is important to acknowledge that an involvement with arts, humanities and social sciences, particularly literature, will continue to help comprehend the complexities and challenges of human experience. The reach of English Studies has expanded to interdisciplinary and cultural studies, and the present IACLALS conference on Food Studies is an illustrious reflection of this development.

The Department of English, Bangalore University, has completed fifty years on Jnanabharathi Campus, heralding a series of academic and intellectual events as part of its Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2026. I extend my best wishes to the Department of English, Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi Campus for organising this International Conference as the first marker of its Golden Jubilee commemorative milestone. May the conference open up new trajectories of thought and yield fresh knowledge in the form of socially sensitised and culturally diverse perspectives.


(Jayakara S M)

K T SHANTHALA, K.A.S.

REGISTRAR



BANGALORE UNIVERSITY

Jnanabharathi Campus

Bengaluru-560 056

Phone : 080-23213023/080-22961012

Email : bu2registrar@gmail.com,

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Message



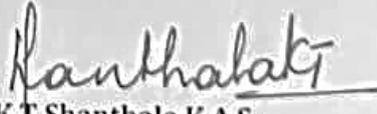
"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." -- Hippocrates

I am delighted that Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi Campus is hosting **IACLALS Annual International Conference 2026**. I am happy to welcome scholars, students, and academics from India and abroad. With our robust multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary foundation, organizing events like these demonstrates the University's dedication to scholarly discourse and intellectual collaboration.

Geography has profoundly influenced food culture throughout history by determining resource availability, sparking conflicts, and driving economic growth through agriculture and husbandry. Riverine civilizations like those along the Nile, Indus, and Yangtze thrived on irrigation and trade routes that exchanged ingredients and culinary techniques, fostering diverse traditions. Coastal areas developed seafood-centric diets enriched by maritime commerce, while mountainous regions innovated preservation methods like drying and fermenting to combat scarcity. Food served as a key barter medium, with trade facilitating cultural exchanges. Indian mythology highlights this link through culinary figures like Maharaja Nala and Bhimasena, embodying the adage that food wins hearts and influences relationships. Ultimately, geography shapes food production, trade, consumption, and regional identities, intertwining sustenance with the environment. It is heartening to note that the scope of English Studies has grown to include Cultural Studies, within which food and debates around food find an important critical space.

The Department of English, Bangalore University is celebrating its Golden Jubilee in 2026 by initiating a series of intellectual and academic activities. I extend my best wishes to the Department of English, Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi Campus for organizing this prestigious International Conference. I wish all the participants and delegates a rich and stimulating intellectual experience.

Best regards,


K T Shanthala K.A.S.

Message From the Chair, IACLALS

IACLALS

ASSOCIATION FOR COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE STUDIES IN INDIA

<https://iaclals.in>

January 20, 2026

We, at the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies in India (IACLALS), are delighted that the Department of English, Bangalore University, Bengaluru is collaborating with us for holding our annual conference on the theme, **FOOD AND FOOD CULTURE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: AESTHETICS, INTERSECTIONS AND MEDIATIONS**, during February 12-14, 2026. The topic is extremely interesting and relevant considering how food is intimately embedded in local cultures and how food culture is rapidly changing with the digital revolution. IACLALS brings together scholars and faculties from all over the country in its conferences, for dialogues, discussions and presenting papers, all of which contribute substantially to the academic climate of the country. Holding this conference in a premier institution like the Bangalore University will provide the participants a unique opportunity to see and explore meeting grounds between their own research work and those of their peer group. I am sure, the scholarly keynote and the valedictory coupled with the deliberations in the business sessions will be both stimulating and insightful, and will contribute substantially in the areas of Food Studies and Culture Studies. I have no doubt that it will be an exciting and memorable conference.

I wish the conference a resounding success.



(Professor M Asaduddin)

Chair, IACLALS

CURRENT OFFICE BEARERS OF IAACLALS

Chairperson:

Prof. M. Asaduddin

Former Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Languages,
Former Professor, Department of English,
Jamia Millia Islamia.

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Prof. Fatima Rizvi

Professor
Department of English and Modern
European
Languages
University of Lucknow

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Department of Comparative Literature
Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

West Zone:

Dr. Amitendu Bhattacharya

Associate Professor of English Literary
Studies,
Department of Humanities and Social
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Department of English
Shaheed Bhagat Singh Evening
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North East Zone:

Dr. Dhurjjati Sarma

Assistant Professor,
Department of Modern Indian
Languages and Literary
Studies,
Gauhati University, Assam.

South Zone:

Prof. Shobha M.

Professor and Head, Department
of English, Bangalore University,
Karnataka.

Central Zone:

Dr. Priyanka Tripathi

Associate Professor of English
Department of Humanities and
Social Sciences, Indian Institute
of Technology Patna, Bihar.

Conference Organizing Committee: Department of English, Bangalore University, Bengaluru
Conference Convenor and HOD: Prof. Shobha M.

Conference Coordinator: Prof. Sindhu J.

FACULTY

Prof. Shobha M.

Sr. Prof. K.S. Vaishali

Prof. R. Geetha

Prof. Sindhu J.

Prof. B.N Shreekeerthy

Dr. Raghavendra H. K.

Office Staff

Roma Dixit S

Girish H.N.

POINTS OF ENQUIRY FOR THE DAYS OF THE CONFERENCE

University Guest House Accommodation: Prof. Sindhu J.
Rudresh, Ravi, Reshma Taj

BASE: Dr. Raghavendra H. K., Akshatha Amin

Registration Counter: Premila, Naziya, Iramma, Radhika

Banner and Standee Design: Iramma

Banners, Standees: Narayan, Jalal, Vinod, Govardhan
Hospitality Committee: Prathibha, Annet, Akshatha Amin

CONCEPT NOTE

Food and food cultures serve as crucial sites for performance, story-telling, memorialization, identitarian politics, ritualistic practice and assertions of power and cultural capital. They also facilitate a fertile field of critical inquiry in terms of intergenerational trauma, ecological ethics, colonial and postcolonial structures and resistance, migration and connectivity. The multiple ways of thinking, preparing and consuming food enable one to understand it as a site mediating complex social relationships and self-representation in diverse cultural and literary texts and contexts.

Food and foodways symbolize types of cultural capital which in turn influence larger concerns of identity and identity formation. Food is part of rituals and ceremonies that span almost all occasions of human existence – whether as offering or for consumption. Processes of resistance and resilience also find reflection in multiple food representations. Within an expanding food literacy, both public and domestic spaces highlight the historical politics of food and eating. The realpolitik of food production narrates tales of exploitation, appropriation and marginalization.

Understanding gastro semantics, culinary cosmopolitanism and gastro-tourism enables both informed understanding and a rethinking of one's relationship with food at local and global levels. Theorizing food requires an interdisciplinary approach involving ethnographic, historical, geographical, political, literary, aesthetic, gender, ethnic, agricultural, economic, nutrition and cultural studies. Food activism focuses on seed sovereignty, farmers' markets, and eating disorders. An epistemology of embodiment and hierarchy can be constructed in the politics of who cooks, who serves and who eats.

Sub-Themes

- Digital gastronomy and food aesthetics
- Food practices: rituals, ceremonies and offerings
- Food, faith and taboo: religious laws and transgressions
- Gastronomic and taste philosophies
- Gastro-feminism and masculinities: gender, food and culture
- Disability and food practices
- Food and food culture in cinema, literature and art
- Culinary colonialism and the decolonial palate
- Food as semiotic system
- Kitchen as archive
- Kitchen as domestic, commercial, trans or queer performative space
- Carnavalesque food and food practices
- Food sovereignty: hunger, memory, famine, starvation
- Indigenous foodways
- Food writing: culinary histories, recipes, menus
- Food and human rights
- Food distribution and public health
- Food activism and advocacy
- Urban food practices, diet and nutrition
- Food porn and food exotica

VENUE: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar School of Economics University (BASE)

Travel Advisory and Additional Details for Guest House Participants

1. Weather in Bangalore in February: Min 13° C; Max 31° C, a light sweater/stole may be needed.
2. Distance between Bangalore University Guest House and Conference Venue (BASE) is approximately 2 Kms. Uber/Ola Auto can be booked to reach the conference venue, with 3 persons per auto on a sharing basis, costs around INR 50.
3. Guest House Accommodation fees: INR 750/- per VIP Room per day; INR 400/- per Regular Room per day. (Not included in the Conference Registration Fees)
4. Guest House Accommodation fees will have to be remitted in Cash only to Mr. Lokesh (The Guest House In charge).
5. Breakfast will be served on 12th, 13th & 14th February at the Guest House from 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM at the cost of INR 120/ + 5% GST- per day per person. (Not included in Conference Registration Fees)
6. Those who check in to the guest house on 10th & 11th are advised to make their own food arrangements for 10th and 11th

Points of contact:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Madhu: +919980000592 | 2) Rudresh:+919741385339 |
| 3) Akshatha Amin: +918904542785 | 4) Ravi:+919880169069 |
| 5)Prof. Sindhu J.: +919480904762 | |

From Kempegowda International Airport to Bangalore University Guesthouse:

Distance: Approximately 45 kms.

Cab Fares: Uber/Ola: From INR 900/- onwards, depending on time of booking. Surge pricing will apply during peak hours.

Time to commute: 1.5 - 2 hours by cab; 2 hours by bus.

BMTC buses: #KIA-9 (Vayu Vajra bus) from Airport to Hebbala; #501-A, #234-F from Hebbala to Bangalore University Quarters Stop.

Local bus/auto/Uber/Ola auto from University Quarters Stop to University Guesthouse (approx. 1km, nominal rates).

BMTC bus fares from Airport to Hebbala: INR 210/-- 265/-; From Hebbala to University Quarters Stop: Nominal rates.

From Yeshwantpur Railway Station to Bangalore University Guesthouse:

Distance: Approx. 9-10 kms.

Cab Fares: Uber/Ola/Rapido: Approx. INR 200/- onwards, depending on time of booking. Surge pricing will apply during peak hours.

Time to commute: 45 mins. to 1 hour, by cab/bus.

BMTC buses from Yeshwantpur Railway Station to Bangalore University Quarters Stop: #401M is the most frequent and dependable, with nominal rates.

Local bus/auto/Uber/Ola auto from University Quarters Stop to University Guesthouse (approx. 1km, nominal rates).

From Kempegowda Railway Station (Local name Majestic) to Bangalore University Guesthouse:

Distance: Approx. 14 kms.

Cab fares: Uber/Ola/Rapido: Approx. INR 300/- onwards, depending on time of booking. Surge pricing will apply during peak hours. Metro: nominal rates.

Time to commute: 45 mins. to 1 hour, by cab/bus; Metro (Purple Line): 25 mins.

Metro (Purple Line): From Sir M. Visveswaraya Station to Jnanabharathi Station (located at the University Main Gate Entrance).

Local /Feeder Bus/auto/Uber/Ola auto from Jnanabharathi Station (located at the University Main Gate Entrance) to University Guesthouse (approx. 1 km.) -- nominal rates.

Sessions at a Glance

PS= Parallel Session

Day 1 12.2.26 Thursday	Inaugural 9-9:45 am LH 1	Keynote 9:45-10:30	Tea 10:30-11:00	PS1 11-12 LH1,2,3	PS2 12-1 pm LH1,2,3	Lunch 1-2 pm	PS3 2-3 pm LH1,2,3	Tea 3-3:15 pm	PS4 3.15-4.15 LH1,2,3	Book launch 4.15-5 pm		
Day 2 13.2.26 Friday	PS5 9:00-10:00 LH1,2,3	10-11 MMM Prize session LH1	Tea 11:11-11:15	PS6 11:15-12:15 LH1,2,3	PS7 12:15-1:15 pm LH1,2,3	Lunch 1:15-2:15 pm	PS8 2:15-3:35 pm LH1,2,3	Tea 3:35-3:50 pm	Poetry Reading 3:50-4:30 pm LH1	4:30-5:00 pm Cultural LH1	5:00-6:00 pm AG BM LH1	7-9 pm Dinner BASE
Day 3 14.2.26 Saturday	PS9 9:30-10:45 LH1,2,3	--	Tea 10:45-11:00	11:00-1:00 CDN Presentation LH1	--	Lunch 1-2 pm	2-2:15 CDN prize Award LH1	2:15-3:15 Valedictory LH1	3:15-3:30 Tea			

Special Sessions :4: Keynote, MMM Prize, CDN Prize, Valedictory. Business sessions: 27

Conference Schedule

Day 1: Thursday, 12 February, 2026

9:00-9:45 AM INAUGURAL

Room No: LH 1

Welcome Address: Prof. Shobha. M., Conference Convenor & Head, Department of English, Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi Campus.

Introduction to IACLALS: Swati Pal. Vice-Chair, IACLALS

Opening Remarks on the Theme of the Conference: M Asaduddin, Chairperson, IACLALS.

Chief Guest's Address: Dr. Jayakara. S.M, Vice-Chancellor, Bangalore University. Jnanabharathi Campus.

Vote of Thanks: Prof. Sindhu J, Conference Coordinator, Department of English, Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi Campus.

09:45-10:30 AM –Keynote Address:

Title: Edible Aesthetics: Food, Form, and the Cultural Politics of Taste Across Borders

Keynote Address: **Anita Mannur**, Professor of Critical Race, Gender, and Culture Studies and the Director of the Asia, Pacific, and Diaspora Studies (APDS) Program, American University, Washington D.C.

Chair: M Asaduddin

Rapporteurs: Renu, Nuthan

Tea: 10:30-11:00 AM

11:00-12:00 AM Parallel Session 1

Room No: LH-1

Chair: Chitra Panikkar

Rapporteurs: Nuthan, Uzba, Madhu

1.1 - Tasting Identities: Food, Caste, and Self-Representation

Labani Biswas: “The Aroma of Cardamom, the Heat of Chilli: Sensuality and Feminine Agency in the Narratives of Divakaruni”

Roopashree U: “Food and Caste Identity: Reading Vaidehi’s *Vasudeva’s Family: Asprushyaru* and Valmiki’s *Joothan* through the Lens of Food”

Pratyaksha: “Interrogations of Identity and the Unconventional Choice of Food in Sanjena Sathian’s *Gold Diggers*”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Murari Prasad

Rapporteurs: Bharath Kumar, Siddeshwara, Prerana

1.2 - Urban Food Spaces: Cities, Communities, and Consumption

Komal Rajwansh: “Food with a Formula: The Homogeneity in the Street Food of Delhi”

Prithiraj Borah: “Food, community kitchens and belongingness: ‘Northeast’ eateries in Kalyan Nagar Bengaluru”

Nishtha Dev: “Edible Urbanities: Capitalism, Food and Memory in Amruta Patil’s Graphic Novels”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: Shyamala A. Narayan

Rapporteurs: Eshita, Someshwari, Nitish Krishnamurthy

1.3 – Narratives of Resistance: Food, Politics, and Rebellion

Kangkana Roy: “Food as a Rebellion: An Analysis of the film *Aamish*”

Sharada Chigurupati: “The Venue and the Menu as the Markers of Protest and Resistance: A Reading of Kitchen Poems by Nithya Mariam John”

Ankita Kumari: “Filming Caste, Social Mobility and Resistance: A Critical Study of the Short Film *Champan Mutton* (2023)”

12:00 AM-01:00 PM **Parallel Session 2**

Room No: LH-1

Chair: Anjali Daimari

Rapporteurs: Nuthan, Uzba, Prerana

2.1 – Sacred Bites: Rituals and Faith

Z.D. Lalmangaihzauva: “Food as Ritual: The Evolution of Feasting Culture of the Mizos”

Chetna Rawat: “The Sacred Plate: Food, Faith, and Cultural Boundaries in Kumaon”

Dr. Dhurjjati Sarma: “Sacralizing the Profane(?): Exploring the Puranic Injunctions for Non-Vegetarianism in Assam”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Renu Elizabeth Abraham

Rapporteurs: Bharath Kumar, Siddeshwara, Prerana

2.2 – Gendered Kitchens: Power, Labor, and Emancipation

Manjari Upadhyaya & Prof. Anjali Daimari: “Food and Gender Politics: A Study of Select Works of Easterine Kire”

Dipanwita Bhattacharyya: “Narrativising the Domestic: The Kitchen in Women’s Autobiographical Writings from Colonial Bengal”

Madhumita Chakraborty: “Food, Faith, and Taboos: Hindu Widows in Bengal”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: Gourhari Behera

Rapporteurs: Eshita, Someshwari, Nitish Krishnamurthy

2.3 – Colonial Palates: Empire, Legacy, and Decolonization

Pritha Sarkar: “The Contemporary Café Culture of Kolkata, Gen Z, Millennials, and Class Hierarchy: Gustatory Cells as a Site of Tracking Colonialism and Neo-colonialism through Enculturation and Acculturation”

Karan Tekwani: “If you want to put nice little dinners upon your table... you must make a friend of your cook”: A Study of Paradoxes in British Indian Cookbooks and Domestic Manuals”

Snigdha Singh: “Culinary Colonialism and the Decolonial Palate: Tracing Spices, Resistance, and Empire in the literature of Global South”

Lunch: 01:00-2:00 PM

2:00-3:00 PM

Parallel Session 3

Room No: LH-1

Chair: Ayesha Irfan

Rapporteurs: Shivarshini, Sulochana, Narayana

3.1 – Dalit Food Experience: Caste, Humiliation, and Resilience

Somya Charan Pahadi: “When Untouchability Infiltrates Interactions with Food: Purity, Cultural Assertion and Resistance in Bama’s *Karukku*”

Pooja Duggal: “In the Dalit Kitchen: Food, Animals and the Politics of Acknowledgment”

Chandrasmita Borgohain & Bashabi Gogoi: “Dalits and their Food Culture”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Nishtha Dev

Rapporteurs: Renu, Reshma Taj, Jalal

3.2 – Digital Feasts: Media, Aesthetics, and Heritage

T C Nivedita: “Recipes and Reels: The Digital Aesthetics of Heritagising Kerala’s Culinary Culture”

Sharmien Ajmal: “Performing Desire: Digital Gastronomy and the Spectacle of Masculinity”

Rachel Irdaya Raj: “Edible Archives: Food as a Cultural Memory in Select Indian Cinema”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: K.S. Vaishali

Rapporteurs: Kusumitha, Nishka, Ravi

3.3 - Liminal Tastes: Death, Nourishment, and Beyond

Nithyashree Narayanan: “The Corpse That Eats: Rethinking Nourishment and Liminality in Torajan Mortuary Rituals”

Nibedita Mukherjee: “Food in Fairy tales: Conceptualising the “Otherness”

Saamyata Joshi: “Sacred Widowhood: Food, Discipline, and Survival in South Asian Narratives”

Tea: 3:00-3:15 PM

3:15-4:15 PM Parallel Session 4

Room No: LH-1

Chair: Nibedita Mukherjee

Rapporteurs: Shivarshini, Sulochana, Narayana

4.1 - Extended Identities: Caste, Politics, and Sustainability

Diksha Beniwal: “We are 'not' what we eat: Food and Dalit identity in Om Prakash Valmiki's *Joothan*”

Nidhi& Anubhav Pradhan: “Gastro-Politics’ and Refugeehood in Phanishwar Nath Renu’s *Juloos*”

Gourhari Behera: “The Ethics and Politics of Commensality, Identity and Sustainability: Decoding the Sacred Food Tradition of Jagannath Mahaprasad of Puri”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Dhurjjati Sarma

Rapporteurs: Renu, Reshma Taj, Jalal

4.2 – Public/Private Divide: Culinary Discourses

Shweta K. Kapoor: “Who Cooks and Who Eats: Archival Absence and Culinary Apartheid in Uttarakhand’s Sacred Geography”

Sarthak Jana: “(Gastronomic) War & Peace: Food, Caste, and Sexual Anxiety in Bengal 1862-1962”

Amarjeet Nayak: “Caste on the Plate: Kitchens and Maternal Insurgency in Select Dalit Autobiographies”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: Rachel Irdaya Raj

Rapporteurs: Kusumitha, Nishka, Ravi

4.3- Regional Roots: Indigenous and Historical Foodways

Savita Bhandari: “Indigenous Food Ways: Garhwali Food of Uttarakhand a tinge of Feasting and Fasting”

Swasti Sharma: “Dietary Habits and Agricultural Practices during the Rig Vedic Period”

Ayesha Irfan: “The Dastarkhwan of Awadh and The Contribution of Wajid Ali Shah to The Awadh and Kolkata Cuisine”

4:15-5:00 PM –Book Release

Moderator:

Rapporteurs: Epshita, Shivarshini

Day 2: Friday, 13 February 2026

9:00-10:00 AM Parallel Session 5

Room No: LH-1

Chair: N. Usha

Rapporteurs: Nuthan, Madhu, Uzba

5.1 - Sensory Narratives: Taste, Smell, and Embodiment

Simantini Basu: “Cartographies of smell: The practice of everyday affect in epistemic and lived encounters with food”

Ekalabya Bhattacharya: “Sensing beyond Taste: on Nicholas Kharkongor's *Axone*”

Jabeen Yasmeen: “I Want the Aroma of Coffee”: Addressing the “Impossibility of Telling” Through Food”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Priyanka Tripathi

Rapporteurs: Bharath Kumar, Siddeshwara, Prerana

5.2 – Food Violence: Purity, Surveillance, and Power

Arghya Dey: “Food, Purity, and Policing: Surveilled Eating and Culinary Violence in Prayag Akbar’s *Leila*”

Bharath Kumar S: “Pure Veg’ Identitarian Politics of Contemporary India: A Study of Devdutt Pattanaik’s Critical Commentaries”

Ahmed Shabin K K: “Black Coffee in a Coconut Shell: Kitchen Archives, Commensality, and Caste”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: Amitendu Bhattacharya

Rapporteurs: Eshitha, Someshwari, Nitish Krishnamurthy

5.3 Gender, Domesticity, and the Kitchen Space

Suraj Kumar: “Recipes for Queer Home-making: A Queer Autoethnography”

Milony Richa Mathew: “From Primers to Coffee-table books: Navigating Feminine Identities Through the Evolution of Culinary Narratives on Kerala Cuisine”

Srijani Ghosh: “Domestic Kitchens that Cooked Revolutions: Gendered Labour, Fragile Masculinities and the Blurring of the Private/Public Divide in Kallol Lahiri’s *Indubala Bhaater Hotel*”

10:00-11:00 AM: MMM Prize Session- 2026 Winner, Nishat Haider in conversation with Dhurjjati Sarma

Chair: Swati Pal

Room No: LH-1(Plenary)

Tea: 11:00-11:15 AM

11:15AM-12:15 PM **Parallel Session 6**

Room No: LH-1

Chair: Shobha M.

Rapporteurs: Nuthan, Uzba, Madhu

6.1 – Global South Gastronomies: Transgression and Re-Orientalism

Liya Sarah Philip: “From Street to Summit: The Strategic Flavoring of Asia’s Diplomatic Ties”

Sowmya A: “Dialectics of Food: Gender, Control and Resistance in South Asian Conflict Narratives”

Shashikala Muthumal Assella: “Carl Muller’s *Maudiegirl* and a forgotten culinary history of the Sri Lankan Burghers”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Swati Pal

Rapporteurs: Bharath Kumar, Siddeshwara, Prerana

6.2 – Culinary Narratives: Language and Taste

Aditi Krishna: “Travelling tales of Tsampa: Economies of food in Tibetan literature in English”

Tufan De: “Taste, Tradition and Athleticism: A Gastronomic Study of Three Novellas by Moti Nandi”

Sangeetha Balakrishnan: “Culinary Ekphrasis and the Narrative of Formation: A Cognitive-Narratological Reading of Romesh Gunsekera’s *Reef*”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: Banibrata Mahanta

Rapporteurs: Eshitha, Someshwari, Nitish Krishnamurthy

6.3 - Marginalized Voices: Hunger, Deprivation and Disability

Sayahnika Ganguly: “Food for Feelings: A Crip Analysis of Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*”

Alvina Ahmad: “Disability and Food: Ingestion, Access, and Assisted Eating”

Kopal: “Writing Hunger: Narrating Deprivation in Manoranjan Byapari’s Autobiography”

12:15 – 1:15 PM

Parallel Session 7

Room No: LH-1

Chair: Sharada Chigurupati

Rapporteurs: Shivarshini, Sulochana, Narayana

7.1 - Semiotic Servings: Signs, Symbols, and Meanings in Food

Armeen Kaur Ahuja: “Semiotics of Food in *Yajurveda*”

Sania Muzamil: “Semiotics of Culinary Creation: A Greimasian Reading of Hamari Jamatia’s ‘Does the Artist Eat Gourd, Brother?’”

Avnish Tyagi & Jindagi Kumari: “Entangled Kitchens: A Semiotic Study of Gender, Space, and Modernity in the Selected Works of Ambai and Vivek Shanbhag”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Meenakshi Pawha

Rapporteurs: Renu, Reshma, Jalal

7.2 - Ecological Bites: Sustenance, Seasons, and Contradictions

Chitra Bajpai: “Banana Leaves to Plastic Wraps: Food, Culture and Ecological contradictions in South Asian narratives” -

Anushree Nayek: “Cooking for Tomorrow: Seasonal Memory and Ecological Thought in *Bhadre Rendhe Ashwine Khaoa*”

V L Ruati: “What Belongs at the Table: Dissecting the Foodways and Consequences of Hunger and Starvation in Katherine Boo’s *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: Amarjeet Nayak

Rapporteurs: Kusumitha, Nishka, Ravi

7.3 – Food in Popular Culture

Sanjukta Naskar: “Semantics of Food in Folktales”

Azhar Uddin Sahaji: “What’s desi in Ghee? Interrogating Food Fad, Body Aesthetics, and Masculinity through the Consumption Pattern of Ghee in Contemporary India”

Angela Emily Sebastian & Dr. Shalini Moolechalil: “Gender, Food and the Making of Modern Households in Early Malayalam Women’s Magazines”

Lunch: 01:15-2:15 PM

2:15 – 3:35 PM

Parallel Session 8

Room No: LH-1

Chair: Sindhu J.

Rapporteurs: Shivarshini, Sulochana, Narayana

8.1 – Flavors of Belonging: Diaspora, Memory, and Cultural Archives

N. Usha: “Culinary Memory on a plate: Food as Cultural Archive in Diasporic Fiction”

D. Sudha Rani: “Food at the Centre of the World Stage: A Study of Double Diaspora and Food Memory in Select Indian Diaspora Plays”

Srijeeta Adhikary: “Looking Beyond the Borders: A Study of Immigrant Food Narratives, Memory, and Identity in Madhushree Ghosh’s *Khabaar: An Immigrant Journey of Food, Memory, and Family*”

Nandana Sanker: “Living Archives of Memory: Kitchens and the Chinese Diaspora of Kolkata”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Fatima Rizvi

Rapporteurs: Renu, Reshma, Jalal

8.2 – Cultural Habitus: Politics and Translatability

Mohd Aqib: “Translatable/Untranslatable Food: Examining the Translation of the Culinary Diction in *Ni ‘matkhana* into English”

Monib Ahmad: “The Kitchen as a Battleground: A study of the Indian National Army”

Saim Raza: “Flavour of Shi’ism: Tabarruk in Moharram Mourning, Folk literature, and syncretic Awadhi culture”

Saneya: “Zubaan ka Chatkhara: Savoring the Women’s Language”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: Debashree Dattaray

8.3 – Food as Metaphor and Memory

Rapporteurs: Kusumitha, Nishka, Ravi

Madhumita Roy: “Sculpting Identity(s) through Food: A Critical Insight into Madhushree Ghosh’s *Khabaar*”

Pavani Akasha Premarathne: “Tasting Re-Orientalism: A Study of Food Markers in Running in the Family and Anil’s Ghost”

Swatee Sinha: “Food as Metaphor and Historical Archive in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997)”

Asit Kumar Biswal: “A Taste of Another's Memory: Food, Remembering, and Relationality in Select Indian Poetry”

Tea: 3:35– 3:50 PM

Poetry Readings: 3:50-4:30 PM (LH1)

Moderator:

Rapporteurs: Akshatha Amin

4:30 -5:30 PM: Cultural Program-Lecture Demonstration (Hindustani Classical Music) by K.S.Vaishali

5:30-6:00 PM: Annual General Meeting of IACLALS (LH-1)

7:00-9:00 PM: Conference Dinner (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar School of Economics University (BASE))

Day 3: Saturday, 14 February, 2026

9:30-10:45 AM Parallel Session 9

Room No: LH-1

Chair: Sanjukta Naskar

Rapporteurs: Nuthan, Uzba, Madhu

9.1- Food, Diaspora, and Cultural Identity

Muskan Kanodia: “Tasting Cultures: Food, Nostalgia and Identity in Diasporic Fiction”

Tabinda Sadiq: “Kitchens of Exile: Food, Memory, and Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies*”

Toposhree Taraphdar: “Exploring the Representation of Santali Food Culture in Santali literature”

Haadiyah Marikar: “Get the ghozhumba kanji it’s nombuthorakatime: The Intersection of Food, Language, and Identity in the Study of Sri Lankan Englishes Spoken by Moors”

Room No: LH-2

Chair: Jabeen Yasmeen

Rapporteurs: Bharath Kumar, Siddeshwara, Prerana

9.2 - Forbidden Flavors: Taboos and Transgression

Maziah Shaaz: “Kitchen, Body, and Text: Food and Menstrual Taboos in South Asian Narratives”

Amandeep Kaur: “Phantasmagoria, Disgust, and the Kitchen in Khalid Jawed’s *The Paradise of Food*”

M.M. Shakya Nethmini: “Alien Appetites: Survival through Transgressive Consumption in Sayaka Murata’s *Earthlings*”

Shreyasi Dasgupta: “Tasting Transgressions: Understanding Feminist Aesthetic Emancipation through Food”

Room No: LH-3

Chair: Shashikala Muthumal Assella

Rapporteurs: Eshita, Someshwari, Nitish Krishnamurthy

9.3- Mosaics of Food: Diverse Voices

Srijoni Banerjee: “The Daily Dole of Watery Rice-Lentil Porridge”: Food, Solidarity, Resilience, and the Interconnectedness of Memory and Identity in Ghosh’s *Victory Colony, 1950*”

Beant Kaur: “Food as Character: The Cultural Politics of ‘Pattal Kaav’ in Punjabi Weddings”

Tanya Sharma: “Humiliation on a Platter: The Global North consuming the Global South in *Succession* Season Two (2019)”

Neenu Kumar: “Cinematic Kitchens: Use of Food Items, Memory and Ethnicity”

Tea: 10:45-11:00 AM

11:00-01:00 PM: CDN Prize Session

Room No: (LH-1)

Chair: M. Asaduddin & Debashree Dattaray

Rapporteurs: Renu, Akshatha Amin

Aalisha Chauhan: “Culinary Cartographies of Partition: Food as Cultural Archive in Digital Spaces”

Aniket Kumar Jha: “Taboo, Temptation and Taste: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Pleasure and Repression in Food Porn and Mukbang”

Ashima Shrawan: “Recipes of Resistance and Resilience: Food, Caste, and Politics in Rajyashri Goody’s *Eat with Great Delight and Writing Recipes*”

Gaurav Singh: “Performative Bereavement and Culinary Healing: Food, Death, and Widowhood in Chitrita Banerji’s *Culinary Memoirs*”

Sanyogita Singh: “Food and Futurity: Agrarian Songs at the Edge of Capital and Commons”

Lunch: 01:00-2:00 PM

2:00- 2:15 PM - CDN Prize 2026 Distribution (LH-1)

2:15-3:15 PM: VALEDICTORY Room No: (LH-1)

Valedictory Address: Ramachandra Guha

Title: “The Craft of Historical Biography”

Chair: Swati Pal

Rapporteurs: Epsitha, Kusumitha, Shivarshini

Vote of Thanks: Fatima Rizvi, Secretary, IACLALS

Vote of Thanks: K.S. Vaishali, Department of English, Bangalore University.

Tea: 3:15-3:30PM

BOOK of ABSTRACTS

Day 1: Thursday, 12 February 2026

Keynote Address:

Anita Mannur: “Edible Aesthetics: Food, Form, and the Cultural Politics of Taste Across Borders”

Abstract: This talk situates food and food cultures at the center of contemporary debates in literary and cultural studies, foregrounding their aesthetic force, mediating power, and geopolitical entanglements within the expanding field of food studies. Treating food not merely as metaphor or material practice but as a dynamic aesthetic and epistemological form, the talk examines how culinary representations traverse borders—linguistic, cultural, and territorial—to articulate belonging, displacement, nostalgia, and rupture. Across different narratives, food emerges as a dense site where memory and desire intersect with histories of migration, colonialism, and racial capitalism.

By foregrounding food as an intersectional and transnational analytic, the talk argues for an expanded understanding of aesthetics that takes seriously the material, affective, and ethical dimensions of eating. Ultimately, it proposes food as a critical lens through which to rethink cultural representation, historical violence, and the possibilities of care and survival in an era of planetary crisis.

Bionote: **Anita Mannur** is Director of the Asia, Pacific and Diaspora Studies and Professor of Critical Race, Gender, and Culture Studies. Her research areas are Asian American literature, food studies, transnational South Asia, fashion studies and race and gender studies. She is the author of two monograph, *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture* (Temple University Press, 2010) and *Intimate Eating: Racialized Spaces and Radical Futures* (Duke University Press 2022). She has co-edited several collections including *Theorizing Diaspora* (2005), *Eating Asian America* (2010) and *Eating More Asian America* (2025). Her work appears in several journals including *American Quarterly*, *Cultural Studies*, *MELUS*, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *Gastronomica*, *Amerasia Journal*. She is the former editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Asian American Studies* and is a member of the editorial collective at *Gastronomica: The Journal for Food Studies*.

She was the 2012 recipient of the Early Career Award from the Association of Asian American Studies and the 2019 winner of the Excellence in Mentoring Award, also from the Association for Asian American Studies. She is President Elect of the Association for Asian American Studies.

At AU, she teaches courses in Asian American Studies in South Asian popular culture, food and race and Asian American literature.

Chair’s Bionote: Author, critic and translator in several languages **Mohd Asaduddin** writes on literature, language politics and Translation Studies. A professor English, he served as the Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Languages, Jamia Millia Islamia, and Advisor to the Vice Chancellor. He was a Fulbright Scholar- in-Residence at Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA, during 2008-2009. Earlier he was a Charles Wallace Trust Fellow at University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK, in 2000. He has lectured/ led workshops at many universities of India and abroad. Among his books are: *Complete Premchand Stories*, (Penguin Random House, 4 volumes, 2017), *Premchand in World Languages* (Routledge, 2016), *Filming Fiction: Tagore, Premchand and Ray* (Oxford U Press, 2012), *A Life in Words* (Penguin, 2012), *The Penguin Book of Classic Urdu Stories* (2006), *Lifting the Veil: Selected Writings of Ismat Chughtai* (Penguin, 2001) *For Freedom’s Sake : Manto* (Oxford U Press, 2002) and *Image and*

Representation: Stories of Muslim Lives in India (Oxford U Press, 2000). He is the Chair, Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (IACLALS), and the International Chair, ACLALS. His extensive translations from Urdu to English of authors like Premchand, Ismat Chughtai, Manto and Syed Muhammad Ashraf have been recognized by the following awards: Katha Award, Dr A.K. Ramanujan Award, Sahitya Akademi Award, Urdu Academy (Delhi) Award and Crossword Book Award.

11:00-12:00 AM Parallel Session 1 Room No: LH-1

Chair's Bionote: **Chitra Panikkar** recently retired as Senior Professor from the Dept of English, Bangalore University. She began her teaching career in the University of Hyderabad, where she taught at the Centre for Comparative Literature for eight years and at the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies for six years. Her PhD thesis was on James Joyce and Marcel Proust after which she worked for a year at the James Joyce Foundation in Switzerland for a year. Her research interests have spanned areas of translation, questions of identity, and illness narratives. She has also been socially active on issues of caste and gender. Her most recent completed Research Project submitted to Bangalore University was on the Representations of Dementia in Literature and Art.

1.1 - Tasting Identities: Food, Caste, and Self-Representation

Labani Biswas: "The Aroma of Cardamom, The Heat of Chilli: Sensuality and Feminine Agency in the Narratives of Divakaruni"

Abstract: The notion of food porn, often aligned with contemporary digital culture, has its antecedents in literary practice, where the sensuality of food is textualised to evoke desire, intimacy, and pleasure. Literature has used the language of taste, touch, and smell to make food feel erotic, turning meals into sensual experiences often blurring the difference between hunger and desire. Food porn is often characterized as particularly sensualised and stimulating representations of food, and these might even borrow motifs and techniques from the aesthetics of sex porn. In the food porn literature, a number of works address how the phenomenon relates to gender, body, and sexuality. By engaging with the rhetorical strategies of vivid description, synesthetic evocations, and erotic undertones, the study would investigate how literature produces a pornography of taste, inviting both consumption and contemplation. Rather than seeing food porn as shallow indulgence, this paper aims to argue that in literature it complicates desire which is not only about feeding the body, but also about feeding the imagination and the heart. The paper aims to identify the literary techniques that transform descriptions of food into sensual, quasi-erotic experiences and to explore ways in which the imagery of food eroticism negotiates themes of desire, intimacy, and identity through the works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. This study guided by the theoretical framework of David Sutton's gustemology, situates food porn in literature not merely as textual analysis but as a cultural discourse that destabilises binaries between necessity and luxury, corporeality and imagination, and domesticity and transgression. Divakaruni's sensual foodscapes thus highlight the act of eating and remembering, where spices and flavours evoke senses of agency and femininity.

Bionote: Labani Biswas is a senior research fellow in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Patna. She is working in the field of gastronomy and culinary arts focusing on nostalgic attribution and aspects of identity formation which take place through the language of food.

Roopashree U: “Food and Caste Identity: Reading Vaidehi’s *Vasudeva’s Family: Asprushyaru* and Valmiki’s *Joothan* Through the Lens of Food”

Abstract: Since civilization, it is a known fact that food in India is linked to caste. Often when one is questioned about his/her food practices in India, people imperceptibly try to discern one’s caste through the response. Caste identities being perceived through food practices, food becomes an important vector to divide and unite people, thereby becoming a metaphor of significance to identify people. In a way it can be said that food becomes a means to create and contest identities. The cultural politics generated around food disproves of certain food belonging to the lower castes regarding it as impure. Further, in India, which is a land of cultural diversity, food practices also determine the social status of people. Power equations get synchronized with food practices, thereby rendering unequal social status to the lower castes whose food practices are considered impure/polluted.

Literary texts also serve as an important platform for expression of views through food. The present paper will analyse Vaidehi’s *Vasudeva’s Family: Asprushyaru* to trace the representation of food in a text by a writer belonging to upper caste. Social hierarchies established through food are expressed through the notions of purity and pollution, subtly explicating the Cultural hegemony, thereby expounding the unequal power structure. In contrast Om Prakash Valmiki’s *Joothan* shall be analysed to represent the struggles of the Dalits to assert themselves. How the Dalit writers use food to oppose the dominant culture through non-normative/non-conformist eating practices to assert their self-respect shall be deduced.

Bionote: Roopashree U is a distinguished academician with over two decades of teaching experience. Presently, as the HoD of English at Seshadripuram Academy of Business Studies, she has served as a member of NEP and SEP English Text Book Committees and held various responsible roles at University and College levels. Email: drroopashreemohan@gmail.com

Pratyaksha: “Interrogations of Identity and the Unconventional Choice of Food in Sanjana Sathian’s *Gold Diggers*”

Abstract: The paper will focus on identity formation and intersectionality in feminism by women’s writing of the global South within the genre of magic realism through analysing Sanjana Sathian’s debut novel *Gold Diggers* published in 2020. The novel is set in Georgia and California of the twenty-first century with certain fragments of the narrative going back to the twentieth century in Bombay, India. The novel uses gold as a cultural marker to interpret the nuances of gender and complexity of identity formation via the characters of Anjali Dayal, Anita Dayal, and the protagonist Neeraj (Neil) Narayan. Caged by the duties of her familial and matrimonial life, Anjali resorts to her mother’s alchemical recipe to brew a concoction of gold lemonade. She carries forward the tradition to her daughter Anita with Neil becoming an incidental consumer. Since magic realism is a mode of interrogating Eurocentric narrativity by representing the voices of the global South, the episteme of decoloniality is suitable to describe the genre. The paper will look at the intersections of feminism and decoloniality in magic realism through the lens of transnational feminism where the process of forming gender identities, by discarding patriarchal impositions, across borders will be gauged. The decolonial aspects of gender and transnationalism will help to underline crucial insights into feminism, like the issues of integration and identity that the second-generation immigrants face with respect to their psychological and geographical longing for home. The frameworks by critics

like Walter Mignolo, Margaret A. MacLaren, and Linda Martin Alcoff will be taken into account. Further, the unconventional choice of food in the novel, i.e. gold, an important socio-cultural marker, will be analysed as the trope of gastrocriticism, questioning what constitutes food and its respective relation to culture in literary spaces.

Bionote: Ms. Pratyaksha is a PhD scholar in the Department of English, University of Delhi. Her research explores Gothic Feminism in Contemporary Latin American Literature. She also holds an MPhil in English from University of Delhi where she explored women's writing in magic realism. Her area of interests includes Critical Food Studies, Posthumanism, and Women's Writings.

Room N0: LH-2

Chair's bionote: **Murari Prasad** retired as University Professor and Head of the Department of English, Purnea University (Bihar). He earlier taught at D.S. College, Katihar, and headed the postgraduate Department of English at B.N. Mandal University, Madhepura. His scholarly work includes studies on William Shakespeare, Ernest Hemingway, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, and Vikram Seth, along with four edited critical anthologies. He has contributed over fifty book reviews and chapters to academic journals, including an entry on Upamanyu Chatterjee in the Dictionary of Literary Biography (Vol. 323, Gale). He also taught English at Sana'a University, Yemen, from 1999 to 2007.

1.2 - Urban Food Spaces: Cities, Communities, and Consumption

Komal Rajwansh: "Food with a Formula: The Homogeneity in the Street Food of Delhi"

Abstract: The street food in Delhi is often a blend of refined flour and synthetic processed cheese with negligible nutritional value. It can be described as "formula food", based on the standardised formulae used for preparation that creates homogeneity in dishes typically served on disposable platters. Such food is easy to cook, demands little innovation, and guarantees the same taste irrespective of the outlet where it is served. Menus might carry fancy names, but the flavours are generic. Every cuisine in India has recipes, and one has to follow these instructions to cook the dish. Yet, in the home, even when the same recipe is followed, the dish acquires a distinct flavor through "swaadanausaar" adjustments and the use of fresh ingredients. In contrast, many cafés and food outlets today serve dishes that taste identical because they rely on mass production. Uncooked food is manufactured in bulk, needing only to be steamed, fried, or assembled with standardised spices and sauces. For instance, champ rolls and momos, now iconic to Delhi's streets, are produced in small units and supplied to vendors. The vendors merely steam or fry these semi-prepared items before serving. Due to this the taste remains uniform across the stalls with no culinary variation. In contrast, the home food is cooked from scratch and therefore carries inherent individuality and authenticity. This paper critically examines the production processes behind Delhi's street food. Drawing on Fredric Jameson's postmodern theory of depthlessness, it highlights how the formula-based preparation of street food erases originality and reduces its meaning. Delhi's street food is the reflection of postmodern culture that privileges surfaces over depth. The food has just become an instantly consumable standardised commodity lacking authenticity and variety. Its homogeneity reflects the homogenising culture of the late capitalism.

Bionote: Currently she is pursuing PhD from Dr. B R Ambedkar University Delhi. The topic of her research is "Dalit Consciousness in Punjab: A Study of its Multifarious Historical, Literary, and Cultural Manifestations". In addition to the area of her research she is also interested in researching about society, politics, culture, religions, and history of Punjab and Delhi. Born in Delhi and tracing her roots to Punjab, she is in love with both the regions.

Prithiraj Borah: “Food, community kitchens and belongingness: ‘Northeast’ eateries in Kalyan Nagar Bengaluru”

Abstract: This paper examines how Northeast food eateries in Kalyan Nagar, Bengaluru, illuminate complex questions of belongingness and negotiate the troubled dynamics between insider and outsider identities. While the insider-outsider dichotomy has long been a pertinent issue in Northeast India regarding economic and political marginalisation, it has emerged as an equally significant factor in shaping food practices and culinary spaces in urban India. The existing literature on the gastronomic politics of Northeast cuisine predominantly addresses issues of racial and caste-based discrimination in metropolitan cities like Delhi. However, this paper investigates how Northeast eateries in Bengaluru strategically navigate such challenges through everyday negotiations, tactical adaptations, and carefully orchestrated responses to local sensitivities. The paper scrutinises how Northeast eateries in Kalyan Nagar deliberately modify their cooking practices—specifically by omitting ingredients like axone (fermented soybean paste) and bamboo shoots from certain dishes—to pre-emptively avoid potential conflicts with neighboring communities.

The paper argues that these community kitchens employ a sophisticated system of selective accessibility—remaining strategically open to the broader community while simultaneously functioning as closed, secure spaces when serving traditional Northeast dishes with contentious ingredients. This dual operation creates distinct temporal and social boundaries that determine when and to whom certain foods are made available. The consumption patterns within these spaces reveal intricate layers of the insider-outsider dynamic. This analysis is grounded in 18 months of intensive ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Kalyan Nagar, employing participant observation, in-depth interviews with restaurant owners and community members, and careful documentation of daily practices within these culinary spaces. The paper ultimately demonstrates how these Northeast eateries function as crucial sites of cultural negotiation, where questions of belonging, authenticity, and survival intersect through the medium of food, revealing the sophisticated strategies employed by the tribal communities to navigate urban spaces while preserving their cultural integrity.

Bionote: Prithiraj Borah, currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Department of Law, at NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. He can be reached at prithiraj.borah@nalsar.ac.in

Nishtha Dev: “Edible Urbanities: Capitalism, Food and Memory in Amruta Patil’s Graphic Novels”

Abstract: The paper, focusing upon the intersection of food and urbanity, locates the representation of urban spatiality particularly in Amruta Patil’s graphic novels, particularly Kari within the overlapping categories of spaces/places through which the graphic novel portrays urban experiences and challenges capitalist discourses within South Asia. Contesting Marxist theorizations of urban spatiality as a disciplinary spatiality, the paper employs the theoretical frameworks of conviviality, commensality and memory to propose that urban spaces are fluid, contested realms, that perform ideological subversions embedded in the realm of the everyday. Within the context of the everyday, the paper then locates subversive tactics like sharing and eating food as embodied experiences constituted by a vocabulary and discourse of “consumption”. While re-reading “consumption” as a subversive and not a ritualistic and regulated practice, this paper explores the potentiality of analysing food and memory in urban

spaces/places as practices that critique the metanarratives of globalization and capitalism, and, critiques the tendency in much scholarship, to pigeonhole them as totalising discursive frameworks generated from the Global North influencing the Global South.

Bionote: Nishtha Dev, currently teaches at the Department of English, Sophia College for Women (Empowered Autonomous), Mumbai University. She is pursuing PhD in Indian Graphic Narratives. Apart from the area chosen for PhD, she is also interested in critical theory, visual studies, popular culture and translation studies.

Room No: LH-3

Chair's bionote: **Shyamala A. Narayan** obtained her Ph.D. in 1974 under the supervision of Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah. She is the author of *Indian English Literature 2001-2015: A Critical Survey* (2020), *Indian English Literature 1980-2000: A Critical Survey* (2001, co-authored with M.K. Naik), *Raja Rao: The Man and His Works* (1988), *Sudhin N. Ghose* (1973) and two books commissioned by the Sahitya Akademi. Since 1972, she has been in charge of the Indian section of the "Annual Bibliography of Commonwealth Literature" which appears every December in the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, now renamed *Literature, Critique, and Empire Today* (published by Sage, London). She retired as Professor of English at Jamia Millia Islamia.

1.3 – Narratives of Resistance: Food, Politics, and Rebellion

Kangkana Roy: "Food as a Rebellion: An Analysis of the film *Aamis*"

Abstract: Bhaskar Hazarika's *Aamis* (2019) offers a nuanced exploration of desire, identity, and cultural boundaries, all through the lens of gastronomical experiences. Set in Assam, Northeast India, a region often overlooked in mainstream Indian cinema, the film delves into the role of food, specifically meat in shaping both personal and societal norms. At its centre, *Aamish* traces the unconventional relationship between Suman, a young anthropology PhD student, and Dr. Nirmali, a married pediatrician. Their bond, while ostensibly platonic, evolves through their shared passion for consuming exotic meats, symbolizing a deeper psychological and emotional connection that transcends conventional physical intimacy. The film uses food as both a literal and metaphorical medium to explore the complexity of human desires, distinguishing between the basic need to satisfy hunger and a more subconscious, almost forbidden urge to transcend societal boundaries.

Aamis explores the complex relationship between two characters who bond over their shared passion for eating meat, which ultimately leads them to transgress both societal and legal boundaries. As their obsession deepens, the film interrogates the distinctions between what is considered "normal" and what is viewed as an anomaly, particularly when it comes to food consumption. The narrative raises critical questions about the very nature of food, what constitutes it and where the line is drawn between acceptable consumption and taboo. While cannibalism stands as the extreme limit of this inquiry, *Aamis* delves into the broader terrain of human desire, probing its limits and consequences. The characters' descent into transgression is not just an act of eating, but an act of rebellion, challenging the boundaries of social, cultural, and legal norms. Through this lens, the film positions food not only as sustenance but as a powerful symbol of defiance, questioning the thresholds of desire and societal control. In this manner food becomes a site of societal transformation, exerted through desire, acting as a space to reimagine forms of resistance.

Bionote: Kangkana Roy teaches English at Bharati College, University of Delhi. She is currently pursuing her PhD on Folklore of Goalpara, Assam. Her areas of interest lie in Folklore studies, Indian Classical literature, Contemporary literature and film studies amongst others.

Sharada Chigurupati: “The Venue and the Menu as the Markers of Protest and Resistance: A Reading of Kitchen Poems by Nitya Mariam John”

Abstract: This paper examines the representation of Indian kitchens and their multifaceted dynamics by Nitya Mariam John in her collection of poems, *Kitchen Poems* (2025). The poems capture the kitchen’s complex connotation; as a ‘silent space’ with heaving hearths, sighing stoves, dented dishes as the souvenirs of women’s undocumented drudgery over generations. The poems highlight the unacknowledged gendered labour within the soiled walls, fractured floors where women of the house burn their days serving the spread of menu.

The poet flips and subverts this grand narrative by making a remarkable shift. Kitchen is now seen as an archive of agency and autonomy. The venue is re-engineered to concretize empowerment and the menu is revised to fuel resistance and protest.

The paper argues that Nitya Mariam John's 'Kitchen Poems' offer a fresh perspective on domestic exploitation where the menu, recipes, ingredients and cuisine redefine the creative expression, reframe and reimagine female identity informed by feminist food studies as theorized by Barbara Haber and Arlene Avakian.

Bionote: Sharada Chigurupati is a Professor in the Department of English Literature at The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. Her research focuses on American Literature and Postcolonial Literature. She has published research papers in various journals and books, and co-edited two notable volumes: *American Literary Studies in Postmillennial India: Critical Perspectives* (Lexington, USA) and *Global Literatures and Cultures of Modernity: Critical Perspectives from India* (Routledge, USA).

Ankita Kumari: “Filming Caste, Social Mobility and Resistance: A Critical Study of the Short Film *Champan Mutton* (2023)”

Abstract: The paper aims to critically study Ranjan Kumar's directorial short film titled *Champan Mutton* (2023) to deliberate on how caste-based discrimination in India often finds representation through culinary politics and how something as specific as mutton consumption becomes a site for both social control and resistance. Set in rural Bihar, the film implicitly yet powerfully engages with the politics of food, especially mutton, as a symbol of caste privilege, aspiration, and resistance. In this context, the paper aims to analyze how the act of desiring, cooking, and consuming mutton—an ostensibly mundane act—is deeply inscribed with markers of caste identity, social hierarchy, and mobility. Further, the objective of the study is also to contextualise resistance within the broader discourse of Dalit Cinema through the portrayal of everyday activity of Dalit characters as a politicized form of reclaiming dignity and space in society.

Bionote: Ankita Kumari is presently working as an Assistant Professor at Lakshmibai College, University of Delhi. Her research interest lies in post-colonial fiction, South Asian Literature, Violence Studies, and trauma and memory in Historical Fiction.

12:00 AM -01:00 PM [Parallel Session 2 Room No: LH-1](#)

Chair’s Bionote: **Anjali Daimari** is a Professor in the Department of English, Gauhati University. Her interest areas are Fiction, African Writing in English, Contemporary South Asian Literature, Life writing, Translation Studies, Writings from India’s Northeast and Bodo

Life and Literature. Some of her publications include: “Towards a Postcolonial Ecocriticism: A Reading of Mamang Dai’s Legends of Pensam” in *New Developments in Postcolonial Studies* (Peter Lang: Frankfurt, 2017); “Witch-hunting and Resistance to the formation of Women’s Community” in *Communities of Women in Assam: Being, Doing and Thinking Together* (Routledge, 2016); “Idea of Evil among the Bodos: Text and Context” in *Construction of Evil in North East India: Myth, Narrative and Discourse* (Sage Publications, 2012); *Sagan: A Collection of Bodo Short Stories* (DVS Publishers: Guwahati, 2011,2013); “Place and Exile: Writing/Reading the Tibetan Experience & quot; in *Dibrugarh University Journal of English Studies*, (Vol.24, 2016); “Interrogating the Postcolonial: Writing/s from India’s North-East” in *Phoenix: Sri Lanka Journal of English in the Commonwealth* (Volume X & XI, 2013 & 2014).

2.1 - Sacred Bites: Rituals and Faith

Z.D. Lalmangaihzauva: “Food as Ritual: The Evolution of Feasting Culture of the Mizos”

Abstract: This paper shall explore the relationship between food and the Mizo community, focusing upon the practice of feasting as a significant community ritual that has shaped the Mizo cultural identity across the ages. Beginning with the practice of feasting in the pre-colonial culture and its ritualistic significance in the society, the paper traces how the practice of feasting and its significance within the Mizo culture has evolved with the onset of Christianity and its ensuing cultural influences. Looking into the ritualistic nature of feasting in the pre-colonial Mizo society, the paper shall explore how feasting is also intertwined with issues of class and social stratification that extends into the Mizo concept of after-life. As Gunkel defines food as “a system of communication, a type of language through which we express identities and relationships, including gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, festivity, and sacrality” (246), the paper shall examine the evolution of the feasting culture of the Mizos and locate how this evolution represents the confluence of the pre-colonial cultural practices and the contemporary.

Bionote: ZD Lalmangaihzauva is an assistant professor in the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University, India. Apart from publishing in academic journals, his works have appeared in publications by Writers Workshop, Bloomsbury, and Sahitya Akademi

Chetna Rawat: “The Sacred Plate: Food, Faith, and Cultural Boundaries in Kumaon”

Abstract: Nestled in the central Himalayas of Uttarakhand, Kumaon region is known for its rich culture and deep connection between nature and humans. The cultural practices of this sacred land are rooted in the mountainous ecology, agricultural cycles and strong religious traditions. In this cultural fabric, food emerges not just as sustenance but a powerful symbol of faith, identity and community.

Kumaoni temple offerings such as goat meat and liquor subvert dominant religious notions that associate sacredness with vegetarian purity, demonstrating how substances marked as taboo can acquire divine significance. Festivals reinforce this dynamic: during Harela festival, sprouted grains symbolize fertility, prosperity and ecological renewal, while other seasonal feasts include mandua (ragi) rotis, mutton curry and locally brewed liquor. These kinds of feasts express plenitude while setting aside everyday norms. In diasporic contexts, however, kumaoni food is reshaped and revalorized: bal mithai appears in new forms like chocolates, mandua is reframed as global “superfood”.

In urban contexts, the strict gendered division of kitchen labor begins to shift. Men, often separated from extended family structures, take on cooking as a practical necessity but also as a way of reconnecting with heritage through food. In doing so, traditional boundaries around gender and food begin to soften, creating a more flexible space of cultural expression.

This paper argues that kumaoni food practices are not merely nourishment but about negotiating between faith, taboo and transgression. By examining temple offering, festival feasts, caste practices and diaspora reinventions, it highlights how kumaoni cuisine is both a guardian of sacred codes and a site of cultural adaptation- demonstrating how food in the Global South embodies ritual meaning, social order and creative reinvention.

Bionote: Chetna Rawat is a Senior Research Fellow at the department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her research area includes study of violence in Detective Fiction. She is the editor and designer of the magazine, *Rhetorica: A Literary Journal of Arts*.

Dhurjjati Sarma: “Sacralising the Profane(?): Exploring the Puranic Injunctions for Non-Vegetarianism in Assam”

Abstract: Owing to its locational specificity as a crossroad between the Indic and South-East Asian cultures, Assam is home to elements of fusion and assimilation that often defy the binaries determining the nature of social-cultural interactions in other parts of South Asia. As a highly subjective yet deeply ritualised and regulated affair, food choices in Assam have been based upon a range of factors—social, religious, cultural—enjoining or prohibiting the consumption of food traditionally classed within the category of non-vegetarianism. Two major Sanskrit shastras composed in Assam, namely, Kalika Purana (tenth century CE) and Yogini Tantra (sixteenth century CE), not only prescribe the consumption of a variety of bird and animal meats as food items, but also incorporate bird- or animal-sacrifice as a major component within the devotional practices of Shakti and Shiva worship in Assam. Using insights from literature, folklore and religious studies, this paper will attempt to situate the culture of non-vegetarianism in Assam not as antithetical to vegetarianism, but rather as a social-cultural worldview in itself thereby reflecting the integrative sociological patterns of interactions between the castes and communities inhabiting the region. Through such an analysis, the paper will argue for developing more nuanced perspectives on the caste- and community-specific choices and regulations defining the food-consumption practices in the region and, in the process, also deconstruct the essentialist markers and descriptions governing the same.

Bionote: Dhurjjati Sarma is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Indian Language and Literary Studies, Gauhati University, Assam. He was earlier a Production Editor at SAGE Publications, New Delhi, and, before that, a Research Fellow in North East India Studies at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi. He is presently engaged in studying the early and modern literatures of Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu from a comparative-cultural perspective. As a student and teacher of comparative literature, he is also trying to develop new insights and perspectives on the composite area of comparative literary history. His writings have been published under Sahitya Akademi, Routledge, and Palgrave Macmillan, and in journals like English Forum, Rupkatha Journal, Dibrugarh University Journal of English Studies (DUJES), Space and Culture India, and Margins: A Journal of Literature and Culture. He is presently working on a critical history of Assamese literature.

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Chair's bionote: **Renu Elizabeth Abraham** is an Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Christ University, Bangalore, where she has been teaching since 2009. She holds an M.Phil in English Literature from Jamia Millia Islamia and is currently pursuing her PhD in Platform/Fandom Studies at Kuvempu University. Her research interests center on fan studies, popular culture, children's literature, and digital communities. She has published extensively in Scopus-indexed journals, including *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*. Her notable works include studies on fan writing as life writing, digital fandoms, and the cultural politics of children's edutainment magazines in India.

2.2 - Gendered Kitchens: Power, Labor, and Emancipation**Manjari Upadhyaya & Anjali Daimari: "Food and Gender Politics: A Study of Select Works of Easterine Kire"**

Abstract: Food and foodways become an expression of social, personal and cultural identity. The act of preparation of meal mediates familial relationships, intra personal bonds and broad socio-cultural connections. Food in Northeast India is closely associated with ethnicity, culture, history and a sense of rootedness to one's community. This article examines the fictional narrative of Easterine Kire highlighting how she portrays the entanglement of food and fiction within the realm of northeast literature. Her representation of the kitchen, feasts and agrarian practices foreground the role of food in women's daily labour. The paper also focuses on numerous socio-cultural politics of food culture in indigenous communities as seen through Kire's fiction. Food becomes a meeting point in such cultures and connotes symbolic meanings. Assessing the ethnic food habits portrayed by Kire in her works, the paper also examines the cultural significance of food of the Angami tribe, one of the Naga tribes among many. By a close reading of Kire's texts - *A Terrible Matriarchy*, *Bitter Wormwood*, *A Respectable Woman* - this article tries to understand how food becomes a site of oppression as well as resistance for women in Naga society. It also depicts a political phenomenon where question of gender, ethnicity and power is negotiated. While food ritual point at subjugation of women, it also gives a space of agency and power, and helps preserve cultural memory and resist cultural erasure.

Bionote: Manjari Upadhyaya is currently pursuing her Ph.D., in the Department of English at Gauhati University. She holds an M.A. in English from the Department of English and Foreign Languages, Tezpur University. Her research interests include Food Studies, Gender Studies, South Asian Literature, and Postcolonial Literature.

Dipanwita Bhattacharyya: "Narrativising the Domestic: The Kitchen in Women's Autobiographical Writings from Colonial Bengal"

Abstract: The andarmahal or the inner quarters remained outside the purview of literature and public writing, preserved from the contamination of modernity. However, stories from this private world came to the fore when women themselves began writing and publishing their works after the proliferation of the printing press in the nineteenth-century. So, for the first time, the world of the andarmahal, and along with it, the kitchen were given significant narrative space. With the development of various modern genres, and women's increasing presence in the literary scene, the hitherto veiled world of the inner quarters and their unique episteme entered the public discourse. Literary works became testament to the kitchen and its

paraphernalia as a dynamic space with its own dynamics of power, arrangement of labour, and possibilities for subversion and forging solidarities.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the domestic or the household became a site of struggle for power for both the coloniser and the colonised. And the emergence of the *andarmahal* in the public discourse was a phenomenon peculiar of colonial modernity. Dually, as the separation of the private and the public became more stringent with the advent of colonial modernity, and at once, the bridging of that severance by the new print technology.

Through a reading of the autobiographical writings of women in the nineteenth and twentieth century Bengal, the paper seeks to enquire how women, who often did not receive modern western education, and remained at the periphery of the public discourse, narrativise the kitchen in their life-writings. In the process of emplotting their lives, how do we read the choice to inscribe the kitchen, or its deliberate absence, as it formed a part of their lived day-to-day? Ultimately seeking to understand how women perceived, and remembered the kitchen, as articulated in their self-expression, and what it came to signify beyond its mundane materiality.

Bionote: Dipanwita Bhattacharyya is a postgraduate student at the Department of Comparative Literature in Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Her areas of research interest include popular culture, early-modern Bengali literatures, and Gender and Caste studies.

Madhumita Chakraborty: “Food, Faith, and Taboos: Hindu Widows in Bengal”

Abstract: Widows in Bengal have traditionally been bound by strict dietary restrictions – without onion, garlic, meat or fish just to name a few. These restrictions are a combination of faith, patriarchal beliefs, and perhaps most crucially, the regulation of the female body and the curtailing of female agency. These dietary limitations are rooted in Brahmanical concepts of purity and asceticism (Dumont 67; Kane 212), transforming widowhood into a ritualised manifestation of renunciation. The widow’s regular diet is often a simple, meagre vegetarian meal. Her social identity is constructed through such repetitive ritualised practices, perpetually marking her as a liminal figure—neither wholly integrated into the social body nor completely excluded from it (Butler 178).

In a state where fish is culturally associated with life and sensuality, and is a ritual marker of good fortune, its prohibition for widows is especially notable. It signifies both a symbolic demise and the regulation of desire, associating the widow with principles of austerity and societal invisibility. This paper explores food, faith and taboos in the lives of Hindu widows in Bengal, and particularly how these intersect to regulate gendered bodies. The widow is consigned to a liminal space in the societal frame, with her dietary restrictions playing a major role in this marginalisation process. The paper argues that widowhood in Bengal should be perceived as a dialectic of oppression and agency, wherein food taboos function both as instruments of control, disciplining desire and reinforcing patriarchal order, but also as hidden transcripts of resistance, where widows reclaim agency through clandestine eating, culinary improvisation, or symbolic defiance.

Bionote: Madhumita Chakraborty is Professor, Department of English, Zakir Husain Delhi College (Evening), University of Delhi.

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Chair's bionote: **Dr. Gourhari Behera** is a Professor in the Department of English, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur. He pursued his Masters and MPhil at JNU and teaches courses on Literary Theory, Contemporary Indian English Literature, Popular Literature and British Fiction. He has recently published an edited volume, *Literature across Mediums: The Aesthetics and Politics of Medial Boundary Crossing*.

2.3 - Colonial Palates: Empire, Legacy, and Decolonization**Pritha Sarkar: "The Contemporary Café Culture of Kolkata, Gen Z, Millennials, and Class Hierarchy: Gustatory Cells as a Site of Tracking Colonialism and Neo-colonialism through Enculturation and Acculturation"**

Abstract: This article traverses through the contemporary café culture of Kolkata to locate the change in the food pattern and culinary choices among the new middle class. In the last couple of decades, Kolkata has witnessed a rise in café joints that offer a variety of Mediterranean and Asian cuisines, while also doubling up as a workspace. Thus, this research is based on an ethnographic close reading. While the colonial middle-class of Calcutta witnessed an occidental influence in the gustatory cells due to hybridity, currently, there has been another perceptible shift in the culinary choices towards sourdough bread and pastas, as well as an increase in Asian delicacies, such as bao. The augmentation in café culture has resulted, on one hand, in the establishment and expansion of international food chains, and on the other hand, in an increase in local joints catering to global food. At the same time, one can note the visible augmentation in marketing the nostalgia of Bengali cuisines in a few of these cafés. While these cafés themselves embody the class hierarchy through the invested capital, the customers also represent the increasing gap between the classes. Parallely, the talk will also navigate the gradual shift in the street food of Kolkata following the global trend. Theorizing enculturation and acculturation in the culinary choices, I will investigate the shift in gustatory cells that essentially binds with the class composition, change in profession, and lifestyle of the emerging contemporary middle-class, particularly among and between the millennials and the Gen Z. Hence, this paper will engage with the journey in the shift of food palate, observed through the rise in café(s), that reflects the class hierarchy, generation gap, while at the same time bears witness in the shift from colonialism to neo-colonialism as well as commodification of ethnic cuisines.

Bionote: Pritha completed her PhD from IIT Kanpur (2024) and is an assistant professor at XIM University. Her forte lies in movement literature, gendered history, Dalit feminism, queer studies, and critical food studies. She has published a monograph, papers, book chapters, and delivered invited lectures and presented papers on her areas.

Karan Tekwani: "If you want to put nice little dinners upon your table,... you must make a friend of your cook": A Study of Paradoxes in British Indian Cookbooks and Domestic Manuals"

Abstract: "Look into that Oriental kitchen. If your eyes are not instantly blinded with the smoke, and if your sight can penetrate into the darkness, enter that hovel, and witness the preparation of your dinner." (213)

Published immediately after the Indian Revolt of 1857, George Francklin Atkinson's *Curry & Rice* is an illustrated satire that humourously narrates the day-to-day activities in the fictional town of Kabob. Here in the chapter on "Our Cook Room", Atkinson draws a stark comparison

between the clean, neatly arranged Western kitchen and the dirty, dark Indian kitchen, to challenge the readers to take into account the filthy preparations of their dinner. However, Atkinson is quick to add that in spite of its unwelcoming paraphernalia, the Indian kitchen is guaranteed to serve an excellent dinner. This paradoxical conception of the British Indian kitchen as an unhygienic hearth that assuredly flourishes the most delicious meals forms the crux of my paper.

The second half of the nineteenth century in British India witnessed a large production of cookbooks, domestic guides and manuals, all aimed to help the English Memsahib run the household in the Indian subcontinent. However, rather than just deliver advice, these instructional texts allowed the Memsahibs to remap, reconfigure and even reimagine the Empire within the space of the kitchen. Instead of being singular and unilateral, the 'culinary contact zone' outlined in these writings exhibited multidirectional pulls that called for negotiations and collaborations between the mistress and servants. Moreover, when viewed in light of the contemporary Oriental publications, these culinary writings adopt a more open and inclusive approach. Therefore, the space of the kitchen in the British Indian household gets riddled with paradoxical yet fruitful hierarchies.

I aim to explore these critical tangents in my study of a select culinary writings published in the second half of the nineteenth century. Apart from a close reading of the direct counsel offered to the Memsahib in these texts, along with a scrutiny of the exclusion and inclusion of the recipes, my analysis will also focus on subtle adjustments, convenient adoptions and desired hybridity promoted in these texts and their ramifications on the larger colonial equation. Most importantly, through these instruction manuals, I attempt to reconstruct the paradoxes lived in these kitchen spaces. The overall agenda is to present a nuanced and fraught understanding of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent.

Bionote: Karan Tekwani is currently teaching as an Assistant Professor at St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi. Karan has a Master's in English Literature from the University of Delhi and a postgraduate in Aesthetics from Jnanapravaha, Mumbai. Lured by tasty food, Karan spends most of his time trying to understand food trajectories and movement across the globe. He believes that while others may eat to live, he lives on "eating"

Snigdha Singh: "Culinary Colonialism and the Decolonial Palate: Tracing Spices, Resistance, and Empire in the literature of Global South"

Abstract: Food has since long been connected to the empire. The colonial trade in items like spices, sugar, tea, cocoa, and rice not only changed the world's economy but also influenced how people in the Global South remember, feel, and identify themselves. This paper looks at the concept of culinary colonialism and the decolonial palate with the efforts to challenge it in postcolonial writing. Using detailed analysis of works by Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Jamaica Kincaid, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, the paper postulates that food becomes not just a place where exploitation happened but also a way to resist it.

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie uses the idea of "chutnification of history" to show how Indian identity is hybrid in nature and shaped by taste. Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* highlights the harsh connections between food, trade, and forced labour in his descriptions of opium and sugar plantations. Kincaid's *A Small Place* shows how Caribbean food is often seen as exotic by tourists, which reflects colonial attitudes. Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* uses magical spices to bring back the knowledge of traditional foodways. Levy's *Small Island* shows Caribbean people in postwar Britain using food memories to hold on to their culture.

Amalgamating these works with ideas from Bourdieu on cultural wealth, Bhabha on hybrid identities, and Gilroy on the Black Atlantic, this paper argues that the "decolonial palate" is both a way of thinking, a metaphor and a way of acting to resist colonial power. Tasting food in postcolonial literatures, in these stories, is like tasting history; re-examining foodways is like revisiting freedom.

Bionote: Snigdha Singh is a Research Scholar in the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. She has published academic papers, as well as works of fictions, and is currently working on several unfinished projects.

2:00-3:00 PM Parallel Session 3 Room No: LH-1

Chair's bionote: Dr. Ayesha Irfan is an Associate Professor at the Department of English, Dyal Singh College, University of Delhi. Her area of specialization is African-American literature, and she has also looked at Awadh under Wajid Ali Shah. She has published pieces on Wajid Ali Shah's Lucknow in prominent journals like, JSL- JNU, *Indian Literature*, Sahitya Academy and *Journal of Urdu Studies*. She has also published a translation of a masnavi of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in IACLALS newsletter 2023.

3.1 – Dalit Food Experience: Caste, Humiliation, and Resilience

Somya Charan Pahadi “When Untouchability Infiltrates Interactions with Food: Purity, Cultural Assertion and Resistance in Bama’s *Karukku*”

Abstract: The Politics of Food is inseparable from the Politics of Caste and Purity. As a child, Bama witnessed an elderly man from the Paraiyar community deliver vadais to a Naicker (an upper caste man), holding the parcel by its string so as not to “pollute” the food. Untouchability is thus embodied in bodily practices around food. This practice of exclusion is extended to social spaces like schools and the Christian institutions, such as churches. Documenting these ritual details of food and exclusion, according to K. Satyanarayana & Susie Tharu, editors of *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India*, assert community memory by destabilising mainstream literary categories and prioritizing subaltern speech. In another instance, Bama also highlights the gap between the food cultures of the privileged and the untouchables in their access to different kinds of fish. While, people sold various varieties of food, in their street, Bama was only able to afford the cheaper variants- silebikendai and paambukendai. They couldn't afford fishes like ayiral, keluti and viraal. Gopal Guru in his influential essay “Food as a Metaphor for Cultural Hierarchies” also highlights that food acts as a marker of difference and exclusion- who cooks, what is cooked, who eats, who is considered clean/unclean and who is allowed to touch certain containers. While upper-caste food norms delegitimise Dalit food cultures as “impure” or “uncivilised”, documenting these humiliations and reclaiming Dalit food traditions and Dalit cuisine in Bama's *Karukku* reaffirms Dalit identity and resistance.

Bionote: Somya Charan Pahadi is a Research Scholar at the Dept of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Pooja Duggal: “In the Dalit Kitchen: Food, Animals and the Politics of Acknowledgment”

Abstract: The Dalit kitchen is not merely a site of cooking but a space where histories of hunger, stigma and resilience are inscribed. The paper explores the representation of food in selected Dalit autobiographies—Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste: Akkarmashi*,

Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* and Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke*—to explain how culinary practices both reveal and resist caste oppression. Unlike dominant caste cuisines, which often erase the animal behind “fancy” meals by using terms like ‘pork’ for pig, ‘beef’ for cattle, ‘mutton’ for sheep, Dalit kitchens deliberately foreground the animal itself, such as buffalo, sheep and pig, as an “acknowledged referent,” insisting on its visible presence. By looking at the Dalit kitchen as a narrative archive, the paper argues that food becomes a language of survival and protest. In doing so, it advances a Dalit-centered politics of acknowledgment against culinary erasure. The politics of acknowledgment operates at two levels: the acknowledgment of the animal as inseparable from Dalit foodways and the acknowledgment of lived histories of deprivation and shame embedded in culinary memory. In bringing food and animals into the same frame, the paper reclaims Dalit kitchens as sites of counter-history, offering alternative epistemologies that resist erasure and reconfigure the politics of caste and cuisine. This paper thus reads Dalit autobiographies alongside the material realities of Dalit kitchens, marked by coarse grains, discarded scraps and taboo meats, in order to explore how mainstream Indian food culture embodies “caste” on the plate.

Bionote: Pooja Duggal is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab. Her research interests lie in Dalit Studies and Animal Studies. She has published research articles in reputed journals, including *Prose Studies*, *The Book Review* and *dialog*.

Chandrasmita Borgohain & Bashabi Gogoi: “Dalits and their Food Culture”

Abstract: “How one eats is one of the most powerful ways they have to express, and preserve, their cultural identity” – Michael Pollan

Food acts as an entity of culture by serving as a central medium for expressing and preserving a group's identity, values, history, and social structures. Historically denied access to fertile land and resources, Dalits developed a food culture based on ingredients that were readily available and often discarded by dominant castes. Traditionally, dominant Indian food narratives are framed by Brahmanical notions of purity and pollution, which have historically marginalized Dalit foodways as “tamasic” or impure. This paper argues that Dalit food culture is not merely a consequence of economic deprivation but a deliberate act of culinary resistance and a rich repository of subaltern knowledge. The analysis employs a theoretical framework that views food as a political entity, a tool for both social exclusion and cultural reclamation. As explained by Shahu Patole in his *Dalit Kitchen of Marathwada*, dishes made from millets, foraged greens, and parts of animals discarded by upper castes like the meat of dead cattle and offal are not just for survival. They are central to community rituals, a form of protest against an oppressive social order, and a symbol of a distinct Dalit identity. Primarily, this paper posits that Dalit literature, including Patole's work, provides a crucial counter-narrative to the hegemonic discourse of Indian cuisine. By bringing the marginalized kitchen to the center, these texts challenge the idea that food is a neutral entity. Instead, they demonstrate how it is a powerful site of memory, a symbol of dignity, and a testament to the enduring creativity of a community that has historically been denied a “seat at the table.”

Bionote: Chandrasmita Borgohain is an Assistant Professor of English at Darrang College, Tezpur, Assam. Currently, she is also a PhD scholar at Tezpur University, where her research focuses on Dalit studies in literature and films. She has been exploring the intersections with literature and film, reading caste and cinematic narratives. She is interested in the rupture and residues of modernity of the continued legacy of caste in modern India.

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Chair's bionote: Nishtha Dev currently teaches at the Department of English, Sophia College for Women (Empowered Autonomous), Mumbai University. She is pursuing PhD in Indian Graphic Narratives. Apart from the area chosen for PhD, she is also interested in critical theory, visual studies, popular culture and translation studies.

3.2 - Digital Feasts: Media, Aesthetics, and Heritage**T C Nivedita: "Recipes and Reels: The Digital Aesthetics of Heritagising Kerala's Culinary Culture"**

Abstract: Food and foodways can be counted among the most evocative sites that establish the cultural heritage of a community or a people. Simultaneously addressing the individual and the collective, the quotidian and the grandiose, food and heritage afford significant potential for critical analysis. Moreover, the idea of "food-as-heritage" is gaining currency today with the proliferation of food influencers in digital foodscapes. This paper examines the aesthetics of these digital spaces, identifying them as fundamental to the performance of culinary heritage. Through a multimodal content analysis of Instagram pages curated by selected food content creators from Kerala, this study argues that food, in terms of its materiality and symbolism, serves to construct and reinforce the idea of a shared Malayalee heritage. The Instagram pages analysed in this paper are distinguished by a common aesthetic that aims at eliciting nostalgia, with traditional culinary artifacts, local produce, and classic songs often serving as cultural anchors in their narrativisation of recipes. Establishing a methodological dialogue between food studies and critical heritage studies, and drawing on concepts such as authenticity, gastro-nostalgia, and the expediency of culture, this paper underscores the need to approach heritage not as a static culinary designation but as a constantly evolving process. To this end, it is guided by two research questions: 1) How does the digital performance of "food-as-heritage" contribute to the constructed idea of an authentic Kerala cuisine? 2) What are the implications of employing culinary aesthetics to mobilise nostalgia among the people of Kerala, particularly against the backdrop of a shifting, increasingly commodified foodscape? Furthermore, the study contends that the performance of heritage through food, while ostensibly articulating cultural continuity, is ultimately a process of selection that often obscures the culinary diversity of the state. Expanding the scope of the food-heritage interface to include digital foodscapes, this paper thus highlights the relations of power underlying the heritagisation of Kerala's culinary culture.

Bionote: T C Nivedita is a PhD scholar in the department of English and Cultural Studies, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru. Her research interests lie at the intersection of food studies, environmental humanities, and contemporary women's writing.

Sharmien Ajmal: "Performing Desire: Digital Gastronomy and the Spectacle of Masculinity"

Abstract: Recently, short-form digital content, such as reels and YouTube shorts, has popularised a new mode for the performance of masculinity, presenting men as cooking not as care or domestic labour but as an object of seduction. This paper interrogates this trope of 'cooking as seduction' in a new mass Indian digital food culture. It focuses on specific case

studies of Instagram reels where male influencers caption their performances with provocations such as “I can steal your girl with this recipe” (Bhilare 2024). Such content mobilises food as a desire vehicle, transforming cooking from an everyday activity fulfilling a need into an eventual spectacle of masculine peacocking. These spectacles are inherently ambivalent. While on the one hand, they challenge the feminisation of cooking by positioning men as skilled and visible culinary agents, they simultaneously reaffirm hegemonic masculinity-driven conquest narratives by framing well-cooked food as a means of sexual conquest. In Butlerian terms, these reels show how masculinity is constituted performatively (Butler 1990) as cooking is resignified through repeated scripts of bantering heterosexual rivalry, masculine allure and bravado.

As Baudrillard suggests, “seduction lies with the annulment of the signs, of their meaning, with their pure appearance,” (Baudrillard 1990). Here, food is a sign not of nourishment, nor of an object of desire, but rather as a medium through which masculine allure may be flaunted and advertised. The paper thus posits that these performances are part of a broader cultural logic of hegemonic masculinity that appropriates an act of labour for a need and recodes it as both cultural and erotic capital, transforming the kitchen into a stage for conquest.

Bionote: Sharmien Ajmal is a first-year doctoral student and JRF in English at Aligarh Muslim University. Two of her papers are published and in pre-publication respectively in international peer-reviewed journals. She has presented papers at five national and international conferences at institutions like IIT Jodhpur, DU, and Jadavpur University. Her academic interests lie in gender studies, media studies, and literary philosophy.

Rachel Irdaya Raj: “Edible Archives: Food as a Cultural Memory in Select Indian Cinema”

Abstract: In the Global South, food is never merely sustenance; it symbolises memory, ritual, and identity. Food memories are not just individual recollections of a specific dish; they are deeply ingrained in broader collective memories, dietary customs, and culinary practices. Indian cuisine is deeply embedded in family structures, traditions, and identity formations. A community's "collective memory" is carried forward by its food (Halbwachs, 1992) and kitchens, tiffin boxes and recipes all turn into "sites of memory", according to Pierre Nora's (1996–98) concept of lieux de mémoire. This paper explores ways in which Indian cinema uses food to evoke cultural memory, including migration, caste and gender hierarchies, regional identities, and family history. *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021, Malayalam), *Macher Jhol* (2017, Bengali), *The Lunchbox* (2013, Hindi), and *Ustad Hotel* (2012, Malayalam) are closely analysed textually and semiotically in this study. This paper highlights the role of food as a mnemonic system, which articulates how culinary practices serve as archives of cultural memory. By using handwritten recipes as living archives, ceremonial cuisines as mnemonic scaffolds, household kitchens as sites of gendered labour, and prohibited foods as communal limits, the analysis demonstrates how cooking and eating stage a repertoire of recollection. The study offers a framework—"edible archives"—for understanding foodways in films as a way to both perform and store cultural memory. The ramifications include understanding cinema's role in safeguarding intangible heritage and critically evaluating exclusions replicated through gastronomic nostalgia.

Bionote: Dr. Rachel Irdaya Raj has two decades of teaching experience in English language, memory studies, gender studies, and English for academic purposes. She is involved in syllabus design and curriculum framing, along with content development for three textbooks. She is the co-founder of the Centre for Memory Studies and Storytelling at VNRVJIET.

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Chair's Bionote: **Vaishali K.S.** is a Senior Professor at the Department of English, Jnana Bharathi, Bangalore University. In her 28 years of service at the department, Vaishali has served as the Chairperson of the department twice from 2011 to 2013 and 2018 to 2020. She has served as the chief editor of English text books for undergraduate courses of Bangalore University. She is a literary translator and a bilingual writer. She has translated Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain's novella *Padmaraga* into Kannada and Orhan Pamuk's political thriller *SNOW* into Kannada. She has presented papers and delivered plenary lectures at several international and national conferences in India, UK, Thailand, USA and Italy. Vaishali is a freelance music columnist for *The Hindu* and has published over 100 articles in *The Hindu*. She is a performing Hindustani classical vocalist and a recipient of the prestigious Karnataka Rajyotsava award in Hindustani classical music and Sugama Sangeet.

3.3 - Liminal Tastes: Death, Nourishment, and Beyond**Nithyashree Narayanan: "The Corpse That Eats: Rethinking Nourishment and Liminality in Torajan Mortuary Rituals"**

Abstract: To place food before a corpse is to confront the persistence of hunger beyond life. In Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, the dead remain in the family house for months or years, cared for in the ritual practice known as *makula*, when the deceased is treated as if still ill. During this period, relatives speak to the body, dress it in new clothes, and place rice, pork, or betel beside it, often addressing the dead as though the offering will be consumed. The culmination is the *Rambu Solo'*, among the world's largest funerary feasts, where hundreds of buffaloes and pigs are sacrificed and the scale of food offered becomes a public register of kinship, obligation, and prestige. This paper asks how nourishment, when offered to bodies that do not digest, transforms the very meaning of eating. What forms of kinship are sustained when food circulates between the living and the dead? How does the act of feeding a corpse reorder grief, hierarchy, and memory into systems of status and debt? The study proposes to approach *Rambu Solo'* as both an ethnographic record and aesthetic text, treating the imagery of food and feeding as its central archive. Online film recordings, photographic documentation, and ritual accounts will be read alongside artistic techniques of close-looking and speculative visual mapping. This method aims to trace how food, image, and death together generate meanings that extend beyond metabolism. The analysis places Bataille's reflections on expenditure in conversation with Douglas's ideas of purity, yet moves further by showing how Torajan funerals position food as neither survival nor waste. Nourishment emerges as a medium of care, prestige, and obligation that traverses the threshold of mortality, allowing food cultures of the Global South to be theorised as practices of world-making beyond life itself.

Bionote: Nithyashree Narayanan is pursuing her postgraduate studies in English at EFLU Hyderabad, after graduating from the University of Delhi. Her research engages food politics, thanatology, and folk literary traditions. She has presented at six international conferences, including IACLALS 2025, and published in a peer-reviewed journal and three anthologies.

Nibedita Mukherjee: "Food in Fairy tales: Conceptualising the "Otherness"

Abstract: Food in fairy tales operates not merely as a means of sustenance; it embodies symbolic, cultural, and psychological perspectives of otherness, i.e. otherness that highlights both belonging and exclusion. Fairy tales have always functioned as cultural texts that encode collective fears, desires, and moral lessons. Among their recurring motives, food emerges as a

powerful symbol that carries significance beyond mere gustatory delight. It is often associated with temptation, scarcity, danger, and transformation, functioning as a marker of boundaries between the familiar and the strange.

This paper intends to explore the role of food as a narrative device that constructs and perpetuates the idea of “otherness” within fairy tales across different cultures and traditions. Through close readings of canonical texts such as Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, and select Eastern and South Asian tales, the study intends to depict how food signifies not merely temptation, danger, and transformation, but also, social anxieties surrounding scarcity, hospitality, and the unknown. The analysis demonstrates that food frequently marks the divide between the familiar and the strange: the home-cooked meal versus the enchanted feast, the nurturing gift versus the poisoned apple. These juxtapositions not only dramatize moral lessons but also crystallize cultural desire for purity and on the other hand, the fear of contamination. By situating food within the larger discourse of cultural identity and alterity, the paper argues that the motif of food in fairy tales serves as a critical lens for understanding how societies articulate boundaries of self and the “other.”

Bionote: Nibedita Mukherjee is Professor in English at Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, India, a university catering largely to the indigenous people. She was the former Head of the Dept of English, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University. She specializes in Feminist Studies, Digital Humanities and Ecocritical Studies with special reference to Indigenous folk literature and sustainability practices. Mukherjee has five books to her credit. She was the recipient of the USA State Fellowship Award (SUSI).

Saumyata Joshi: “Sacred Widowhood: Food, Discipline, and Survival in South Asian Narratives”

Abstract: This paper examines how South Asian women’s writing employs food and hunger to interrogate the social disciplining of widows’ bodies within intersecting regimes of religion, patriarchy, and nationalism. Focusing on Indira Goswami’s *The Blue-necked God* (1976) and Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Water* (2006), the analysis foregrounds how restricted diets and the denial of nourishment transform food into a medium of both control and resistance, situating these texts within the wider discourse of foodscapes in the Global South. In Goswami’s novel, Saudamini’s life in the sacred city of Vrindavan exposes the paradox between spiritual piety and material deprivation. The widows, or Radheshyam is, survive on meagre alms collected outside temples, while hoarding their scant savings not for sustenance but for their own cremations. Hunger becomes both a marker of devotion and a slow form of erasure, highlighting how religious orthodoxy exploits female vulnerability under the guise of sacred duty. Sidhwa’s *Water*, set against the backdrop of India’s nationalist movement, depicts the brutal realities of widowhood through the eyes of the child Chuyia. Here, food is entangled with sexual exploitation, and widows are forced into prostitution in exchange for morsels of survival. The text further critiques how nationalist discourses romanticised the figure of the ascetic widow while ignoring her legal and material rights, exposing the gap between reformist rhetoric and lived reality. By placing these narratives in the context of the Global South, the paper argues that hunger in South Asian fiction is not merely a private affliction but part of a larger structure of inequality shaped by religion, colonialism, and gendered oppression. Foodscapes here reveal how women’s bodies become terrains of regulation and resistance, making widowhood a crucial site for understanding the entanglement of sustenance, survival, and power.

Bionote: Saumyata Joshi is a doctoral candidate at the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University. A scholar of English Literature, she has completed her bachelor's and master's in

Literature from the University of Delhi and her M.Phil. from Panjab University, Chandigarh. Her interests include graphic narratives, food studies, popular literature and politics of postcoloniality, among other areas. In her free time, she dabbles with philosophy and explores the relationship between art/literature and flowing life.

3:15-4:15 PM Parallel Session 4 Room No: LH-1

Chair's Bionote: Nibedita Mukherjee is Professor in English at Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, India, a university catering largely to the indigenous people. She was the former Head of the Dept of English, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University. She specializes in Feminist Studies, Digital Humanities and Ecocritical Studies with special reference to Indigenous folk literature and sustainability practices. Mukherjee has five books to her credit. She was the recipient of the USA State Fellowship Award (SUSI).

4.1 - Extended Identities: Caste, Politics, and Sustainability

Diksha Beniwal: "We are 'not' what we eat: Food and Dalit identity in Om Prakash Valmiki's *Joothan*"

Abstract: 'We are what we eat' has become a popular phrase we often hear as we are gently nudged toward healthier eating habits. Before being taken over by consumerism, food in India was a symbol of one's socio-cultural and religious affiliations, which were mainly defined along caste lines. This paper analyses the depiction of food as a factor and product of caste discrimination in rural India in Omprakash Valmiki's memoir *Joothan* (जूठान, meaning leftovers). Much like the 'culinary triangle' of the categories of raw, cooked, and rotten food (Strauss 1965), "delimits a semantic field, but from the outside," so does the liminal category of non-food for food and what is seen as edible in a culture. Valmiki's narrative, detailing his family's struggles for food and its lack, reveals how only leftover meals and by-products are made available for consumption to untouchables in his village, symbolizing how Dalits are treated as the discarded by-products of society. While the upper castes enjoy rice meals, the discarded rice starch becomes the milk of the untouchables. While the rich enjoy elaborate feasts in weddings, Valmiki's family is shown to rejoice in receiving scraps stuck on used plates. This paper analyses how Valmiki's narrative exhibits retrospective awareness of the village's food structure to seek agency and redefine his identity.

Bionote: Diksha Beniwal is Assistant Professor in Easwari School of Liberal Arts at SRM University-AP. Her research interest areas include Dalit studies, Dalit memoirs, and Indian writings in English.

Nidhi & Anubhav Pradhan: "Gastro-Politics' and Refugeehood in Phanishwar Nath Renu's *Juloos*"

Abstract: Food has long been central to shaping social relationships and hierarchies in South Asia. As Arjun Appadurai notes, moments of conflict over food constitute "gastro-politics (496)," when food is deliberately used to send messages between participants who share the same cultural framework but contest its enactment in practice. Mary Douglas, in *Purity and Danger* (1966) contends that in the Indian context, cooking itself is considered the beginning of ingestion, making it especially susceptible to ritual contamination (128). Food, therefore, becomes a key site through which communities articulate boundaries between the pure and the impure, the self and the other, the in-group and the out-group. Her framework on purity and

danger based on ‘dirt’ suggests that it is not an intrinsic category but something that emerges when an object or person is perceived as being out of place (Douglas, 160).

Using this framework as my entry point, I read Phanishwar Nath Renu’s *Juloos* (1966) to examine how food mediates the fraught encounter between the locals of a village in Bihar and a group of Hindu Bengali refugees rehabilitated there after Partition. The refugees’ arrival—which here act as the ‘dirt’ being out of place—destabilises the village’s fragile social order and food becomes a key terrain where these tensions play out. Accusations like the refugees were made to consume beef during their flight or the meals they prepare at a feast initially meant as a gesture of unity, is transformed into proof of contamination and a breach of cultural boundaries the very next day render them symbolically impure, overriding their shared Hindu identity. This refusal transforms food into a symbolic weapon, a way to mark social distance and reaffirm boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

By tracing these dynamics, the paper argues that *Juloos* presents gastro-politics as a deliberate mechanism through which the village reasserts its moral and cultural order in the face of disruptive change. In doing so, the novel reveals how anxieties around food encode deeper struggles over identity, assimilation, and the terms of belonging in post-Partition rural India.

Bionote: Nidhi is a Doctoral Scholar in the Department of Liberal Arts at Indian Institute of Technology Bhilai. Her research area is Women’s Life Writing on the Partition of India. Her area of interest also includes the impact of Partition on the state of Bihar, Women’s studies, auto/biographical studies and Indian English literature among others. She has organized and co-organized national conferences and currently working as a co-editor for an edited volume on women’s writing.

Gourhari Behera: “The Ethics and Politics of Commensality, Identity and Sustainability: Decoding the Sacred Food Tradition of Jagannath Mahaprasad of Puri”

Abstract: Sacred food traditions have a long, powerful and significant history in the countries of the Global South and they intertwine gastronomy, spirituality, community life, ritual and ecology. These traditions usually center around places of worship and include the tradition of offering and consuming of prasad/prasadam among the Hindus, the langars of the Sikhs, the communal feasts in African ancestral rituals so on and so forth. One such tradition is the Mahaprasad tradition of the Jagannath temple in Puri, Odisha that has a long history of around 900 years and has roots in tribal, Buddhist and Vaishnava traditions. The Mahaprasad tradition is not simply a ritual practice but also a site of cultural negotiation, resistance, and identity-formation. The proposed paper shall attempt to explore how the Mahaprasad tradition upsets Brahminical caste hierarchies by promoting inclusivity wherein devotees share the meal irrespective of their caste status but also how this gastronomic egalitarianism operates within ritualized cultural frameworks that do not do away altogether with certain hierarchical structures. The paper shall also attempt to point out the role of Mahaprasad as a marker of Odia identity and pride by privileging local ingredients like vegetables, lentils and spices and cooked in earthen pots over firewood symbolizing ecological sustainability and simultaneously resisting cultural homogenization. The paper shall employ insights from Food Studies, Identity Studies and Cultural Studies to highlight how the production and consumption of the “sacred” Mahaprasad is not just a matter of ritual nourishment or devotion but an expression of the ethics and politics of shared commensality, an exercise in ecological sustainability and a manifestation of the subaltern resistance to global food practices.

Bionote: Gourhari Behera is a Professor in the Department of English, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur. He pursued his Masters and MPhil at JNU and teaches courses on Literary Theory, Contemporary Indian English Literature, Popular Literature and British Fiction. He has recently published an edited volume, *Literature across Mediums: The Aesthetics and Politics of Medial Boundary Crossing*.

Room No: LH-2

4.2 – Public/Private Divide: Culinary Discourses

Chair's Bionote: **Dhurjjati Sarma** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Indian Language and Literary Studies, Gauhati University, Assam. He was earlier a Production Editor at SAGE Publications, New Delhi, and, before that, a Research Fellow in North East India Studies at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi. He is presently engaged in studying the early and modern literatures of Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu from a comparative-cultural perspective. As a student and teacher of comparative literature, he is also trying to develop new insights and perspectives on the composite area of comparative literary history. His writings have been published under Sahitya Akademi, Routledge, and Palgrave Macmillan, and in journals like *English Forum*, *Rupkatha Journal*, *Dibrugarh University Journal of English Studies (DUJES)*, *Space and Culture India*, and *Margins: A Journal of Literature and Culture*. He is presently working on a critical history of Assamese literature.

Shweta K. Kapoor: "Who Cooks and Who Eats: Archival Absence and Culinary Apartheid in Uttarakhand's Sacred Geography"

Abstract: This paper critically examines the systemic erasure of Dalit culinary histories within dominant narratives of 'Pahadi cuisine' in Uttarakhand. Contemporary discourses valorise ingredients such as koda (Kodo millet) and bhang ki chutney as emblems of ecological resilience and cultural authenticity. The presentation of Pahadi cuisine as predominantly vegetarian belies the region's challenging terrain and harsh climate, which necessitated the inclusion of non-vegetarian and foraged foods as integral to local diets. However, the pervasive marginalisation of Dalits and the persistence of untouchability have rendered the sharing of plates and palates across caste lines a historical impossibility, reinforcing a culinary apartheid that endures in both domestic and public spaces.

Unlike Maharashtra or South India, where Dalit food traditions have gradually entered scholarly and public discourse, Uttarakhand's food heritage remains curated through selective visibility, rendering Dalit contributions largely invisible. Historical records of kitchen purity in royal and priestly households highlight how food preparation has long served as a means of demarcating caste hierarchies, with strict regulations governing who may cook and who may eat. This paper traces these genealogies of caste privilege from royal kitchens to contemporary state-run mid-day meal programs, where incidents such as the exclusion of Dalit women cooks (e.g., Sunita Devi) illustrate how culinary labour remains tightly policed along caste lines.

Drawing on field research and comparing it with Dalit literary testimonies, contemporary case studies, this study interrogates the politics of authenticity as a mechanism of strategic ambiguity, perpetuating dominant caste narratives while silencing marginalised voices. The paper advocates for a reconfiguration of South Asian food heritage discourse that centres Dalit histories, destabilises nostalgic essentialism, and confronts the embedded casteism in heritage-

making practices. In making visible what has been structurally suppressed, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on food sovereignty, caste, and archival politics in South Asia.

Bionote: Shweta K. Kapoor is Assistant Professor in the department of English, Modern European and Other Foreign Languages, HNBGU. Her areas of specialisation are Absurd Theatre, Postmodern Literature, and, recently, folk ethnographies and cultural tradition studies. For the past decade her work, both academic and creative, have been getting published and recognized.

Sarthak Jana: “(Gastronomic) War & Peace: Food, Caste, and Sexual Anxiety in Bengal 1862-1962”

Abstract: My paper reads three Bengali literary texts from different historical moments — *Ekei Ki Bole Sabhyata?* (circa 1862) by Michael Madhusudan Dutta, *Chokher Bali* (1903) by Rabindranath Tagore, and *Chowringhee* (1962) by Sankar — to argue that food is not a marginal reference, but a condensed mode of signification that indexes class, caste, and gender. Through close readings of specific scenes and comparison with contemporary cookbooks, I show that culinary references perform classificatory work, serving as narrative shorthand for larger discourses on desire — the consumption and abstention, I argue, serve as an extended metaphor for the characters’ fraught relationships with the self. Building on Antoinette Burton’s theory of literature as an archive and Partha Chatterjee’s gendered spatialities of the domestic-public, I trace a recurrent pattern where the *bahir* was deemed as a zone for Westernised excesses, moral laxity, and irreligious debauchery, as satirised in Dutt’s play, while the *ghar* is coded as the locus of feminine sanctity and the woman’s duty is to not succumb to the seductions of the *bahir*. The widow in this framework therefore emerges as a site of upper-caste anxieties due to her status as an outsider in the institution of marriage. The regulation of her sexuality was enforced through dietary regulation that forbade non-vegetarian items and most spices. The consumption of meat in particular was viewed as a slippery slope. In *Chokher Bali*, the consumption of tea and chocolate is a metaphor for the widow’s indulgence of her sexuality, threatening the heteronormative bourgeoisie monogamy of colonial Bengal. Colonial discourses represented meat-eating by widows as a transgression associated with lower-caste customs. The maintenance of a widow’s vegetarian diet, I argue, is an attempt to maintain the caste system, where *savarna* anxieties regarding a widow’s excess sexuality had to be tamed through her stomach. Sankar’s postcolonial urban milieu complicates this apparent binary by both dissolving and recreating social boundaries. Culinary hybridity of the hotel menu highlights the cosmopolitan possibility and new forms of moral ambiguity. Thus, I explore how culinary practices are employed to discipline widowhood, stage class aspiration, and narrativise post/colonial modernity, to both police desire, discipline sexuality, yet also act as sites of agency and strategic mimicry.

Bio note: Sarthak Jana is currently pursuing M.A. English from the University of Delhi. His interests are post-independence Bengali poetry, translation studies, queer studies, and modern caste identities. He is affiliated with the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI).

Amarjeet Nayak: “Caste on the Plate: Kitchens and Maternal Insurgency in Select Dalit Autobiographies”

Abstract: Caste in India is performed most viscerally through food. Who is permitted to cook, who is allowed to serve, and who consumes what, is not a matter of appetite but of hierarchy, marking Dalit labour as polluting and Dalit consumption as degraded. This paper argues that

Dalit autobiographies recast these food practices to show how kitchens become sites of both humiliation and insurgent dignity. Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* situates rural Uttar Pradesh kitchens within the violence of feudal caste. Dalit families survive on joothan—the scraps of upper-caste ceremonies—while their cooking is considered contaminating. Valmiki's mother's labour at the chulha, framed through invocations of Mai Madaran rather than Lakshmi, reveals a subaltern ritual order in which food taboos are inverted and maternal fury becomes insurgent. Vasant Moon's *Growing Up Untouchable in India*, by contrast, locates hunger in the urban vasti of Nagpur. His mother Purnabai kneads meagre flour into thin chapatis, circulating remnants through kin networks. Here, cooking sustains community memory: deprivation is repeated across generations, yet maternal foodwork inscribes dignity within scarcity. The analysis draws on Mary Douglas's purity and danger to illuminate how caste fixes food taboos, Julia Kristeva's abjection to conceptualise the disgust attached to Dalit bodies, Pierre Bourdieu's habitus to explain how everyday food habits reproduce stratification, and Arun Mukherjee's Dalit aesthetics to foreground lived testimony over canonical polish. The paper finds that Dalit kitchens expose the asymmetry of caste—Dalit women cook but are denied ritual authority, upper castes consume abundance while relegating Dalits to refuse. Yet they also reimagine foodwork as maternal insurgency, turning chapatis and joothan into cultural symbols of both survival and resistance.

Bionote: Amarjeet Nayak is Associate Professor at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar, an OCC of Homi Bhabha National Institute, Mumbai. His research interests include Postcolonial Studies, Translation Literature, and Speculative Fiction Studies.

Room No: LH-3

Chair's Bionote: Rachel Irdaya Raj has two decades of teaching experience in English language, memory studies, gender studies, and English for academic purposes. She is involved in syllabus design and curriculum framing, along with content development for three textbooks. She is the co-founder of the Centre for Memory Studies and Storytelling at VNRVJIET. She is credited with syllabus design and content development for three textbooks.

4.3- Regional Roots: Indigenous and Historical Foodways

Savita Bhandari: "Indigenous Food Ways: Garhwali Food of Uttarakhand a tinge of Feasting and Fasting" -

Abstract: The present scene of social media identifiers, ultra busy life, and the illusion of fast cooking has turned us into virtual guinea pigs of internet affirmations. This is adversely hitting our eating habits and food culture. Thus, narrowing the scope of the platter which once used to be the most nutritious and satisfying ritual of every Indian household. Gradually our indigenous delicacies have now been replaced by imported and expensive ingredients and condiments that make food look like art. consequently the cooking methods and kitchen culinary practices to have under gone this transformation. To some extent globalisation and marketing have been the crucial factors responsible for this sea change. Through extensive research it has been proven that this fast food, imported food and junk food culture is not a healthy and sustainable way of living. The inadequacy and lack of nutritious diet is causing so many health issues like diabetes blood pressure obesity among our youth. The ultimate panacea to all these problems lies in our traditional, indigenous and rustic food and eating habits. "A healthy mind lives in a healthy body", the healthy body is one which is being fed on a healthy meal that is locally

sources and is a proper balance diet. It encompasses the different stages of cooking, eating and good food practices.

The cuisine and culinary practices are dictated by the environment and vegetation of the particular area to a larger extent as cooking is based on the availability of the raw material which depend on the common yield of that region. In this way food customs and the culinary practices of any region are very much influenced by its geography, atmosphere and climate. In Himalayan context especially with reference to the Garhwal region, its cuisine and culinary practices reflect this resultant impact of climate and its topography on its indigenous and traditional staple diet as well as healthy food habits.

This paper revisits and explores the peculiarities of Garhwal region in relation to its indigenous food habits and culinary practices, thus, exploring the overall impact of locally sourced and conventionally prepared food, from farm to table.

Bionote: Savita Bhandari is Assistant Professor in the department of English, Modern European and Other Foreign Languages, HNB Garhwal University, Uttarakhand. Her areas of specialisation are South Asian Diaspora, Gender Studies, and Eco-criticism. Currently she is exploring regional sensibilities and folk traditions of Garhwal.

Swasti Sharma: “Dietary Habits and Agricultural Practices during the Rig Vedic Period”

Abstract: पितुंनुसतोषमहोधर्मणितविषीम।

रस्यतरितोवयोजसावर्त्रीविपर्वमर्दयत्॥

सवादोपितोमधोपितोवर्यंतवावृमहे।

अस्माकमविताभव॥

(Rig Veda 1.187– Hymn in Praise of Food)
The Rigveda, the first among the Chaturvedas, was composed between 1500 and 1200 BCE, introducing valuable insights into the food practices and dietary culture of that era in a documented form. While the hymns drew heavily from religious and spiritual sources, they made references to food, farming, and ritual offerings. These archaeo-linguistic references indicate the intrinsic relationship between survival and worship with regard to dietary habits. Food became the central element of ritual and cosmic order. Agriculture and cattle rearing were given prominent importance in expansion of civilisation during the Rig Vedic period. The research paper will primarily explore descriptions of food and beverage production in the hymns. For instance, it is mentioned that Barley was a staple grain and a ritual offering. Dairy products such as milk, curd, clarified butter (ghrita), and butter were considered noble forms of nourishment and were also offered to Agni and Indra. Ghee was used in yajnas (sacrificial fires) to seek divine benediction from the gods. The paper will also lay emphasis on the techniques of preparing food in a pastoral setup. Soma has been described as the celestial plant whose juice was consumed by gods and it possessed invigorating power. The deep connection between material nourishment and spiritual elevation will also be discussed in the research paper. Food had strong ritual and symbolic meanings in the Vedic times. Offering milk, grains, and ghee into the sacrificial fire was a way to sustain the gods, who protected the cosmic order. This portrayal of reciprocity of humans worshipping the deities through yajna, and the deities bestowing rains, harvests, and cattle, reflects a cyclical worldview. The paper will demonstrate

how Rigvedic food practices formed a unique blend of agriculture, pastoralism, ritualism, and symbolism.

Bionote: Swasti Sharma is currently employed as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Satyawati College, University of Delhi. She is also a Ph.D. research scholar whose core competence is Development of IKS. She has completed her MPhil from the Department of English, University of Delhi. She has presented research papers at several national and international seminars and conferences. Besides, she has authored study material and research papers.

Ayesha Irfan: “The Dastarkhwan of Awadh and The Contribution of Wajid Ali Shah to The Awadh and Kolkata Cuisine”

Abstract: Wajid Ali Shah the last Nawab of Awadh, was famous for the promotion of art, architecture and aesthetics. He is known for his devotion to theatre, dance and music, and not only did he fulfil his love for these artistic forms, but he also promoted them. He is known for organising the grand Jalsa’s of theatre, dance and music. The dramatization of the masnavis that Wajid Ali Shah wrote is marked by the stage performances of these masnavis in the grand Jalsa’s. His love for entertainment and spectacle is manifested in the Royal Jalsa’s and ceremonies and the Royal gatherings of unprecedented grandeur. Besides the contribution of Wajid Ali Shah to the cultural life of Awadh, one can also never overlook his contribution to the cuisine of Awadh, and also, how this cuisine travelled from Awadh to Kolkata where he spent three decades after being deposed as the King of Awadh, in exile from Lucknow. Shah’s grand Jalsa’s were marked by royal hospitality, and his name is often equated with Lakhnavi Tehzeeb, or the grace and elegance of the royal courtesy. The cuisine of Awadh itself is a fulfilling experience in dining, etiquette, style and opulence, and it reflected a Nawabi way of life. The various dishes that combined to form the Awadhi cuisine were perfected by expert chefs of the royal kitchens at Awadh. These foods are not only tasty but they are also symbols of heritage and ingenuity. This cuisine reflected refinement, finesse and sophistication that is associated with the life of the Nawabs of Awadh. The cuisine that was perfected for the royal dastarkhwan of the nawabs was a harmonious blend of Mughal, Persian and local Awadhi confluences, and it includes both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, at the same time Awadhi food is distinct from Mughlai food. In 1856, when Wajid Ali Shah travelled to Kolkata to spend the rest of his life in exile from Lucknow, along with him travelled his wives, animals, and also accompanying this entourage were the royal cooks, the khansamas and the bawarchis from Awadh that transported the culinary legacy of Awadh to Calcutta, where he created a small Lucknow. The food for the nawabs was not just an occasion to indulge themselves personally, but it was also a means to build personal, diplomatic and political relationships amongst native communities and foreign dignitaries. Cooking itself is an act of cultural representation and it is an important emblem of tolerance, fusion and respect for different cultural communities, and this is evident from the dastarkhwan of Awadh.

Bionote: Ayesha Irfan is Associate Professor at the department of English, Dyal Singh College, University of Delhi. Her area of specialization is African-American literature, and she has also looked at Awadh under Wajid Ali Shah. She has published pieces on Wajid Ali Shah’s Lucknow in prominent journals like, *JSL- JNU*, *Journal Indian Literature*, *Sahitya Academy* and *Journal Urdu Studies*. She has also published a translation of a masnavi of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in IACLALS newsletter 2023.

4:15-5:00 PM – Book Release

Moderator:

Rapporteurs:

Day 2: Friday, 13 February, 2026

9:00-10:00 AM Parallel Session 5 Room No: LH-1

Chair's Bionote: N.Usha teaches in the Department of English, Krishna University, Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Her area of specialisation is Comparative Literature, Translation and the Literature of the Indian diaspora.

5.1 - Sensory Narratives: Taste, Smell, and Embodiment

Simantini Basu: "Cartographies of smell: The practice of everyday affect in epistemic and lived encounters with food"

Abstract: The scholarship on culinary cultures in the West has devalued the engagement with olfactory ethics constituting the sensorial predominantly over the taste as the sole signifier. The erasure of the component of smell in reading the discourse on food has contributed to a politics of culinary exclusionism within the epistemological dialogues. Food can be interpreted as a space of contingency, ambivalence and transgression. Food involves a language of its own- the embodied practice of emotion-based poetics, skill, desire, taboo and denial.

In South Asia, the responsibility of the kitchen and the prayer room is entrusted with the women. The cooked food (anya) in a Bengali household is considered sacred and often gets contaminated when touched (ento) - a ritually impure condition. Subjection to widowhood in the late 19th and early 20th century provides a rich tapestry of perspectives into the gruesome dietary regulation that women had to go through. The elaborate rituals of fasting as an extension of the representation of the ideal feminine austerity as an appendage of her interpellated domestic responsibility constructs the woman as a docile body devoid of feeling desire. The volatility, permeability, diffusability of smell crosses the threshold of prescribed forbidden tastes and excites desire therefore creating a conduit for reclaiming the food through memory by decolonising desire, decolonising senses. The private and subjective nature of smell enables female camaraderie and exchange of food rituals sometimes pushing the boundaries and differences of community and religion in the context of a fractured and threatened modernity. However, in the construction of aesthetic subjecthood, smell is reoriented to collude with the hegemonized idea of caste segregation. The ideology of caste is often reproduced by the 'bhadramahila' (urban middle class upper caste woman) and smell becomes the instrument of oppression and violence on the 'Other.' The percolation of the South Asian body as 'smelly', whose stench lingers on their ontological being seals marginalized groups into the subject of ridicule, disgust and discrimination within the domestic space collating the category of the labouring/working woman into bearing a monstrous smell. The undesirable monstrous smell haunts the rhetorical and material existence of the 'perfectly clean' sensibility and spreads discontent of alienation from a projected subjectivity.

Thus, is it at all possible to archive smell with respect to interiority and reimagine taste? In the paper, I propose to interrogate cookbooks and life writings from the early 20th century to rehabilitate the subjectivities that have been misheard and misread. The evocation of different

forms of vernacular culinary knowledge shaping the experiential at the crossroads of tradition and cosmopolitanism as evident from a look into the recipe columns would provide an insight into the trans-cultural exchanges in shaping the modern nation and the home. Lastly, I would like to explore the gendering of spatial contours and the correlation with devotional geography in the delineation of food being offered and served.

Bionote: Simantini Basu is a final year post-graduate student pursuing Masters in the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University. Her research interests include gender studies, urban geography and visual cultures.

Ekalabya Bhattacharya: “Sensing beyond Taste: on Nicholas Kharkongor’s *Axone*”

Abstract: The urban experience in postcolonial India has gotten increasingly multicultural over the decades. Since independence, the formation of the multicultural Indian city as a representational category has relied upon the crucial notions of diversity and cultural difference. The articulations of this cultural difference across different media come to operate in negotiation with the aesthetic conventions which have been formulated by canonical depictions of the cityscapes. This paper intervenes at this juncture to question the politics of multiculturalism by engaging with a possibility of multisensorial urban living. Informed by a critical reading of Nicholas Kharkongor’s *Axone* (2019), the paper foregrounds the question of the right to cook as an assertion of cultural identity within a diverse setting. The narrative grapples with the quest of a group of friends in a neighbourhood in Delhi, all of whom are migrants from different states of Northeastern India, to cook *Axone*, a fermented soybean dish of the Naga cuisine. The film in its creation and reception functions categorically as a food-film. However, the paper demonstrates how a visualisation of the experience of cooking and its sensory provocations causes a critical rupture to the codified aesthetic of dominant urban culinary practices of Delhi. The film essentialises the question of “who gets to cook what and where?” In doing so it enables the possibility of the critical viewer to delve into a discourse of culinary rights within the city and how the migrant transforms the cityscape, sensorially and aesthetically. The paper reads into this politics to contextualise *Axone* as a critical assertion of cultural difference which unravels and expands the postcolonial multiculturalism of Delhi from a vantage of multisensoriality.

Bionote: Ekalabya Bhattacharya is a postgraduate student in the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University. He takes interest in comparative modernisms, transmediality, urban spaces and mobilities, postcolonial urbanisms, representations of lived spaces and built environment.

Jabeen Yasmeen: “I Want the Aroma of Coffee”: Addressing the “Impossibility of Telling” through Food

Abstract: “I want the aroma of coffee. I want nothing more than the aroma of coffee. And I want nothing more from the passing days than the aroma of coffee,” says Mahmoud Darwish in *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1987), as he recreates and narrates the sense of isolation experienced during the Siege of Beirut in 1982 during the Lebanese Civil War. In *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1987), Darwish uses several symbolisms, one of which is the repeated reference to coffee and the slow process of making it. Coffee becomes a way to refer to the absence of normalcy in a situation of ongoing as well as impending extreme violence.

In a completely different world, during my doctoral field visit in Nellie, Assam, survivor of the infamous Nellie Massacre (1983) recalls the massacre by pointing out, “Since Friday morning

no one could eat anything, or drink tea. The fire started early in the morning and went on throughout the day.” Although, the stark contrast of absence and plenitude of food is recurrent in the narratives of the Nellie Massacre, as seen in my doctoral research, the mention of tea was a deviation from the other narratives.

However, in both these cases, coffee and tea, a mundane habit and probably, a necessity during a normal day, become a medium to yearn for an uneventful day. This paper will analyse Darwish’s use of the imagery of coffee, in juxtaposition with narratives from the Nellie Massacre, to understand how food of normative times becomes a figurative medium to refer to the violence of a conflict situation. Food, thus, becomes a medium to address the “impossibility of telling” (Soshana Felman, 2007) and to refer to what otherwise becomes, “unsayable” (Veena Das, 2007) in the “pattern of sociality.”

Bionote: Jabeen Yasmeen is Assistant Professor in Vellore Institute of Technology, Andhra Pradesh. She is a doctoral graduate from Indian Institute of Technology Bombay. Her dissertation was on Narrating the Nellie Massacre of 1983.

Room No: LH-2

Chair’s Bionote: **Priyanka Tripathi** is Associate Professor of English and former Head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Patna (India). She is also the Fellowship Coordinator for the *Journal of International Women’s Studies* (Bridgewater State University, USA). Additionally, she holds the position of Associate Editor for the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (Taylor & Francis) and *Global South Literary Studies* (Taylor & Francis). In the past, she has received prestigious fellowships like, Charles Wallace India Trust Visiting Fellowship (2024-25) at the School of History, University of Leeds, and IPD Visiting Research Fellowship (2022-23) at IASH, University of Edinburgh. Her monograph with Bloomsbury is titled *The Gendered War: Evaluating Feminist Ethnographic Narratives* of the 1971 War of Bangladesh (2022). Her forthcoming monograph with the National Book Trust of India is titled ‘Mann Ki Baat & Bharatiya Art, Culture and Heritage’. She works in the areas of Medical Humanities, Gender Studies, South Asian Fiction, and Graphic Novels.

5.2 – Food Violence: Purity, Surveillance, and Power

Arghya Dey: “Food, Purity, and Policing: Surveilled Eating and Culinary Violence in Prayag Akbar’s *Leila*” -

Abstract: Prayag Akbar’s *Leila* (2017) is a landmark Indian dystopian novel that explores numerous issues, including climate change, social segregation, discriminatory gender norms, and surveillance paradigms exerted on a population. Within the narrative, food and dietary practices become a crucial site where discriminatory processes revolving around notions of ‘purity’ and ‘pollution’ are inscribed, and the regulation of socio-cultural ways of everyday living is carried out. Gopal Guru argues that food plays a crucial role in the production of cultural identities, asserting that dominant regimes hegemonically enforce food practices and dietary restrictions. In *Leila*, state control and expression of a fundamental Hindutva ideology amidst a social dystopian setting translate to rigid and highly intrusive surveillance of food practices, often centred around notions of vegetarianism. The dominant notions of morality and purity that are enunciated through paradigms of food consumption are depicted in multiple instances in the text. Through the study of the futuristic, dystopian Hindutva state wherein caste hierarchies and segregation are strictly enforced, the paper seeks to understand the ideological narration expressed through strictly controlled food practices and restrictions on marginalised communities. The social and legal consequences of any culinary transgression in the form of

physical and psychological violence hint at the role food plays as a critical, yet often overlooked, signifier of socio-cultural and political hierarchies. The paper seeks to highlight how food becomes a tool for reinforcing discriminatory practices in the futuristic Hindutva state in Akbar's narrative, and through this, locate the arbitrary yet extreme meanings and metaphors associated with eating. The dominant aesthetics of food cultures can become violent containers of regulation and homogenisation, which is a central concern of Akbar's novel and needs to be identified to understand the contemporary representation of various food systems in India.

Bionote: Arghya Dey is a research scholar from Jamia Millia Islamia. He is currently researching Surveillance and Dystopian Narratives in American Cinema. He is interested in understanding the consequences of the rise of new technologies and their impact on human and ecological existence. He did his M.A. in English Literature from the University of Delhi. He takes an avid interest in world cinema and the impact cinematic texts have on the collective human imagination.

Bharath Kumar S: "Pure Veg' Identitarian Politics of Contemporary India: A Study of Devdutt Pattanaik's Critical Commentaries"

Abstract: Identitarian politics around food practices and the eventual appropriation of cultural narratives are phenomena that have been operating since ancient times in the Indian subcontinent. With the rise and dominance of majoritarian cultural nationalism in Indian politics, these phenomena have grown in strength and variety. The proponents of 'pure veg' food cultures are emboldened and aided by the recurring discourses around hegemonic cultural practices. The discourse around sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic food cultures has emerged as one of the mainstream trends. This engagement is attracting a considerable number of the audience groups, which are desperately searching for a workable wellness option while under the grip of neo-conservatism. They may appear to be just food choices based on overall well-being and physical health. However, what seems to be underlying is the revival of the sense of cultural hierarchy based on the constructs of 'purity'. This phenomenon is intricately connected with the broader discourse on mythological retellings and reinterpretations.

Despite this dominance, many critical voices are keeping the undercurrent active with regular interventions and indulgences. One such prominent voice, Devdutt Pattanaik, a celebrated mythologist, has engaged with these narratives extensively and proactively. This research attempts to understand and interpret the cultural frameworks Pattanaik presents through his commentaries. His undisputable relevance in the contemporary mythological discourses makes this study more comprehensive. Applying the methodology of critical discourse analysis, the research arrives at the understanding that Pattanaik's critique of the hierarchical food narratives is part of the larger repurposing framework his mythological narratives offer, subsequently leading to postmodernist inferences.

Bionote: Mr. Bharath Kumar S., the author of this research paper, is pursuing research in the Department of English, Bangalore University, since 2023. The area of the said research is Contemporary Indian Mythological Retellings with a special focus on the writings and commentaries of the mythologist, Devdutt Pattanaik.

Ahmed Shabin KK: "Black Coffee in a Coconut Shell: Kitchen Archives, Commensality, and Caste"

Abstract: This paper makes food the analytic centre for reimagining centre - margin dynamics by reading Perumal Murugan's *Black Coffee in a Coconut Shell: Caste as Lived Experience* (2017) as an archive of kitchens, vessels, serving protocols, and commensality rules that render caste legible in everyday life.

Drawing on Arjun Appadurai's account of gastro-politics to frame contests over who cooks, serves, and eats with whom, the study shows how meals and water practices stabilise hierarchy through small but consequential procedures. This includes separate plates and tumblers, cupped palm drinking, poured from height serving, and the substitutional code of "black coffee without milk". Following Mary Douglas, purity and danger are traced not as **Abstract** beliefs but as handling practices that sort bodies, vessels, and spaces including floor washing after a guest eats, cattle shed seating, and leaf placement. Pierre Bourdieu's insights on habitus and taste illuminate how these routines become second nature in households, schools, farms, and festival hospitality. Further, David Sutton's work on culinary memory guides the reading of food scenes as embodied remembrance, where technique and sequence transmit social knowledge over time.

Methodologically, the paper combines close reading of scenes to examine what is cooked, which vessels, who serves, where people sit, and in what order things are served. It then sets these scenes against the local ritual year, paying attention to fast days, feast menus, and festival hospitality, to see how rules tighten or loosen with the occasion. Conversely, the study examines the "policing of taste" in kitchens to the interpretive habits that also drive literary policing: the same literalist, offence seeking postures that sanction taboo cuisines and segregated dining animate attempts to censor texts, showing how margins speak through the ordinary grammar of meals to recalibrate the centre.

Bionote: Ahmed Shabin KK is Assistant Professor at the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Presidency University, Bangalore. He completed his PhD from BITS-Pilani. His doctoral work critically examined the recent instances of literary censorship and obscenity jurisprudence in India during the last decade (2014-2024). His M.Phil dissertation explored the Indian National Emergency of 1975 and its representations in fiction, graphic narratives and cinema. His research areas are Censorship Studies, Authorship Studies, Graphic Narrative Studies, Resistance Literature, Critical Legal Studies, and intersect with the fields of Dalit, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Room No: LH-3

Chair's Bionote: **Amitendu Bhattacharya** is Associate Professor of Literary Studies in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani (BITS Pilani) – K K Birla Goa Campus. He earned his M.A. and M.Phil. in English from the University of Hyderabad and his Ph.D. in English Literature from The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He was a Visiting Scholar at the School of Communication and Arts, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, as part of the UEA Scheme. His research interests include South Asian literature, environmental humanities, and comparative studies and translation. He recently co-edited the book *Frontiers of South Asian Culture* (2024), published by Routledge, New York. His writings and translations have appeared in journals such as the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *The International Journal of the History of Sport, Asiatic*, *The Book Review*, *JSL* (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi), *Translation Today* (CIIL, Mysore), and *Muse India*.

5.3 Gender, Domesticity, and the Kitchen Space

Suraj Kumar: “Recipes for Queer Home-making: A Queer Autoethnography”

Abstract: The present autoethnographic study offers an exploration of the kitchen as a central site where intimacy, everyday labour and non-normative kinship are negotiated in the life of a cohabitating gay couple from India. It examines the various meanings that get encoded in cooking and the kitchen space, in the context of a queer partnership. As a non-gendered space, a queer kitchen may be perceived as egalitarian, where roles are shared rather than prescribed, challenging traditional gender hierarchies. Yet, the labour of kitchen tasks brings forth subtle tensions that intersect with other dimensions of the queer relationship. The paper traces how kitchen labour both shapes the couple’s relationship and unsettles heteronormative expectations. While being appreciative of the cooking skills, the larger family tends to frame it as a temporary arrangement, which is to be ultimately taken over by a female spouse. Such responses reveal the deep-seated anxieties surrounding non-normative kinship. In this study, the kitchen emerges as a site of queer expression, resistance and meaning-making. Through their cooking skills and a fully-equipped kitchen, the author and his partner differentiate themselves from other “bachelors,” for whom cooking spaces are often makeshift and underused, turning the kitchen into a marker of chosen family. It is central in providing a semblance of domesticity and household order in a context where queer relationships lack institutional recognition. Thus, the paper shows how the kitchen becomes instrumental in cultivating intimacy, belonging and a sense of home for queer couples.

Bionote: Suraj Kumar teaches English literature and language at SCD Government College, Ludhiana (Punjab). His PhD research examined the intersections of caste, class and queerness in queer writings of India. His other areas of interest include Autoethnography, Affect Studies and New Materialism.

Milony Richa Mathew: “From Primers to Coffee-table books: Navigating Feminine Identities Through the Evolution of Culinary Narratives on Kerala Cuisine”

Abstract: Food has transformed from its basic function as a means of nutrition and sustenance to a system of symbols and signs that expose the underlying culturally laden social structures, norms, values, and power relations.

The print and publishing revolution that happened in Kerala in the early 19th century paved the way for a significant rise in the publication as well as popular demand for cookbooks, instruction manuals, guides, and recipe columns in newspapers and magazines from the second half of the 20th century resulting in the formation and codification of both regional and micro cuisines. As a result, the feminine performative act of cooking transforms from the family (domestic) level to a more individual one (an artistic pursuit) with the advent of modernity, migration, and globalization. This paper attempts to outline the various feminine identities involved as an author or writer and as an audience by mapping the origins and the evolution of culinary narratives on Kerala cuisine with a particular focus on narratives published from the erstwhile Travancore region and the formation of a Syrian Christian micro-cuisine.

Bionote: Milony Richa Mathew is a postgraduate student from the Department of English, University of Hyderabad. Her research interests include Romantic and Victorian literature, Food Studies, and Travel literature. She spends most of her free time hunting archives and doing historical research.

Srijani Ghosh “Domestic Kitchens that Cooked Revolutions: Gendered Labour, Fragile Masculinities and the Blurring of the Private/Public Divide in Kallol Lahiri’s *Indubala Bhaater Hotel*”

Abstract: Kallol Lahiri’s ‘Indubala Bhaater Hotel’ (2020) has garnered widespread critical attention for its evocative portrayal of a displaced widow’s ordeal and struggle for survival, instrumentalising her decision to transform her domestic kitchen into a small public eatery. In this narrative, food and culinary recipes do not function as basic markers of taste or tradition but rather emerges as lived metaphors of daily struggle and conflicted identities, anchoring the protagonist to her lost homeland in East Bengal while simultaneously installing her within the social fabric of post-partition Kolkata, itself infested by economic precarity and political upheaval.

While existing scholarship on this novel has largely foregrounded themes of migration, memory, nostalgia and identity crisis, this paper argues that the text needs to be revisited to study its depiction of fragile masculinities and its effective blurring of the public/private, personal/political divide, significantly foregrounding a new mode of gastro-feminist thought. Indubala’s otherwise abusive, drunken, and ineffectual husband yields to the power of her delicacies, momentarily allowing her to exercise authority over him. Similarly, her self-determined acts of secretly feeding Naxalite revolutionaries and her brother involved in the Muktijuddho (Bangladesh Liberation War), authorises her indirect participation in political movements while remaining within the hidden folds of the domestic sphere.

Her acts of feeding function as moments of covert transgressions, unsettling the dominant masculine conception of political action as external, spectacular, and street-bound. It instead reframes sustenance, repetition, and embodied care as legitimate methods of public participation. The study attempts to contribute to the larger discourse on South Asian food studies by demonstrating how food and cooking function as potent tools for women’s intervention in public histories, even when they remain nominally confined to the private sphere.

Bionote: Srijani Ghosh is currently pursuing her Master’s degree in English Studies at IIT Madras. Her research interests include postcolonial, transnational and comparative women’s literature, with a particular focus on the intersections of literature and cultural memory.

10:00-11:00 AM: MMM Prize Session- 2026 Winner, Nishat Haider in conversation with Dhurjjati Sarma

Room No: LH-1(Plenary)

Tea: 11:00-11:15 AM

11:15AM-12:15 PM. Parallel Session: 6 Room No: LH-1

Chair’s Bionote: Dr. Shobha M. teaches at the Department of English, Bangalore University as Professor. She is currently heading the Department of English, Bangalore University. She has served as the Chief Editor of English text books for undergraduate courses of Bangalore University. She has more than twenty-one years of teaching experience. She was the recipient of Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship from Nov 2000 to April 2002, and carried out her research work at McGill University, Montreal as Visiting Research Fellow. Her areas of research interest are: Canadian Literature, Gender Studies, Critical Theory, Cultural Studies and Indian Literatures. She

has presented and published numerous research papers in national and international conferences. She is currently pursuing a major Research Project funded by Bangalore University titled “Representations of Food in Literature: A Cultural Approach to Regions in Karnataka.” She has Guest edited the IACLALS Newsletter, Issue No.10, 2021.

6.1 – Global South Gastronomies: Transgression and Re-Orientalism

Liya Sarah Philip: “From Street to Summit: The Strategic Flavoring of Asia’s Diplomatic Ties”

Abstract: This qualitative study examines how Thailand, South Korea, and India deploy culinary heritage as soft power to reshape diplomatic hierarchies and cultural influence in the Global South. Through discourse analysis of policy white papers, promotional media campaigns, and digital communications, it uncovers the strategic mechanisms by which taste is converted into diplomatic capital. Thailand’s Global Thai initiative (2002–present) leverages street-food aesthetics and rural traditions to construct “gastronomic nationalism”, promoting over 10,000 overseas restaurants and recasting rice-farming communities as cultural emissaries rather than mere producers.

South Korea’s K-Dining Diplomacy (2004–present) synchronises K-pop and K-drama with curated culinary events to cultivate emotional affinity and regional networks. Immersive pop-up dinners featuring bibimbap and tteokbokki illustrate how Seoul integrates entertainment and food ministries to amplify its cultural exports. Analysis of digital campaigns reveals how food experiences reinforce South Korea’s leadership by linking shared taste to collective identity, transforming everyday dining into a platform for soft-power projection.

India’s emerging gastrodiplomacy uses G20 side events, diplomatic receptions, and state-sponsored food festivals to invoke spice-trade heritage and assert South-South cooperation. Discourse analysis of festival speeches and chef panels shows how Indian culinary diplomacy foregrounds indigenous agricultural practices and food sovereignty, forging new geopolitical alliances beyond formal treaties. By mapping these discursive strategies and performative practices, this study argues that gastrodiplomacy functions as both a relational technology and a discursive framework, generating affective networks and contesting Western-dominated soft-power paradigms. The findings contribute to international relations theory by demonstrating taste’s instrumental role in contesting global power structures.

Bionote: Liya Sarah Philip is a second-year Ph.D. researcher at Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, specializing in the intersection of displacement, refugees, and migration. Her work critically examines the complex dynamics and humanitarian responses to global migration challenges. Liya holds a Master’s in International Relations and a Bachelor’s in English Language and Literature, equipping her with a robust interdisciplinary perspective.

Sowmya A: “Dialectics of Food: Gender, Control and Resistance in South Asian Conflict Narratives”

Abstract: From the creation of sensual images of food through culinary details, transporting textual realms to domestic realms, to fusing culture, language, memory, identity and ethnicity, food serves as a powerful subtext in novels. Food, which also functions as a vital lens to grasp the dynamics of war and its intricate relationship with gender, is fraught with ambiguities and

paradoxes in conflict times. During war, food can be a biopolitical weapon to control, dehumanize people and thereby reduce them to bare life (Agamben). Contradictorily, it can also be a potent medium of resilience and survival. As war can collapse the biological, social and intimate aspects of food and eating and turn the act of eating into a site of control and oppression, studying the repercussions of war on food affords an intriguing understanding of war as a gendered ideological construct. This paper will explore the different dimensions of food in the context of war by reading South Asian war novels published recently.

Bionote: Sowmya A. is Associate Professor who teaches English in a government degree college affiliated with the University of Mysore. She writes poems and she has published research articles in literary journals. Her published poetry collections are *Waves* (2021), *Subsongs* (2023) and *Light and the Mirage* (2025).

Shashikala Muthumal Assella: “Carl Muller’s *Maudiegirl* and a Forgotten Culinary History of the Sri Lankan Burghers”

Abstract: This paper will attempt to read Muller’s *Maudiegirl: And the Von Bloss Kitchen* (2009) as a culinary memory that is forgotten within the larger socio-political landscape and the post-independence development in Sri Lanka. The socio-political changes altering the landscape of the ‘Other’ minority in Sri Lanka, through the food memories captured by Carl Muller in his Burgher culinary fiction allows a window into forgotten culinary memories of a select Burgher community, thus archiving not only food memories and recipes, but also social change that altered the culinary choices of Sri Lankan upper middle class. This paper will endeavour to capture the political changes that affected the ‘once favoured’ minority group, through their reluctant and otherwise acceptance of the food habits, tracing the changes in their cuisine and other alternative food ways. While the most domestic representation of an ethnic minority will be overlooked as exotic and as ‘fitting into the global trends’, this paper argues that the most intimate and the private world of the kitchens and dining tables, become the ingested histories of our indigenous identity as opposed to a postmodern exoticising of identities and differences, as is sometimes brandished by the diasporic authors.

Bionote: Shashikala Assella is a Senior lecturer attached to the Department of English, University of Kelaniya and is the current chair of Sri Lanka Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. She has published and researched on diasporic women's writing, culinary fiction and Sri Lankan women's writing.

Room No: LH-2

Chiar’s Bionote: **Swati Pal**, Professor and Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi, is a Fulbright- Nehru fellowship scholar, a Charles Wallace scholar and the first Asian scholar to receive the John McGrath Theatre Studies Scholarship at Edinburgh University. Author of several books on theatre, creative and academic writing, her newspaper articles articulate her views on education. Her areas of research interest include performance studies and cultural history. She translates from Hindi to English and several of her translations have been published. She writes poetry and her poems appear in several anthologies; she also has two collections entitled *In Absentia* and *Forever Yours* and a curated collection called *Living On*. She is the Vice Chair of the Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies and has been the recipient of several national and international awards, both as a teacher as well as an administrator.

6.2 – Culinary Narratives: Language and Taste

Aditi Krishna: “Travelling Tales of Tsampa: Economies of Food in Tibetan Literature in English”

Abstract: Soon after the Chinese invasion of 1959, the Tibetan exile community in India began to forge new cultural pathways with food becoming a critical marker of survival. When His Holiness the Dalai Lama moved his seat from Mussoorie to Dharamshala because, ‘Dharamshala’s water is better than Mussoorie’s milk’ the distinction gradually began to bear the weight of sustenance which was to fall on the community in exile as it was starting from scratch. Water versus milk soon began to reflect in the nature of exilic lives where the precarity and resilience go hand in hand.

This paper examines Tibetan food ways in exile as oral archives of displacement and affect drawing from the Tsering Wangmo Dhompa’s memoir *A Home in Tibet* (2013) and *Taste Tibet: Family Recipes from the Himalayas* by Julie Kleeman and Yeshe Jampa (2022). The two texts show how memory and loss are inscribed in everyday practices. This paper will also ask has the Tibetan momo become the emblematic food of Delhi streets? Has ‘tsampa’ was which was originally a common man’s staple food now been repackaged as ‘tsampa shake cum smoothie’ to accommodate the modern times? These trajectories illustrate what Arjun Appadurai terms “gastro-politics” where food becomes a site of cultural capital. The paper also argues the about the future of Tibetan food and its survival without a glossary, that is to say without the preservation of language and memory that ground it? Reading food practices through affect theory and diaspora studies this paper argues that food operates not merely as nourishment but as a system of resilience and an archive of dispossession.

Bionote: Aditi Krishna is a PhD scholar in the Department of English, University of Delhi. Her research engages with the ethic of care and the intersection of philosophy and literature. She taught at The Dalai Lama Institute of Higher Education, Bangalore. Her interest in the Tibetan cause stems from her teaching experience there, where she encountered the practices of community living and the forms of care work essential to sustaining life in exile.

Tufan De: “Taste, Tradition and Athleticism: A Gastronomic Study of Three Novellas by Moti Nandi”

Abstract: Moti Nandi, born in West Bengal, is arguably the only prominent author in India to have created an entire body of fiction based solely on sports. While the existing scholarship on Nandi has largely examined the questions of narrative strategies, thematic preoccupations, gender dynamics and the institutionalization of sports, there is a paucity of theoretical enquiry into his recurrent representations of food as a contentious issue. Nandi’s fictional creations are fraught with the descriptions of consumption habits and culinary cultures - particularly Bengali cuisines. The present study would bridge this academic gap by examining three of Nandi’s novellas namely, *Koni*, *Kalabati* and *Striker*, with the aim of theorizing how these narratives conceptualize food both as a material necessity for building an aesthetic athletic body and as a prerequisite for sustaining the active human physique. It would also problematize the discourse on food by situating it within a complex nexus between different variables like class, age and gender, thereby arguing how the relation between idealized athletic bodies and disciplined dietary practices is equally shaped by socio-economic conditions. Simultaneously, the study would further explore the extent to which Nandi’s texts (re)-position food within the broader socio-cultural narratives of Bengali culinary identity, and thus, identify the intersections between sports, culture and cuisine in his literary oeuvre.

Bionote: Tufan De is a doctoral researcher at Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. He has presented research papers at various national and international

conferences, and also published with “International Forum of Psychoanalysis” (Taylor and Francis), “Translation Today” and “Research and Criticism”. His research areas include Sports Literature, Translation Studies, Body Studies and Gerontological Studies.

Sangeetha Balakrishnan: “Culinary Ekphrasis and the Narrative of Formation: A Cognitive-Narratological Reading of Romesh Gunsekera’s *Reef*”

Abstract: This paper reads Romesh Gunsekera’s *Reef* (Granta Books, 1994) as staging a narrative of formation through food, in which culinary ekphrasis—vivid, sensorial descriptions of food that invite embodied participation—appears as a throughline. The novel follows the protagonist Triton’s growth from his role as a helper to the cook in the Salgado household in Sri Lanka to the narratorial proleptic gesture toward him being a chef and owning a restaurant in London. Cooking underpins Triton’s journey in the text and functions as the medium through which he creates a self. The novel enacts a pedagogy of cooking starting with Triton’s first hesitant lessons in the kitchen, graduating on to his mindful creation of hybrid dishes like corned-beef hash, elevating everyday food preparation to aesthetic events.

This paper undertakes a reading of some ekphrastic passages in the text through the lens of cognitive narratology, showing how Gunsekera’s language compels readers to engage not only at the level of plot but through embodied imagination. Vivid depictions of translucent onion slices or the precise time to cook rice activate gustatory schemas in readers, aligning the reader in the same perceptual field as Triton. The portrayal of these scenes ensures that Triton’s growth is not merely reported but affectively rehearsed in the act of reading the text. This is thus taken to indicate that Gunsekera’s culinary ekphrasis becomes both a narrative device and a cognitive-affective interface.

By foregrounding culinary ekphrasis as aesthetic practice and embodied pedagogy, this paper demonstrates how *Reef* situates food as the axis on which Triton builds his life. Rich, evocative descriptions of preparing, consuming and ruminating on food firmly place the novel within Global South food studies and contribute to the ongoing discussions about food and food cultures in the region.

Bionote: Sangeetha Balakrishnan holds a PhD in Chemistry and has done postdoctoral research in Nanoscience. After six years of teaching Chemistry she transitioned to English Studies, aligning with her interest in the discipline of Literature and Science. Her current PhD research explores Biofiction and its engagement with scientific discourse.

Room No: LH-3

Chair’s Bio: **Banibrata Mahanta** is a Professor of English at Banaras Hindu University, India, specializing in disability studies and rights with a focus on India. His recent works include the edited volumes *English Studies in India: Contemporary and Evolving Paradigms* (Springer, 2019) and the forthcoming *Evolving Perspectives in English Studies: Views from the Northeast and Beyond*. His monograph *Disability Studies: An Introduction* (2017) and his latest work, *Narrative Universes of Disability: Global Perspectives* (Springer, 2025, with Someshwar Sati and Shilpa Das), contribute critical insights into the field of disability studies. In addition to his academic work, he also conducts sensitization workshops across India, addressing disability-based marginalization in academia and beyond. A multilingual translator, he works across Bangla, Hindi, and Urdu. His acclaimed

translation of Kusum Khemani's *Lavanyadevi* (Orient BlackSwan, 2024) was awarded the prestigious PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant (PEN America) in 2021 and the Valley of Words Best English Translation in 2025.

6.3 - Marginalized Voices: Hunger, Deprivation and Disability

Sayahnika Ganguly: “Food for Feelings: A Crip Analysis of Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*”

Abstract: This paper proposes to use a crip food studies lens to examine Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*, focusing on how food is used to manage, resist and even cause impairments. The paper puts forward the argument that the impairments of the characters, both physical and emotional, are central to the novel’s critique of family structure, with food acting as a tool for both disabling and enabling bodies. The paper tries to systematically break down how, by materialising internal states of illness, pain and desire, the novel reappropriates the disabled and chronically sick body as a site of power, communication and embodied resistance against ableist and patriarchal norms. It also plans to examine the kitchen as not merely a domestic, heteronormative space of confinement but a nexus of bodily expression and radical defiance while delineating Tita’s magical cooking as a language of the non-normative body. This notion aligns with McRuer’s critique of compulsory able-bodiedness. Moreover, by delineating how Esquivel’s use of magical realism renders invisible bodily experiences as palpable, the paper tries to explore the novel’s extraordinary events as a form of crip aesthetic, as elaborated by scholars like Alison Kafer. The paper offers a new perspective to yield insights into how food, the body and power intersect in cultural texts to reveal truths about human experience and the quest for liberation.

Bionote: Sayahnika Ganguly is pursuing her PhD in English from Tezpur University, Assam, focusing on areas like disability studies and popular literature. She has also served as an English Research Intern- Schools of Specialized Excellence at Ashoka University. She recently presented a paper at the 5th International IDSC Conference.

Alvina Ahmad: “Disability and Food: Ingestion, Access, and Assisted Eating”

Abstract: Food represents culture and identity; it is a lived act through which identity, belonging, and agency are expressed. Eating is a process that extends beyond sustenance; a cultural practice embedded with meanings, rituals, and power relations. However, this seemingly ordinary act becomes deeply complicated for a disabled individual. For them, ingestion intersects with social, medical, and infrastructural systems, transforming eating from being a simple act that is not just solely governed by personal agency but by caregivers, access barriers, and socio-economic structures.

While food and cultural studies have long explored the relationship between consumption and identity, the experiences of disabled individuals within the food culture have largely been underexplored. When performed through disabled bodies, eating becomes dependent on external factors, such as: modified ingestion, assisted feeding, and restricted access to public food spaces revealing ongoing struggles for autonomy, control, and dignity. This study investigates how food is accessed, ingested, and assisted within the lives of disabled people, across both public and private spaces. Drawing from critical disability theory, it examines the politics of congestion and the ethics of care embedded in assisted eating practices. The research raises questions of agency, bodily autonomy, and intimacy, arguing that food, when mediated through systems of care and control, becomes a lens through which structural inequality and cultural belonging are revealed. The study

employs a qualitative interdisciplinary approach, integrating textual and visual and visual analysis with narrative enquiry. It analyses representations of food and disability in selected films, documentaries, and digital narratives to understand how eating practices are mediated and represented. These methods are interpreted through frameworks of CDT (Critical Disability Theory), Goffman's concept of 'Stigma', and Mitchell and Snyder's 'Narrative Prosthesis' that would enable a nuanced understanding of power, dependence, and relational agency. The paper contends that disability and food must be jointly examined within cultural studies to uncover how external systems: medical, social, and infrastructural govern intimate acts like eating. By mapping the intersections of ingestion, access and assisted eating, it highlights the urgent need for inclusive foodways and the recognition of eating as a site of disability justice, dignity, and cultural participation.

Bionote: Alvina Ahmad is a Junior Research Fellow (JRF) and GATE-qualified PhD scholar at BITS Pilani K.K. Birla Goa Campus. She holds her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in English Literature from the University of Delhi. Her research intersects Disability Studies and Film Studies, with broader interests in visual media, gender representation, and digital cultures. Passionate about literature, art, and poetry, Alvina's work seeks meaning in overlooked spaces and marginal narratives, with a focus on cultural representation and identity politics.

Kopal: "Writing Hunger: Narrating Deprivation in Manoranjan Byapari's Autobiography"

Abstract: Manoranjan Byapari's autobiographical narrative *Bhaga Hua Ladka* (The Runaway Boy) presents hunger as the defining reality of childhood at the margins. The text recounts his life as a refugee, child labourer, and runaway, where food is never taken for granted but earned through humiliation, exclusion, and precarity. Rice, gruel, scraps - each instance of food becomes an index of survival, caste hierarchy, and displacement. Hunger here is not an isolated hardship but a recurring condition that shapes memory, identity, and the very texture of narration.

From its opening chapter detailing the struggle to get a bit of rice from a Brahmin landlord to feed a pregnant wife to its closing image of fighting dogs for scraps from a dustbin, deprivation is never episodic but the defining condition of life. Each chapter marks hunger's persistence, shaping reproduction, migration, caste oppression, and the precarious survival of refugees and runaways.

In this text, food is not remembered with nostalgia or cultural pride; it is remembered through scarcity, humiliation, and exclusion. Unlike culinary histories that recall food through nostalgia or celebration, Byapari's account insists on the persistence of deprivation. Food absence becomes a narrative strategy, unsettling dominant representations of food culture and demanding recognition of hunger as a political reality. Through its stark depictions of scarcity, *Bhaga Hua Ladka* illuminates how hunger mediates caste, refugeehood, belonging, and rights in the Global South. This paper reads Byapari's text as part of a wider autobiographical project where the aesthetics of hunger organize memory as much as the struggle for survival itself.

Bionote: Kopal is Assistant Professor of English Literature at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi. She earned her PhD in literary historiography with a focus on nineteenth-century Indian literature. Her research and teaching interests span narratives of resistance, crime fiction, and literary cultures of the Global South.

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Chair's Bionote: **Sharada Chigurupati** is a Professor in the Department of English Literature at The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. Her research focuses on American Literature and Postcolonial Literature. She has published research papers in various journals and books, and co-edited two notable volumes: *American Literary Studies in Postmillennial India: Critical Perspectives* (Lexington, USA) and *Global Literatures and Cultures of Modernity: Critical Perspectives from India* (Routledge, USA).

7.1 - Semiotic Servings: Signs, Symbols, and Meanings in Food

Armeen Kaur Ahuja: "Semiotics of Food in *Yajurveda*"

Abstract: Yajurveda comprises of two parts - VājasaneyīSaṃhitā and TaittirīyaSaṃhitā; these two etymologically appear to be titled after a horse and partridge birds. But the case is something else, the two parts of the Yajurveda are re-presentations of the relationship between food and nourishment.* This myth breaks down the several semiotic possibilities that food has in Yajurveda, in the foundational myth itself the food becomes symbol for knowledge, the 'vomiting back' of the mantras reifies the impossibility of exactness of returning the knowledge but simultaneously opens up the possibility of sharing the knowledge through communal consumption by the partridges (much like how food is shared) and the revisionary possibilities that naturally exist in gnosis – through the improved or 'well cooked' version given by the Sun God.

Through this myth it is established that food is central in the various relative algorithms laid down for Yajña. Food primarily features as an offering that initiates the barter or exchange in the communication of gods and humans. Much like as it is shown in the foundational myth, the food can be well cooked (wherein agni and sun god acquire symbolic meanings of purifying forces beyond cooking agents) or can be a half-cooked gruel (like the vomit) – each having a position and hierarchy within the yajna. So, while remaining a currency in a yajna, which is used to obtain protection from the gods – the food also acquires symbolic meaning and rank- ranging from a basic nutritious offering to enlarging itself up to the extent of being symbol of Knowledge or Immortality (Soma).

The above given example is only a suggestive explanation of what the paper will investigate, but there are various relationships or semiotic roles that the food acquires in Yajurveda which will be studied in the paper. These include the function of food as a cosmic signifier mediating between Gods and humans, within this exchange the foods also acquire sacrificial value – denoting the sanctity, gravity and difficulty of a specific yajna. These offerings also often denote time cycles- day and night, lunar calendar and agricultural seasons. The cyclic denotations eventually create cosmic identifications (for e.g. in the yajnas of darśa-pūrṇamāsa the householder seeks to align (or identify) the household with the cosmic lunar cycle.) which eventually strengthen and preserve the social order. This communication or Yajna is activated through rituals which create the space of liminality** wherein the space is activated, the deities are summoned and the sacrificial food acquires a divine nature.

* The lore believes that Vaiśampāyana ordered all his students to do penance after a ritual fault, but Yājñavalkya (pupil) refused, the angry teacher then asked the pupil to return all the mantras he had learned. Yājñavalkya vomited the knowledge while rest of the pupils transformed into partridges and consumed the vomit on orders of the teacher. Yājñavalkya then performed meditated and summoned Sun God who gave a clearer, better arranged and improved version of the mantras which feature in VājasaneyīSaṃhitā while the former feature in TaittirīyaSaṃhitā.

**Transitional space in a rite of passage or rituals, as defined by Victor Turner.

Bionote: Armeen Kaur Ahuja teaches English Literature at SGTB Khalsa College, Delhi University. She completed her M. Phil. in Comparative Literature and has keen interest in folklore and folk performances of the Indian subcontinent. Her areas of writing include works on visual cultures, Indian drama, digital spaces, partition studies, folk songs and translated literature.

Sania Muzamil: “Semiotics of Culinary Creation: A Greimasian Reading of Hamari Jamatia’s ‘Does the artist eat gourd, brother?’”

Abstract: Food is an ordinary substance, until it becomes an ‘object of value’ through meaning, desire, and consumption. Algirdas Julien Greimas in his essay ‘Basil Soup or the Construction of an Object of Value’ (1979), takes the simple act of preparing basil soup to decode a semiotic process- of how value is attached to objects through structured cultural transformations. This Greimasian notion of ‘value’ as a construct rather than an intrinsic property of objects, can help illustrate how arbitrary actions (like cooking), that are embedded in specific myths and meanings, create valued (culinary) cultures. Hamari Jamatia’s essay ‘Does the artist eat gourd, brother?: On Denouncing Pork and Discovering It’ (2023) revolves around the consumption of pork; a substance seen as polluting and inferior in many traditions, yet centred as an object of value in various culinary sub-cultures. Taking cues from Greimas’ ideas on value for a semiotic analysis of Jamatia’s essay, the paper seeks to look at the creation of a specific pork dish- the ‘wahanmosdeng’ (spicy pork mash)- and alternate expressions of aesthetics and desire through this culinary process. An analysis shall be attempted of the idea of value ensconced in specific cultures of meaning-making, the specificities of identity and memory of marginalised ethnic groups, as well as the myriad ways in which traditional beliefs shape individual and collective culinary choices. The aesthetics of culinary subcultures outside the dominant notions of taste and desirability remain underanalysed, and require alternative frameworks for defining ‘value’. The paper thus proposes to study the processes of culinary-narrative creation and constructed aesthetic notions in the Indian context, and to understand how structures of discrimination lead to exclusion of certain cultures of taste, as seen in Jamatia’s narrative.

Bionote: Sania Muzamil is a doctoral research scholar at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India. Her research focuses on culinary memory and food history in India. She did her M.A. and M.Phil in English from the University of Delhi. She has presented in various conferences and published a chapter on the memories of the Vietnam War in a volume published by Springer Nature.

Avnish Tyagi & Jindagi Kumari: “Entangled Kitchens: A Semiotic Study of Gender, Space, and Modernity in the Selected Works of Ambai and Vivek Shanbhag”

Abstract: This paper takes a closer look at food and culinary spaces in Ambai’s “A Kitchen in the Corner of the House” and Vivek Shanbhag’s “Ghachar Ghochar,” suggesting that food acts as a rich sign system that captures the complex interactions between rural and urban life, gender roles, and the evolving norms of modernity. Rather than just viewing food as something to eat, it’s explored here as a language—a collection of signs made up of ingredients, recipes, rituals, and spaces—that reflects the limited roles of women, the changes in family and community as they transition from rural simplicity to urban wealth, and the broader anxieties that come with modern life.

In Ambai’s narratives, the kitchen stands out as both a space of restriction and a repository of women’s memories. The tools of cooking, the repetitive nature of preparing meals, and the sensory experiences of food—its smoke, aroma, and flavour—serve as signs that highlight patriarchal limits

while also preserving a hidden history of women's creativity, strength, and rebellious spirit. On the other hand, Shanbhag's novella unpacks the meanings behind consumption: the family meal evolves from a symbol of shared survival to a marker of urban dreams, tangled desires, and delicate intimacy.

Using a comparative approach grounded in semiotic theory and Global South literary studies, this paper illustrates how Ambai and Shanbhag portray kitchens and dining tables as spaces where tradition and modernity, gender identities, and class concerns intersect. Ultimately, it reveals how food serves as a narrative framework that brings to light the quiet negotiations of identity, memory, and power in contemporary Indian literature, providing a valuable lens for interpreting food as a cultural text.

Bionote: Jindagi Kumari works as Assistant Professor at Maharaja Surajmal Institute of Technology, New Delhi. A PhD in English from IIT-ISM Dhanbad, her research covers areas of Indian English literature, Post-colonial Studies, Ecocriticism, Gender Studies and others. Her publications include 16 research papers, 9 reviews, 2 books, and many short fictions.

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Chair's Bionote: **Meenakshi Pawha** retired as a Professor from the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her research interests include Indian Drama, Folk Theatre, Climate Change, Films Studies, Disability Studies, Translation Studies, Postcolonial Literatures and English Language Teaching (ELT). A Mellon Fellow at Harvard University (2017) Fulbright Scholar at New York University (2006), Charles Wallace India Trust fellow at Cambridge University, she is the author of two books - *The Dramatic Art and Vision of Tom Stoppard* (2007) and *Alan Ayckbourn: Chasing the Comic Muse* (2007). Her translations of short stories and essays in literary criticism have been published in *South Asian Review*, *Indian Literature* and *Hindi, Language, Discourse, Writing*. Some of her forthcoming titles of her translations of Hindi plays are *Godse @Gandhi.com* (Vani Prakashan); *Yeh Aakash Mera Bhi Hai* and *Ek Bhikaran ki Maut*. Dr. Pawha is a voracious reader, an avid traveler and cinephile. She is fond of listening to music in any form and is passionate about the rich cultural heritage of the performing arts and textiles of India.

7.2 - Ecological Bites: Sustenance, Seasons, and Contradictions

Chitra Bajpai: "Banana Leaves to Plastic Wraps: Food, Culture and Ecological contradictions in South Asian narratives"

Abstract: In South Asia, food was, and to some extent continues to be, more than just sustenance, as it is a ritual, a symbol of community, and an ecological practice based on sustainable traditions. Meals served on banana leaves, and made of hand-pounded grains and consumed in collective rituals supported the repetitions of continuity between land, health, and culture. However, in modern South Asia, this balance in the ecology is becoming more and more violated. Sustainability paradoxes have emerged as a result of the industrialization of the food industry, the domination of the world by plastics, packaging and distribution as well as the commercialization of the so-called organic health discourses. Although the contemporary consumer glorifies the notion of organic food, the actual organizational processes of its production, circulation, and distribution are based on the use of plastic waste, transportation that relies on large amounts of carbon dioxide, and unsustainable infrastructure.

This paper examines how South Asian literature and film use food as a memory and criticism to address ecological contradictions. *Salt and Saffron* by Kamila Shamsie and *Midnight's*

Children by Salman Rushdie recall the family and cultural significance of spices, chutneys, and rice. Ritesh Batra's 2013 film *The Lunchbox* contrasts traditional steel tiffins with the plastic-dominated food economy of the modern city. Read and Amitav Ghosh's writings on climate and ecocritical models show how food has become a scale between nostalgia for a sustainable past and the reality of the ecological crisis, birth and death, and climate vulnerability.

Through the pathway of banana leaves to plastic wraps, this paper contends that the South Asian stories can help us rethink the concept of food not merely as a source of sustenance but as a place where ecological ethos meets the issue of cultural continuity and sustainability of the climate.

Bionote: Chitra Bajpai is Assistant Professor of English, a dedicated and accomplished scholar of English literature with extensive teaching and research experience. She holds a PhD in English Literature from the University of Lucknow, has been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship at Yale University and a Junior Research Fellowship from the UGC, alongside notable editorial, research, and international academic contributions.

Anushree Nayek: “Cooking for Tomorrow: Seasonal Memory and Ecological Thought in *Bhadre Rendhe Ashwine Khaoa*”

Abstract: It is in the kitchen that ecological risk is first confronted, transformed into practice, and remembered as ritual. “*Bhadre Rendhe Ashwine Khaoa*,” literally “cooking in the month of Bhadra and eating in the month of Ashwin,” names Arandhan Pujo in Bengal, a day when the hearth is extinguished and sustenance deferred. Far from simple abstention, the ritual becomes a technology of survival, binding the unruly rhythms of the monsoon to the authority of Maa Manasa, a goddess whose presence fuses devotion with dread. The careful selection of vegetables, fish, and flowers is less an ornament than a precise articulation of seasonality and risk. Recipes and prohibitions form a grammar through which agrarian communities translate ecological volatility into continuity. Read as a palimpsest, the ritual reveals how collective memory adapts through repetition and improvisation, embedding knowledge in the gestures of sorting and cleaning as much as in sacred texts. This paper situates Manasamangal Kavya alongside Brata Kathas to argue that folklore does more than narrate the monsoon: it regulates its uncertainties by encoding ecological intelligence within ritual form. Arandhan Pujo is theorised through Jan Assmann’s concept of cultural memory as a medium where survival and seasonality coalesce, while modernity threatens to strip the ritual of its rationale and reduce it to performance. The study follows oral accounts and visual ethnography to map regional variations across West Bengal, demonstrating that ecological knowledge persists less in archives than in embodied, gendered labour. It advances the claim that Arandhan Pujo enacts a mode of environmental governance outside institutional frameworks, challenging the assumed divide between ritual and rationality. The paper ultimately argues that the erosion of such practices marks both cultural diminishment and the erasure of other possible ways of knowing and inhabiting ecological worlds.

Bionote: Anushree Nayek is currently pursuing an MA in English Literature at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, following her graduation from the University of Burdwan. She volunteers as an English educator in orphanages, believing in social contribution. Her research areas include food practices, folklore, and graphic narratives.

V L Ruati: “What Belongs at the Table: Dissecting the Foodways and Consequences of Hunger and Starvation in Katherine Boo’s *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*”

Abstract: The influence of food studies as a topic of discourse in recent years has had an impeccable influence in extending the referentiality of food across disciplines. The interdisciplinary relation between food studies and literature has brought forth crucial narratives that allow us to examine the varied interpretations related to the concept and representation of food. This paper aims to explore the nature of hunger and starvation and their implications on an individual and the community, as depicted in Katherine Boo’s riveting book, “*Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*.” While being non-fiction, Boo skillfully narrates the visceral life of the Annawadians, making it a text laden with poverty, despondency, corruption, delinquency, and a sliver of hope to transgress the status quo, almost like a work of fiction. Additionally, apart from examining the moral and ethical dimensions, the paper will also focus on the food that teaches the body to persevere. The requirement to destabilise the meaning of “disgust” when it comes to foods consumed by communities living in poverty is crucial not only to bring them into the gastronomic sphere but to acknowledge the basis of reality that the community within Annawadi thrive on. By delving into pertinent questions like “What are the people of Annawadi guilty of because of hunger?”, “Is there a ground to measure the ethical paths taken by Annawadians? And if so, who gets to be the judge of that?”, “What is being cooked in the tiny hearths of Annawadi and how can we subvert the notion of disgust?”, and “How does the absence or low availability of food disrupt ‘moral’ decision?” will be explored through an interdisciplinary lens of food studies, strain theory, and trauma studies.

Bionote: V L Rauti is currently pursuing PhD from the University of Delhi, Department of English. My area of interest lies in the interlinking relationship between food literature and trauma studies. The working title of my thesis is “Tasting Hunger: Exploring Hunger, Starvation, and Resilience through Selected South Asian Trauma Narratives.”

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Chair’s Bionote: Amarjeet Nayak is Associate Professor at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar, an OCC of Homi Bhabha National Institute, Mumbai. His research interests include Postcolonial Studies, Translation Literature, and Speculative Fiction Studies.

7.3 – Food in Popular Culture

Sanjukta Naskar: “Semantics of Food in Folktales”

Abstract: Food plays a vital role in the way in which human civilisation has developed and progressed. Cultural histories bring out the way in which consumption of food has created symbols and metaphors that have shaped concepts of gender identity, popular culture, rituals, religion and agency. Food in folktales represents both enslavement and empowerment and appears in culturally deterministic ways that have evolved as generic determinants of social structures. Traditionally the act of procuring food is endowed to men whereas the act of cooking and serving is relegated to women thereby creating a conformed association with women. Food is also an important component in rituals and religious activities designating days and types of food preparation for certain forms for religious performance. In this essay I will explore the ways in which food determines gender roles and the ways in which food plays a vital role in the narrative of the oral and

folk tales. However, in folktales food is not always about food being served on the plate to satisfy the famished soul but becomes a symbol that resonates with survival, oppression, control, subservience, and renunciation. Food is as much about feasting as it is about fasting bringing out ideals of chastity and fecundity. Food is also associated with magic or magical powers in folktales thereby gaining a cult representation. My paper will explore Grimms folk and fairy tales along with Rev Lal Behari Day's collection of folktales to analyse the ways in which food imagery occurs and recurs in these stories developing into a symbolic code that binds the story.

Bionote: Sanjukta Naskar is faculty in the Department of English at Janki Devi Memorial College, Delhi University. Her area of interest among others lies in Folklore and Caste in Bengal. She has presented papers in various national and international conferences. She has also received the Charles Wallace Trust Scholarship in 2010 during the course of her PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Azhar Uddin Sahaji: "What's desi in Ghee? Interrogating Food Fad, Body Aesthetics, and Masculinity through the Consumption Pattern of Ghee in Contemporary India"

Abstract: The rapid expansion of the fitness industry, the rising consciousness towards body aesthetics, with the popularity of social media and the related change in consumption cultures demand an examination of daily dietary practices. This paper will examine the changing patterns in the consumption of ghee, an indigenously produced milk product in India/South Asia, to explore the transformations in public masculinity in the region. Ghee, a traditional form of concentrated dairy, known for its strengthening and fattening qualities, was limited to a specific form of cuisine and regions. Consistently glorified as a healthier replacement to the lowly and adulterated vanaspati oil (vegetable oil) until the 1990s, ghee continues to have an overwhelming presence in the contemporary dietary system, especially in relation to body aesthetics, (sportsmanship) and evolving culinary cultures. Despite this consistent characterisation, ghee has also been derided for its unhealthy dimensions that purportedly do not align with sedentary urban lifestyles. Nevertheless, in recent years, ghee has witnessed a niche return to the market, which, on closer examination, seems like a food fad. Associated with a masculine rural health and vigour, ghee has been shown to be a part of the north Indian dietary system (culinary uses) since ancient times, and its medicinal and ritualistic significance has been emphasised through popular media, advertisements, and health portals. Utilising various popular representations of ghee, this paper interrogates the rising body aesthetics and masculinity around ghee through a detailed study of consumption cultures and culinary practices in the Indian/South Asian context.

Additionally, this paper underscores the ontology of the consumption pattern and accessibility of ghee by examining the consumption culture that indicates an intersection of multiple social patterns around body, marketing strategy and gendered health assumptions in contemporary India. The paper argues how ghee has become a commodity fetish through contemporary market cultures, which are often driven by regionalism, caste, and religious ideologies. Such patterns are evident in the advertisements of ghee as well as the numerous depictions on social media, webzines and health-related articles/op-eds both in Hindi and English. These depictions, as this paper demonstrates, inflect the way ghee was used selectively as a health product in households across the privileged rural areas to a product that signals masculine bodily grooming and its confirmation of a healthy religiosity. Categorising it as a fad product, this paper will examine this co-constitution of health, masculinity, and religious identities through the consumption of ghee. By interrogating the use of marketing strategies of ghee, its selective vilification and glorification in relation to the emerging body

aesthetics and the history of ghee in India/South Asia, the paper playfully questions the ‘desi’-ness of ghee and its relevance in the contemporary social and cultural significance/representation.

Bionote: Azhar Uddin Sahaji has recently completed his Ph.D. from the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He has been teaching at Delhi University for the last eight years. His research area includes Translation Studies, Reception Studies, Adaptation Studies and Bangla Literature in Bengali and English translation, Modern Indian Languages, and Bhasha literature discourses.

Angela Emily Sebastian & Shalini Moolechalil: “Gender, Food and the Making of Modern Households in Early Malayalam Women’s Magazines”

Abstract: When women's magazines began publication in Malayalam in the early 20th century, columns on food and nutrition were an essential part of them. The content of these columns, interestingly often written by men, reveals that the relationship between women, the kitchen and cooking at the time was different from how it is today. In a large number of upper caste households, women of the house were usually expected to oversee the cooks rather than cook for the family. However, the attempts to modernise family and gender relations in the 19th and 20th-century Kerala conceptualised the ideal Malayali woman as the sole custodian of her family's nutritional needs. The shift from joint families to nuclear families further cemented this ideal that persists to this day. Women’s magazines from the early 20th century form an archival record of some of the early discourses on women and the ‘duty’ of cooking for their families. Columns and articles from magazines not only published recipes but also educated the readers on the health and economic benefits of women taking over the kitchen from the cooks, ways to introduce cooking to girls, the science of nutrition and so on. They also served as sites to debate the subject of women’s role in the kitchen. Based on articles from 'Sarada' (1904-1910), 'Mahila' (1921-1941) and 'Sthree' (1933-?), this paper explores the universalisation of cooking as a woman’s responsibility in early modern Kerala.

Bionote: Angela Emily Sebastian is currently pursuing PhD in English at Pondicherry University. Her areas of interest include gender studies, cultural studies and environmental humanities.

Bionote: Dr. Shalini M. is Assistant Professor at the Department of English and Comparative Literature, Central University of Kerala. She received her research degrees M.Phil and Ph.D from University of Hyderabad, India. Her areas of specialization are Comparative Literature, Gender Studies, and life writing studies.

Lunch 1:15 – 2:15

2:15 – 3:35 PM

Parallel Session 8

Room No: LH-1

Chair’s Bionote: Dr. Sindhu J. is a Professor in the Department of English, Bangalore University, Bangalore, where she has been teaching since 2007. Her major areas of research interest include

Central Asian Studies (with a focus on travel writing), Gender Studies and Ecocriticism, urban ecology and ecofeminism. She has presented and published numerous research papers in national and international conferences. Her publications include: *The Manas Epos: Across the Millennium* (2005); *Siberia in the Literary Imagination: From Frozen Waste to 'Land of the Future'* (2021); *Studies in Ecology: A Reader* (2019). She has recently completed a major Research Project funded by Bangalore University titled "Gender and Urban Space: An Analysis of Select Women's Writings on Bangalore", funded by Bangalore University.

8.1 – Flavors of Belonging: Diaspora, Memory, and Cultural Archives

N. Usha: "Culinary Memory on a plate: Food as Cultural Archive in Diasporic Fiction"

Abstract: Food writing in Indian diasporic literature transcends its literal function to become a powerful narrative device. For Indian diasporic authors, culinary references often articulate the complexities of migration, belonging, and identity. Culinary histories, recipes, and menus serve as channels for memory, identity, and cultural negotiation. As Arjun Appadurai notes, "gastro-politics is central to understanding how communities negotiate identity through food (Appadurai 3). For diasporic communities, Indian food becomes a sensory archive of the homeland. The aroma of spices, the texture of rice, or the ritual of preparing filter coffee can summon memories of childhood, family, and cultural belonging. Writers use food to bridge the gap between past and present, home and host land, tradition and adaptation.

This paper examines how diasporic writers mobilise food writing to explore cultural memory, with a particular focus on the select works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, Preethi Nair, Amit Majmudar, and Amulya Malladi. In Chitra Banerjee's *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo dispenses spices imbued with mystical properties. Each spice, turmeric for healing and chilli for passion, serves as a metaphor for emotional and cultural restoration. Lahiri's *The Namesake* subtly explores the generational divide through food. Gogol's rejection of Bengali cuisine symbolises his struggle with cultural identity. In Preethi Nair's *One Hundred Shades of White*, recipes are interwoven with personal trauma and healing. Maya's cooking becomes a form of storytelling and resistance, allowing her to reclaim agency and identity. Food here is therapeutic, a means of survival and self-expression. Through textual analysis, the study reveals how diasporic authors transform kitchens and meals into sites of storytelling, resistance, and reclamation.

Bionote: Prof.N.Usha teaches in the department of English, Krishna University, Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Her area of specialisation is Comparative Literature, Translation and the Literature of the Indian diaspora.

D. Sudha Rani: "Food at the Centre of the World Stage: A Study of Double Diaspora and Food Memory in Select Indian Diaspora Plays"

Abstract: Food anchors cultural memory, and in double diaspora, it intertwines homeland ties with layered displacements. This paper examines food memory in two plays depicting double diaspora experiences and identity negotiations applying Maya Paramar's theory of double diaspora. We are going to consider one play from Indian diaspora the USA, namely *Assimilation* by Shishir Kurup, a double diaspora community member and *Calcutta Kosher*, by Shelley Silas, a double diaspora community member from the UK. *Assimilation* is an autobiographical monologue that exhibits the trauma of an immigrant to assimilate in the cultural milieu of America. The protagonist is a second-generation immigrant who continues to think about Indian food, its taste, flavour and colour along with his love for American food.

In *Calcutta Kosher*, the action is set in Calcutta in a Jewish Indian family over one shabbat evening dinner. Mozella has called her two daughters, Esther (from England) and Silvie (from America) back home to be by her side as she is recovering from a heart attack. The audience get to know how Jewish Indian cuisines dominate and become important topic for discussion. Therefore, a keen scrutiny of Assimilation and *Calcutta Kosher* reveals that food acts as a significant conduit of transcultural and transgenerational memory in Indian diaspora theatre. Avtar Brah's notion of the diaspora space helps illuminate how these plays stage food as a site where histories of migration, displacement, and belonging intersect. In double diaspora contexts, food embodies layered cultural negotiations while each migration impacts and shapes culinary practices. Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory' and David Sutton's idea of food as a 'sensory memory' explains how second and third generation immigrants inherit food memories through stories, rituals and tastes if not through direct experience and this anchors them to their ancestral homelands while they continue to adapt and enjoy the food of host land. As noted by Astrid Erll, 'transcultural lens' promises a better understanding of our own globalizing age, in which memory travels at a greater speed beyond boundaries, the present paper attempts to study the Indian diaspora theatre by foregrounding food on stage to argue that the kitchen and the dining table are as significant as the stage itself. They become performative sites where resilience, nostalgia, and identity are enacted, proving that food memory is central to the cultural survival of double diaspora communities in transcultural settings.

Bionote: D. Sudha Rani is an associate Professor in English and has over 30 years of extensive teaching/research experience in English language, literature, memory studies. Being an active scholar, she presented and published a lot of research work along with 12 books which are prescribed in different universities and colleges. Since her research area is Memory Studies, she coestablished the Centre for Memory Studies and Storytelling at VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering and Technology (Autonomous), Hyderabad.

Srijeeta Adhikary: "Looking beyond the Borders: A Study of Immigrant Food Narratives, Memory, and Identity in Madhushree Ghosh's *Khabaar: An Immigrant Journey of Food, Memory, and Family*"

Abstract: The paper examines the politics of food narratives and the complex social and cultural formation of identities within the migrant communities in South Asia, with a particular focus on Madhushree Ghosh's food memoir, *Khabaar: An Immigrant Journey of Food, Memory, and Family*. Food narratives have been an integral part of our cultural identity, ethno-historical community and personal memory. In the South Asian context, food is not just a mere edible substance for survival; rather, it coagulates as a fascinating cultural tradition, moulding one's personal and collective memory. Through the framework of gastro-semantics, my article aims to explore how food can be seen as a text that has travelled through colonisation, partition, migration, and indenture. Madhushree Ghosh, being a daughter of refugee parents and an immigrant herself, aptly underscores the perception of her scattered identity and a sense of belonging in her food memoir. In the book, food serves as a metaphor that represents home, desire, and liberation. The author's identity, however, is influenced by various geographies, including Orissa, her Bangladeshi refugee heritage, West Bengal, Delhi, and later the United States, which becomes very evident in her socio-cultural existence. Therefore, food has emerged as an elemental force that acts as a bridge across her indelible yet precarious association with these places. This paper uses Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, highlighting how food embodies cultural memory and facilitates the intergenerational transmission of personal and collective histories. It also explores Ghosh's dysfunctional

marriage, arguing that cooking represents a gender-biased role, a form of labour, and an act of resistance.

Bionote: Srijeeta Adhikary is currently pursuing her PhD in the Department of English at the University of Kalyani, West Bengal. She passed her Master's Degree from the University of Calcutta in 2018. Her research interests are genocide literature, partition texts, trauma and memory studies and Bangladesh.

Nandana Sanker: “Living Archives of Memory: Kitchens and the Chinese Diaspora of Kolkata”

Abstract: Culinary spaces, though seemingly ordinary, symbolise food as a cultural experience that is intensely private yet universally resonant. The kitchens and eateries of Kolkata's Chinese community evolve into a living archive where family recipes, tangible possessions, traditional knowledge systems, ritualistic practices, and cultural memories intersect in a negotiation of practice, celebration, transmission and safeguarding across generations. The Chinese culinary landscape is not merely a site of food production and consumption, but also a living heritage that serves as an embodied archive of the city's Chinese community. Within these spaces, the community negotiate their identity, remembers, shares and contests their past, nurtures resilience and works towards healing.

This paper examines the dynamic and resilient cultural significance of Chinese gastronomic heritage in Kolkata, focusing on Tiretta Bazaar and Tangra, two historically rich yet marginalised Chinatowns. Through ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and participant observation, the study examines how the Chinese community created a distinct culinary identity within the rich cultural mosaic of Kolkata through their kitchens, eateries, markets, associated cultural spaces, culinary knowledge, and food practices shaped by diasporic migration narratives, collective cultural memory, contemporary realities, continuous adaptations and historical trauma. The culinary legacy of the Chinese also represents the atrocities, systematic violence and exclusion inflicted upon the community during the 1962 Indo-China War. In the aftermath, food became central to survival as a number of Chinese eateries and food stalls burgeoned in Kolkata, transforming kitchens and dining spaces into community archives where identity was expressed, traumas entered a trajectory of healing, and everyday culinary practices became archival acts of remembering and belonging.

Today, the dwindling presence of this minority community, which was central in building the cultural landscape of Kolkata, marks the decline of a long-standing culinary heritage. By framing the Chinese eateries in Kolkata as “kitchen as an archive”, the paper highlights the urgency to recognise and safeguard these spaces as both a living archive and heritage, as well as a livelihood.

Bionote: Nandana Sanker is an independent heritage researcher with a focus on the intersections of food, cultural heritage, and community-driven heritage-making practices. She holds a Master's degree in Heritage Management from Ahmedabad University, where her thesis, *Calcutta Chinese Food and Associated Cultural Spaces as Potential Heritage*, examined the role of Chinese eateries in Kolkata as evolving sites of intangible heritage within urban contexts.

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Chair's Bionote: **Fatima** is Professor in the Department of English and Modern European languages, University of Lucknow. Her areas of academic interest include Colonial and Postcolonial Studies and Film Studies. She is editing a volume of critical essays titled *Revisiting the All-India Progressive*

Writers' Movement: Critical Perspectives on Literature and Culture, to be published by Oxford University Press.

8.2 – Cultural Habitus: Politics and Translatability

Mohd Aqib: “Translatable/Untranslatable Food: Examining the Translation of the Culinary Diction in *Ni‘matkhana* into English”

Abstract: *Ni‘matkhana* (2014) continues the aesthetics of death and disgust Khalid Jawed developed in his earlier works. In the novel, the kitchen becomes a philosophical and political space where questions of existence, self, identity, guilt, memory, class, and locale are negotiated. Its translation into English as *The Paradise of Food* (2022) by Baran Farooqi performs a complex linguistic and cultural re-inscription, in which food becomes the principal site of translation. The Urdu title *Ni‘matkhana* (literally ‘house of blessings’) evokes theological, domestic, and gustatory resonances that its rendering in English as *The Paradise of Food*, strives to reproduce for an Anglophone audience. This movement from a term embedded in Indo-Islamic everyday idiom to the biblical imaginary of ‘Paradise’ reconfigures the novel’s dense sensory lexicon of smell, decay, and taste within an allegorical frame more intelligible to English readers. Simultaneously, the translation foregrounds the difficulty of transmitting culturally specific culinary practices and their attendant moral and affective registers. The translation thereby stages, at the level of diction, the collision of epistemologies—the Urdu world of *ni‘mat*, endowed with gratitude and divine plenitude, and the English world of ‘paradise’, saturated with moral aspiration and loss. Reading *The Paradise of Food* as a translation not merely of words but of affective and culinary idioms reveals how Jawed’s novel interrogates the very possibility of translating and domesticating culinary diction.

Bionote: Mohd Aqib is a Senior Research Fellow at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He is currently working on his PhD thesis titled ‘Aesthetics of Bilingualism in English Self-Translations of Three Post-Partition Urdu Novels’.

Monib Ahmad: “The Kitchen as a Battleground: A Study of the Indian National Army”

Abstract: The kitchen was one of the invisible battlegrounds where the Indian National Army (INA) fought against British imperialism during the Second World War. Lately there has been a renewed interest in the INA’s role in India’s freedom struggle; studies have looked at the INA from various perspectives such as political or military while many have focused on Subhas Chandra Bose’s personality. This paper will look at the often overlooked yet extremely significant contribution that the INA made towards breaking centuries old caste and communal barriers by uniting Indians under a common kitchen. The British had ensured social division in the British Indian Army by allocating separate kitchens for separate communities. Life writings of the officers and the soldiers of the INA will be used to examine how food, that had been used as an instrument of division until then, was radically recontextualized as a point of anti-colonial resistance. It will further posit that the unprecedented nature of the social reform that the INA was able to instill within its adherents vis-à-vis their relationship with each other and food was one of the primary reasons that gave it the explosive popularity that was witnessed during the INA trials held at the Red Fort (1945–46). INA’s assertion on the dinner table led to the creation of a modern Indian identity beyond caste and communal while subverting colonial expectations will be explored.

Bionote: Monib Ahmad is a PhD Scholar at the Department of English Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He is working on the life writings of the officer and soldiers of the Indian National Army.

Saim Raza: “Flavour of Shi’ism: Tabarruk in Moharram Mourning, Folk literature, and syncretic Awadhi culture.

Abstract: Tabarruk in South Asian Muslim tradition has been a very prominent aspect of religious gatherings and ceremonies. It is usually a food item distributed at the end of the religious event. With the change in time, this Tabarruk has undergone multiple changes. This paper focuses particularly on the Tabarruk distributed after Majalis (plural of Majlis), Shia Moharram Mourning ceremonies, in the region of Awadh. The Tabarruk is distributed among the attendees of Majlis by the host who organised the Majlis, and yields a powerful effect on how the majlis goes. This paper looks at the factors that determine the importance of Tabarruk in Shia culture. The paper will survey folk literature, stories and sermons, which mention the Tabarruk traditions of the past. Then, through interviews, the research will ascertain how Tabarruk is collectively perceived by participants in these mourning ceremonies. Finally, it will look at the changes that have occurred in Tabarruk with time, for instance a shift from sweets made by the local sweet shop to packaged food or cold drink bottles, and how this will alter the tradition of home-made or locally made Tabarruk. Theories on the intersection of food and religion, particularly those forwarded by Norman Wirzba, Christina Ward and Trudy Eden, will inform and aid this investigation. This research is likely to open the space for more inquiry into the _Shia_, Muslim and Awadhi food culture, which has many unexplored traditions like Nazr, Haazri, Sabeel, Fateha, Langar, Dastarkhwaan, Koonde, Faqashikani, Aftaar, Sahri, etc.

Bionote: Saim Raza is a Research Scholar at the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, India. He has published five research papers and presented at seven national and international conferences. He is a founding member of India’s first Digital Humanities organisation, Digital Humanities Alliance for Research and Teaching Innovations (DHARTI).

Saneya: “Zubaan ka Chatkara: Savoring the Women’s Language”

Abstract: One of the most striking features of BegumatiZubaan, the genderlect of the nineteenth-century Delhi spoken by women in zenana living under purdah, is undoubtedly its heavy reliance on the food and kitchen-based practices. In BegumatiZubaan, it is the domestic sphere of the bawarchikhana (extended kitchen) which becomes the pivot of all the moorings of the zenana subculture. This zubaan full of idiomatic expressions, taunts, blessings, terms of address and amusement, pejoratives, kosne (curses), taane, tishne tends itself so much to the food and kitchen; that the language itself is described in the terms of –and enjoyed for– its flavour (lutf) and relish. I use the metaphor of chatkara- the smacking sound made by lips indicating appreciation of taste of food- to highlight the symbiotic relations between the BegumatiZubaan and the kitchen and food.

Unlike the formal Urdu (of men), BegumatiZubaan borrows more from the vernaculars. These seemingly unpolished utterances are not to be dismissed as minor expressions of women. The micro utterances prevalent in the zenana can still be found in standard language. Expressions like Ye munh aur masoor ki dal, is an often quoted example that clearly explains the creative potential of the zenana women, as informed by her surrounding space of the kitchen. This dependence on the food and kitchen-based activities, is also on display in other zenana practices including rituals and rites, superstitions, ways to ward off evil etc. I postulate that the vocabulary and expressions of

BegumatiZubaan, based as they are inevitably on and in the domestic sphere of the kitchen, lend a deceptive simplicity and mundaneness to a language that is symptomatic of the complex workings of the zenana.

As eloquent indicators of women's social domain, these colourful expressions partake in the character of zenana. Originating in the kitchen, the graphic and witty utterings, bring out the most visible aspects of the speakers and their world. The sing-song rhythm and alliterative quality of the phrases, highlights the relish of this spoken tongue. This paper shall probe the centrality of food and kitchen-based practices that were the driving force of not only the BegumatiZubaan, but also marked the pivotal positioning of the kitchen in the domestic sphere of zenana.

Bionote: Saneya is Assistant Professor at Daulat Ram College in the North Campus of University of Delhi.

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Chair's Bionote: **Debashree Dattaray** is Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, India, and also serves as Coordinator of the Centre for Canadian Studies at the university. In 2025, she was selected as an International Fellow by the York Environmental Sustainability Institute (YESI) at the University of York, United Kingdom. Her previous international recognitions include the Fulbright Alumni Award (2019), the Shastri Mobility Programme at McGill University (2018), the CICOPS Fellowship at the University of Pavia (2014), the Fulbright-Nehru Visiting Lecturer Fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley (2013–2014), the Erasmus Mundus Europe Asia Fellowship at the University of Amsterdam (2012), and the Fulbright Doctoral Fellowship at the State University of New York, Stony Brook (2007–2008).

She is the author of *Oral Traditions of the North East: A Case Study of Karbi Oral Traditions* (Jadavpur University, 2015), and co-editor of several volumes including *At the Crossroads of Literature and Culture* (Primus, 2016), *Following Forkhead Paths: Discussions on the Narrative* (Setu, 2017), *Ecocriticism and Environment: Rethinking Literature and Culture* (Primus, 2017), *Literature and the Other Arts* (Jadavpur University Press, 2023), and *Finding Philosophers in Global Fiction* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

8.3 - Food as Metaphor and Memory

Madhumita Roy: "Sculpting Identity(s) through Food: A Critical Insight into Madhushree Ghosh's *Khabaar*

Abstract: Since time immemorial, culinary culture, the politics abounding in the kitchen space, and the practice of eating have found significant treatments in the literary texts that we, as readers, encounter every day. It is undeniable that in recent years, a spate of literature concerning culinary practices, habits of eating, and tracing family history through shared recipes has emerged to dominate the scenario of popular taste and critical reception. The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the food memoir, *Khabaar: An Immigrant Journey of Food, Memory, and Family* (2022) by Madhushree Ghosh to look at how food acts as a key instrument to explore the complicated intersection between the narrator's cooking/eating practices and her class position, gendered identity and also manifests her complex negotiation, as an immigrant, with the challenging living conditions in a foreign land. The paper will have three distinct sections, each dealing with one significant aspect of the enquiry. Using Pierre Bourdieu's idea of how one's aesthetic judgement/taste is informed by his/her class position, the first section of the paper will try to explore how eating/cooking preferences of the narrator

are strongly rooted in her class consciousness. The second section will attempt to manifest how the narrator's complicated relationship with the kitchen space, her elaborate acts of cooking meals for her South Indian in-laws, and her willful inheritance of recipes from Bengali parents can be read as serious instruments that frame her gendered identity. As its critical lens, this section will use Carole Counihan's argument that deciphers how one's gendered identity is established through a conscious performance of cooking/selecting menu/eating and other such food-related activities. Finally, the third and concluding section of the paper will try to decode the politics that lie dormant within the immigrant-narrator's inheritance of family recipes and her painstaking efforts to recreate her homeland through food. Arjun Appadurai's idea of looking at food as a viable medium of adhering to one's national identity which constantly encounters the threat of cultural erasure in a foreign land will be sought as a critical tool to establish the argument in this particular context.

Bionote: Madhumita Roy completed her PhD on "Rabindranath Tagore's Engagement with Science" from the Department of English, Visva-Bharati in 2022. During the initial years of her research she worked as a research assistant in the Kalanukramik Rabindra Rachanavali Project under Visva-Bharati. She also provided research assistance to Prof. Uma Dasgupta, India Institute for Advanced Studies, Shimla for the National Project: "Early World of Visva-Bharati-Santiniketan: Charles Andrews, Rabindranath Tagore, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru". She worked as a guest faculty in Visva-Bharati, and later on joined Adamas University, Kolkata as a full time Assistant Professor of English. Currently she is Associate Professor of English, Swami Vivekananda University, near Kolkata.

Pavani Akasha Premarathne: "Tasting Re-Orientalism: A Study of Food Markers in Running in the Family and Anil's Ghost"

Abstract: This study explores how Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (1982) and *Anil's Ghost* (2000) employ food references as cultural signifiers that construct and destabilise notions of memory and identity, while simultaneously revealing their complicity in re-Orientalist discourse. Food in these texts functions as more than sustenance or background detail; it emerges as markers that depict diasporic subjectivity, familial bonds, and collective memory. At the same time, such references participate in the exoticisation of Sri Lanka, transforming everyday practices into consumable cultural markers for a predominantly Western readership. Drawing on the theory of re-Orientalism, the study positions Ondaatje's narratives' markers of food within a discourse where "Orientals" themselves perpetuate selective Orientalisms. The theorisation is aimed at exploring how the novels' culinary imagery, while intimate and personal, also risks catering to the expectations of global literary markets that valorise cultural difference through exotic detail. The two novels, one a fictionalised memoir, the other historical fiction, are often analysed as quest narratives for identity, memory and truth, and seem less studied for the re-Orientalism underlining the documentation of culture via the markers of cuisine. The authority invested in these narratives, stemming from Ondaatje's international acclaim, both masks and legitimises these Orientalist cliches, enhancing their cultural credibility and marketability. Accordingly, the research study will conduct a textual analysis while employing the theoretical perspectives from the discourses of re-Orientalism and exoticisation by Lisa Lau and Graham Huggan. Therefore, this study attempts to analyse how in the novels Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* and *Anil's Ghost* the food functions as a site where cultural memory, identity, and re-Orientalist discourse intersect in Sri Lankan post-colonial diasporic writing.

Bionote: Pavani Premarathne, currently working as Assistant Lecturer at the University of Kelaniya. She has published and presented several research papers, alongside her dissertation. Her research

interests include South Asian Anglophone literature, magical realism, re-Orientalism, decoloniality, etc.

Swatee Sinha: “Food as Metaphor and Historical Archive in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997)”

Abstract: The proposed paper uses food as an anchor to navigate through the complex lyrical texture of Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). It looks into the culinary semiotics and sensory history of food metaphors in the novel. In Roy’s novel food isn’t just background but opens up a world of sensory detail through its references to syrupy sweetness, jam and custard, linked to childhood memory. The references to foreign brands, processed preserves and ‘orange drink’ become synonymous with colonial leftovers. Caste-class distinctions are also reinforced through rituals associated with the cooking, preparation and serving of food. The rich, tactile textures of taste mirror bodily desire evoking eroticism and intimacy. As an organic concoction food is susceptible to slow fermentation, rot and decay and becomes an analogy for political and social corruption. Roy lingers on smell, taste, texture through references to jam, custard, syrup, banana, pickle, curry, drink, fruit, rice, coconut. The article is interested in plotting how the micropolitics of food in the domestic circuit of the kitchen, pickle factory, and Ayemenem House where food gone bad signals a decay in relationships interact with the micropolitics of food history embedded in the social dynamics of caste and class and colonial history evoked through references to English cake, jam, and custard. Paradise Pickles and Preserves the pickle factory run by the Ipe family becomes an anchor point symbolic of the processes of preservation and decay intimately connected with mnemonic processes, Esther and Rahel’s childhood, colonial residues, caste transgressions and forbidden love. The pickle factory, with its paradox of preservation and spoilage, emerges as the central metaphor, interlacing personal memory with collective history. In doing so, the novel transforms culinary processes into a conduit for rethinking politics, memory, and desire in postcolonial India interlacing the strands of domestic narrative with broader socio-historical and cultural narratives.

Bionote: Swatee Sinha is Assistant Professor of English under the West Bengal College Service Commission. She holds a PhD in Literature from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur. Her research interests lie at the intersections of Postcolonial Theory, Indian Writing in English, and Literature and Philosophy. Her work has been published in national and international journals, including Routledge and Edinburgh University Press.

Asit Kumar Biswal: “A Taste of Another’s Memory: Food, Remembering, and Relationality in Select Indian Poetry”.

Abstract: In Agyeya’s poem “Cheeni Chai Peete Hue”, the speaker is remembering his father and his complex relationship with him, wondering if “it’s not a good thing to think about fathers”, while the speaker in Anuj Lugun’s poem “Mahuai Gandh” which is written in the form of a love letter from labourers to their wives, the speaker is enamoured by the mahua-like smell of his beloved’s hair which pulls him back to his village. In contrast, if we look at Rabi Singh’s poem “Atah Premika Katha”, one is immediately struck by the revolutionary Marxist persona of the speaker who rejects the profession of love from a girl saying, “I need a fistful of rice, I have no desire for your youthful arms”. Here, food or lack thereof becomes a powerful image to voice the situation of the masses whose suffering the speaker cannot ignore since “he

is not [the Romantic] poet Byron”. Food becomes a medium for the poetic self to relate to another in thought, in memory and in assertion of difference.

In this paper, I attempt a comparative reading of select lyric poetry which employs food as theme from different modern Indian languages to understand how food serves as a device for memory, desire, as well as resistance in different texts. How do these texts use food as a theme to elicit different affects? What kind of a relationality between the self and the other can be seen in the poems vis-a-vis food and related acts like eating? How do these texts address questions of remembrance, desire and dissent through food? What kind of a phenomenology of food do we encounter in these texts?

Bionote: Asit Kumar Biswal is a Ph.D. scholar at the Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad, India. He holds an MA in Comparative Literature and a BA in English Language and Literature from The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. His areas of interest include comparative literary practice, Indian literature, literary historiography, comparative poetics and philosophy of language.

Tea 3:45 – 3-50

3:50-4:30 PM - Poetry Readings

4:30 -5:00 PM: Cultural Program: Lecture Demonstration (Hindustani Classical Music)
by Sr. Prof. K.S. Vaishali

5:00-6:00: Annual General Meeting

Conference Dinner: 7:00-9:00 PM

Day 3: Saturday, February 14, 2026

9:30-10:45 AM Parallel Session 9 Room No: LH-1

Chair’s bionote: Sanjukta Naskar is faculty in the Department of English at Janki Devi Memorial College, Delhi University. Her area of interest among others lies in Folklore and Caste in Bengal. She has presented papers in various national and international conferences. She has also received the Charles Wallace Trust Scholarship in 2010 during the course of her PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

9.1- Food, Diaspora, and Cultural Identity

Muskan Kanodia: “Tasting Cultures: Food and Ambiguous Identity in Diasporic Fiction”

Abstract: Culinary practices are of great significance in contributing to a unique diasporic identity, with food preparation and consumption acting as means of cultural assertion. Functioning as a ‘metalanguage’ for the diasporic consciousness, food is harnessed varyingly to express a longing for home and a connection with cultural roots, as well as to make a case for seamless integration into the host culture.

This paper seeks to explore the portrayal of food as a medium of nostalgia in diasporic short stories, applying Svetlana Boym’s concept of reflective vs restorative nostalgia to Attia Hosain’s *Of Memories and Meals* and Adrian Carton’s *Remembering Kedgerie*. Considering diasporic individuals as straddling the line between the two temporal and spatial worlds they inhabit, this analysis foregrounds the ceaseless tension characterising their existence—between the assertion of an

‘authentic’ identity through food in order to gain ‘culinary citizenship’ and cultural validation, and the impulse to seek acceptance and integration into the host culture.

Finally, this study examines diasporic food narratives as exacerbating culinary tensions both through the East-West divide between individualist and collectivist food cultures, and through gastro-politics that reinforce gender binaries across public and private spaces.

Bionote: Muskan Kanodia is a final year student pursuing M.A. in English from the University of Delhi. Hailing from Kolkata, she is an alumna of Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, Pune, and her research interests include gender studies, feminist literature, postcolonial studies, critical theory, food studies, and more.

Tabinda Sadiq: “Kitchens of Exile: Food, Memory, and Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies*”

Abstract: This paper will look at how kitchens and food appear in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* and what they mean for people living away from their homelands. In Lahiri’s stories, kitchens are not just places for cooking — they become spaces where memory, emotion, and identity come together. Through recipes, spices, and everyday meals, characters try to hold on to a sense of “home” while adjusting to life in new countries. For many of Lahiri’s immigrant characters, the kitchen works like an archive, keeping alive family traditions and cultural practices across distance and time. At the same time, these spaces are full of feeling — they reflect loneliness, longing, care, and connection. Women, in particular, often carry the responsibility of maintaining food traditions, which shows both their role as preservers of culture and the weight of domestic expectations placed on them. By paying attention to kitchens and food across the collection, this paper would look at how Lahiri shows how immigrant lives are shaped not only by the public world of work and migration but also by the private world of meals and kitchens. These spaces reveal how exile is lived every day, through taste, memory, and the struggle to belong. In this way, Lahiri turns the kitchen into a powerful symbol of how the Global South’s cultures travel, survive, and change in the diaspora.

Bionote: Tabinda Sadiq is a research scholar in the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her research is in the area of cultural studies and feminism. She was Fulbright FLTA at Wake Forest University, US in the year 2020-21. Her postgraduate dissertation was titled, “Raising the Banner of Revolt: The Life and Works of Dr. Rashid Jahan.”

Toposhree Taraphdar: “Exploring the Representation of Santali Food Culture in Santali literature”

Abstract: Food is one of the essential requirements for survival. The food system which consists of stages beginning from production to consumption, is not a linear process instead, it is complex interconnected processes deeply embedded in cultural heritage and social identity. In this context the indigenous food culture of tribal community in India provides a rich and nuance understanding of how food, culture, and social identity, are intertwined. The Santali food culture represents the cultural tradition and historical lineage in the food culture. The Santali communities which are located mainly in the eastern part of India have close relationships with the nature. The forest has not been just a source of food for their livelihood rather it symbolizes their culture, belief and social structure. The literature on Santali food and culture shows a fragmented and misrepresentation of Santali food. Moreover, the early work by Missionaries between 1854-1940 which includes writings of P.O. Bodding and Cecil H. Bompas provide valuable documentation of Santali rituals, social customs, and their

symbiotic relationship with nature. These early writings show how food, nature, and spiritual life were intricately linked in the Santal worldview. In addition to this scholars like Marine Carine, P.P. Hembrom provides insightful findings on how traditional knowledge (i.e. ethno-medicine) is embedded in their food choices, including the use of medicinal plants, in seasonal dietary adaptations.

Besides this most of the existing literature portrayed Santali food as a ‘famine or starvation food’ which has no dietary advantages. Accordingly, this portrayed picture of Santali food culture has created a chain effect for which most of the studies on Santali food is based on developmental themes which includes scientific studies related to nutritional and health parameters. So, the main aim of this paper is to highlight the indigenous food practices of Santali community by mapping it from the available literature.

Bionote: Toposhree Taraphdar is currently an ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow undergoing her research in the discipline of Cultural Studies, with a specific focus on the development of Santali folklore. She received her Ph.D. in English from Utkal University. Her research interests include Indian Writing in English, Folklore Studies, and Science Communication.

Haadiyah Marikar: “Get the ghozhumba kanji, it’s nombuthoraketime: The Intersection of Food, Language, and Identity in the Study of Sri Lankan Englishes Spoken by Moors”

Abstract: While the relationship between language and identity as well as food and identity have been explored the former two of the pairs are of recent interest. Linguistic ethnographers and foodway scholars have most recently investigated the collaboration between language and food in meaning making in various contexts. An interesting outcome in a study to expand and dehegemonise the definitions of language varieties such as Sri Lankan Englishes by placing the spotlight on how minorities such as Sri Lankan Moors, is the significant discourse surrounding and using food. Sri Lankan Moors in their use of SLE draw from their community and religious identity, an area that has yet to be studied. As the researcher is a member of the Sri Lankan Moor community the study collects data through four consensually recorded interviews in the home of informants and two focus group discussion with members in the community, as well as the YouTube series “O.L.M. Macan Markar and his Legacy: A Documentary Film” by Farah and Ruzla Macan Markar. Through a content analysis of the collected data the study observes that a major component in the construction of the religious and community minded nature of the Sri Lankan Muslim identity is the discourse of food. Through borrowings used and adapted by members of the community and the analysis of mentioned traditional practices, food and beverage items, specific meals, and the discourse on time and food the study notes the role of the kitchen and food practices as an archive of language in identity construction of the Sri Lankan Moor community. Thus, the study is indicative of the complexities of how our identities are constructed through the unlikely intersection between language, food, and identity, arising from spotlighting underrepresented communities in the study of language varieties in the Global South.

Bionote: Haadiyah Marikar is currently working as Assistant Lecturer at the Department of English, University of Kelaniya. Her interests include sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, cultural identities, media and the digital, and reading books for fun. In her free time she likes to look at crochet projects she hopes to make someday.

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Chair's Bionote: **Jabeen Yasmeen** is an Assistant Professor in Vellore Institute of Technology, Andhra Pradesh. She is a doctoral graduate from Indian Institute of Technology Bombay. Her dissertation was on Narrating the Nellie Massacre of 1983.

9.2 - Forbidden Flavors: Taboos and Transgression

Maziah Shaaz: "Kitchen, Body, and Text: Food and Menstrual Taboos in South Asian Narratives"

Abstract: Food is undeniably one of the primary sources of sustenance other than water, air and shelter. With growing concerns about the collective decline in human health, the concept of mindful eating has become a part of the discourse. Food and food practices are now understood as cultural markers that encode and decode personal, social, cultural and political identity owing to class, caste, religion and gender. Food is the language of hospitality and inclusion that fosters a feeling of shared interest and well-being. But menstruation inverts this symbolism. It also marks the moment when food practices shift from being inclusive to discriminatory. In South Asian societies, menstruation is often marked by restrictions around food and kitchens, where women are barred from cooking, excluded from communal meals, or forbidden to touch items like pickles, milk, and fermented goods. The kitchen, which is conventionally a gendered space, becomes inaccessible to menstruating women. The origin of menstrual myths with respect to the development of culture and society holds the answers to the taboo and myths pervading the modern time. Literary representation of menstruation is a sad affair but writers like Shashi Deshpande, Bapsi Sidhwa, Sujata Bhatt, Volga, Bama, Kamala Das have brought these experiences to light through their writings and interrogated these rituals, offering both testimony and critique. This paper takes up an interdisciplinary approach to establish the understanding of menstrual myths and taboos. It reads the kitchen as a contested space, the body as a site of cultural inscription, and the text as a medium of resistance and remembrance in South Asian cultural narratives.

Bionote: Maziah Shaaz has pursued her PhD from the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her areas of research and interests include works on Gender Studies, Ecofeminism and Film Studies. Her doctoral thesis focuses on the representations and misrepresentations of menstruation in literary texts and explores the origin of the menstrual myth across cultures. Beyond academia, she has a keen interest in reading detective fiction and is especially drawn to the cinematic world of psychological thrillers. A passionate gastronome, she also nurtures a love for travel, with the hope of exploring diverse cultures through their local cuisines.

Amandeep Kaur: Phantasmagoria, Disgust, and the Kitchen in Khalid Jawed's *The Paradise of Food*

Abstract: This paper examines Khalid Jawed's *The Paradise of Food* as a literary staging of the kitchen as a phantasmagorical arena, where nourishment and destruction collapse into one another. The central research questions are: how does Jawed mobilise disgust to interrogate the fragility of cultural and moral boundaries, and in what ways does the novel's kitchen function as a site of abjection that unsettles notions of purity, civility, and domestic order? Building on Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgement, which situates disgust as an anti-aesthetic affect tied to the lower senses of taste and smell, this study argues that the novel uses visceral imagery—spoiled milk, burning flesh, polluted water—to foreground disgust as a persistent mode of memory that resists sublimation into aesthetic pleasure. At the same time, drawing on Julia

Kristeva's theorisation of abjection, the analysis highlights how the novel dismantles distinctions between food and waste, body and environment, creation and decay. Women's repetitive domestic labour, simultaneously oppressive and sublimated, emerges as a channel of both repression and creativity, further complicating the kitchen's role as a site of violence, invention, and existential precarity. Ultimately, *The Paradise of Food* deploys phantasmagoria, disgust, and abjection to reveal the kitchen as a metaphorical combat zone where the illusions of morality and civility are stripped away, exposing hunger as the universal yet destabilising force at the core of human existence.

Bionote: Dr. Amandeep Kaur is Assistant Professor of English at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

M.M. Shakya Nethmini: "Alien Appetites: Survival through Transgressive Consumption in Sayaka Murata's *Earthlings*"

Abstract: Food extends beyond its perceived primary provision of sustenance to function as a medium through which the interior and the exterior, the self and the other are blurred. Acts of consumption, whether socially sanctioned or taboo, shape and reshape one's binds to culture, either aligning one with societal norms or positioning one as the abject other to be suppressed by the symbolic. In Japanese literature, food has been a constant presence although it has not always been deemed worthy of analysis. While contemporary research on Japanese literature does demonstrate an interest in the symbolic function of food, *Earthling* by Sayaka Murata has not been subjected to a comprehensive study on its use of food since existing research often focus only on its scenes of cannibalism. This study traces Natsuki's engagement with food in all its forms, from normative, communal consumption in childhood to ageusia prompted by sexual abuse, the sterile, non-normative food practices she shares with her husband in the city, and finally, the consumption of human flesh, first cooked, then raw, with Yuu and Tomoya. The study draws on Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, Claude Levi-Strauss' analysis of the raw and the cooked and its subsequent reconceptualization in relation to Japanese culinary practices by Nicolas Baumert and Ikuhiro Fukuda. The study argues that Natsuki's progressive departure from normative consumption and identity, and the abject reconceptualization of what constitutes life-giving, consumable and communal in terms of food, offers reprieve from the demands of the heteronormative, reproduction-centered, capitalist society of Japan. Further, a Global South reading of the text that is attuned to cultural hegemony and Japan's use of *washoku* as soft power, perceives such abject food practices to be a subversion of the nation's carefully crafted image with regard to identity and food. Yet, such revolt is not without limits: Natsuki and her community of self-proclaimed aliens may be swollen bellied with the abject that threatens to multiply but they remain trapped within the world of the earthlings with no spaceship in sight.

Bionote: M.M. Shakya Nethmini is an Assistant Lecturer at the Department of English, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. She is a graduate from the Department of English, University of Peradeniya. Her research interests lie primarily in Gender Studies and Psychoanalysis.

Shreyasi Dasgupta "Tasting Transgressions: Understanding Feminist Aesthetic Emancipation through Food"

Abstract: Literary interpretations view food not as a mere object, but as a complex system that consumes a significant portion of our everyday lives. The everyday gustatory experiences

become a mode of accessing the knowledge of human relationships in and with their world. Based on four short stories by Ambai (C.S. Lakshmi), “Journey 3”, “Forest”, “A Kitchen in the Corner of the House” and “Wheelchair”, this paper would attempt a reading of taste as an aesthetic experience that allows the becoming of a liberated female subjectivity, unburdened by gendered expectations. Ambai explores the possibilities of *mukti* for her female protagonists whose gendered existences are otherwise conditioned by the intersections of class, caste, and religion. Ambai’s feminist intervention of the idea of *mukti* rests on the process of self-realisation and the formation of a free-thinking mind that defies societal norms. The emancipated mind is empathetic but has a formidable projection of individual values and desires, and can trace a meaning of her existence through the awareness of her relation with the world. Taking a cue from Nicola Perullo’s method of philosophising with food, this paper argues that Ambai does not partake in the philosophy of food, but attempts to philosophise the burdened existence and the search for *mukti* with food. Even though gender roles assigned by patriarchal institutions influence women’s gastronomic engagements, food bears the stories of women’s lives due to their long association with it. In these short stories, moving beyond gendered codes, food enables women to transgress social and cultural boundaries. This paper shall try to understand the different strategies deployed in Ambai’s feminist narration of resisting both the blatant patriarchy of institutions such as the family and the latent patriarchy of progressive socialist ideologies through culinary representations. Drawing on the discourses on gender and aesthetics by Carolene Korsmeyer, this research aims to theorise taste as an aesthetic experience that enables a feminist revision of artistic sublimity.

Bionote: Shreyasi is a PhD Scholar at the Department of Comparative Literature in Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. She is a food enthusiast. Her ongoing research focuses on the interactions of food, language and gender.

Room No LH-3

Chair’s Bionote: **Shashikala Assella** is a Senior lecturer attached to the Department of English, University of Kelaniya and is the current chair of Sri Lanka Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. She has published and researched on diasporic women’s writing, culinary fiction and Sri Lankan women’s writing.

9.3- Mosaics of Food: Diverse Voices

Srijoni Banerjee: “The Daily Dole of Watery Rice-Lentil Porridge”: Food, Solidarity, Resilience, and the Interconnectedness of Memory and Identity in Ghosh’s *Victory Colony, 1950*”

Abstract: Food—whether access to it, denial, or refusal—is ubiquitous in Bhaswati Ghosh’s *Victory Colony, 1950* (2020), a novel set in the context of refugee resettlement in post-Partition West Bengal, and is used as a device through which the material and psychological conditions of the refugees are revealed by their relationship to sustenance. This paper undertakes a close reading of the novel, showing how food and foodways signify social cohesion, solidarity, and resilience, while revealing the interconnection of memory and identity.

By referring to instances in the novel where food becomes the pretext for initiating friendships, the paper explores how solidarity reflects the material conditions of the refugees. It not only examines

how disruptive events can dissolve social differences—a process that often manifests through the act of cooking together—but also draws attention to those instances when commensality breaks down. The paper delves into the concept of touch, how it translates into the foodscape in a society that heavily regulates touch, and the relationship between morality, substantive freedom, and economic security. Further, it deconstructs the gruel served to refugees residing in the Government refugee camp, and, drawing on food studies and theories of edibility, shows how this food fails to meet the criteria by which edibles are qualified as such. Lastly, the paper addresses how the kitchen—one of the important sites of victuals—is presented in the novel and how it brings together the concepts of solidarity, resilience, and dignity.

Bionote: Srijoni Banerjee is a doctoral student of English at the University of Delhi. She earned her Master's in English from Presidency University, Kolkata (2017–2019) and has taught part-time at TINT, Rajarhat. She has published articles in national and international journals, a book chapter, and a short story with Samyukta Fiction.

Beant Kaur: “Food as Character: The Cultural Politics of PattalKaav in Punjabi Weddings”

Abstract: This paper examines PattalKaav, a ritual-based oral genre in Punjabi literature, through the lens of food studies, engaging Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, gastro-criticism, and performance theory (Victor Turner; Catherine Bell). Performed at weddings in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Punjab, the ritual of Pattal where a woman from the bride's side to symbolically “tie” the food through song, while a man from the wedding party “untied” it with counter-verses, thereby permitting the feast to begin. Food here functioned as a symbolic system mediating gender, authority, and identity. The ritual placed food at the centre of Punjabi weddings, called the khatti roti (the midday feast of the second day). Women enacted symbolic authority by controlling the release of food, yet their exclusion from the feast underscored male privilege. The songs catalogue a wide repertoire—sweets (laddoo, jalebi, barfi), vegetables (pumpkin, okra, brinjal), dairy (lassi, ghee, pede), pickles, grains (wheat, maize, millet), fruits (mango, guava, pomegranate), and meats (jhatka, keema). These references provide a cultural archive of Punjabi foodways, embodying courage, resilience, hospitality, and abundance—the very qualities celebrated as the essence of Punjabi character.

Today, however, with the decline of PattalKaav, these traditional foodways have been replaced in wedding culture by fast food, pizza, soft drinks, and processed items. The erosion of ritual food is inseparable from the erosion of the cultural ethos it sustained. The decline of PattalKaav is not only the decline of traditional food but the decline of Punjabi character itself. PattalKaav shows us that food is character—and with its disappearance, Punjabi identity itself is being re-scripted by the homogenizing pressures of modern consumer culture.

Bionote: Beant Kaur is a research scholar in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Panjab University, Chandigarh. She had completed her MPhil from the same department. Her academic pursuits focus on exploring the intersections of literature, culture, and identity. She is passionate about revealing complex stories about the literature, culture, and folklore of Punjab. As a dedicated scholar, Beant has participated in conferences, seminars, and publications to bridge diverse perspectives within her field of study.

Tanya Sharma: “Humiliation on a Platter: The Global North consuming the Global South in *Succession* Season Two (2019)”

Abstract: The affective economy of food is layered with the intertwined practices of cooking and consumption, each carrying substance to it, both in relation to the other and in isolation. In a similar way, the complex cultural matrix of global south gains definition and meaning through its representational entanglements with the global north. This paper examines how food, especially its excess functions as a marker of power in *Succession* Season Two while the global south becomes conspicuous only through its absence. It argues that select scenes from *Succession* Season Two become emblematic of class humiliation and theatrical abundance at the expense of othering of global south. By examining this asymmetry through Renata Motta's critique of food movements, which argues that these very food movements make inequalities visible, this paper contends that *Succession* dramatizes the inverse, as its foodscapes normalize erasure by transforming excess into a mere background spectacle. This paper identifies how in the said show, corporate negotiations are depicted as proxy conflicts reflecting the wealth and influence of white supremacy, rendering global inequities just structurally present but silenced in the background. This paper, thus, is an attempt to identify the microcosm of south within the elite north through the expansive culinary scenes.

Bionote: Tanya Sharma, is a full time PhD scholar at the Department Of English in Guru Nanak Dev University. Her area of research is food in cinema.

Neenu Kumar: “Cinematic Kitchens: Use of Food Items, Memory, and Ethnicity”

Abstract: Beyond only providing sustenance, cuisine in Hindi cinema serves as a crucial societal marker that may be used to enact proximity, negotiate structures of power, and express individuality. Cinematic representations of food, from home kitchens to street food vendors, become emblematic spaces where societal shifts, contemporary times, and culture converge. While *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977) famously portrays collective dining as an analogy for democratic unification, films like *Bawarchi* (1972) depict the kitchen as a place of tranquillity where shared meals bring fractured households together. On the other hand, *Lagaan* (2001) and *Swades* (2004) highlight shared meals and daily food customs to highlight agrarian cohesion, kinship, and the ethical basis of social existence.

A notable change is provided by the more contemporary *Sharmaji Namkeen* (2022), which challenges patriarchal presumptions that limit the culinary arts to women by focusing on a senior widower who finds new meaning in cooking. In this instance, cookery turns into a place for masculine exploration of oneself and reconnecting with society, demonstrating how food can change urban connections and transmissible patterns. Food also engages in negotiations between traditionalism and contemporary ambitions in films like *Ramji Londonwaley* (2005) and *Cheeni Kum* (2007), which place food cultures within transnational channels of immigration and multiculturalism.

This essay makes the case that food is portrayed in Hindi cinema along three interconnected praxis: (i) food as a symbol of societal integration and segregation, especially across socioeconomic and caste lines; (ii) food as gender-specific work, which both supports and challenges male-dominated position; and (iii) food as an international resource that embodies multicultural sense of self and diasporic memory. The paper shows that food in Hindi cinema is not just an aesthetic element but also an ideological discourse — one that incorporates recollections, belonging, and authority within changing paradigms of Indian society — by interpreting these cinematic foodscapes.

Bionote: Prof. Neenu Kumar teaches English at Aditi Mahavidyalaya, University of Delhi. She is recipient of several awards: Best Teacher Awardee by N. C. T. of Delhi 2014-2015; Certificate of Honor by Aditi Mahavidyalaya, University of Delhi for the College Lecturer Award-2015; Ecologist and Environment Health Educationist Award—2017; Social Worker and Nutrition

Educationist Award—2018; Environment Awareness and Promoting Girl Education Award—2020. She has translated Punjabi poems and short stories in English and published them. She translated Couplets of Baba Farid from Punjabi to English for the serial, *Tabbar* aired on Sony Liv TV. She is a poet and short story writer in English and Hindi. Her poems and stories have been published in anthologies and journals. She has authored *Organizational Behaviour* in 2024 and has edited several books. She has completed Delhi University funded project “LOCATING WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF PARTITION: AN ACCOUNT OF LIVED EXPERIENCES AND UNHEARD VOICES.” She has presented several papers in International and National Conferences. She has published many articles and chapters in journals and books.

Tea: 10:45-11:00 AM

11:00-01:00 PM: LH-1Session: CDN Prize Session

Chair: M. Asaduddin & Debashree Dattaray

Aalisha Chauhan: “Culinary Cartographies of Partition: Food as Cultural Archive in Digital Spaces”

Abstract: This paper examines how food functions as a living archive for the oral histories and traumatic memories of the Indian Partition of 1947. It argues that food serves as a potent archive of memory and identity, particularly in contexts of displacement and cultural rupture of the 1947 Indian Partition. The culinary practices become mnemonic devices that evoke ancestral memories of survival, migration and loss, allowing displaced communities to reconstruct fragmented histories and maintain cultural continuity. Food acts as a dynamic repository of collective memory through the preservation of recipes and cooking techniques. The research employs digital ethnography to analyse user-generated culinary content on social media platforms. Through analyses of hashtags such as #partitionfoodtales, #partitionstories, and #partitiondiaries, digital platforms facilitate intergenerational dialogue and community building, while food featured in these posts serves as a kind of cartographic mapping of the Partition culinary recipes across dispersed geographies. When ‘Nivaala.co’ posts a moong dal kachori recipe (Poorni), which has been in one family for four generations and crosses borders it treats the recipe as an heirloom and allows for a cross-cultural semblance. Digital platforms, such as Instagram, enable users to preserve sensory memories through a visual narrative format that documents lost kitchens and records recipe modifications necessitated by displacement. This paper further relies on qualitative content analysis and postmemory theory to study how displaced communities utilise culinary practices as a mechanism for cultural identity reconstruction. This research thus demonstrates how analysing food as an archive provides a profound understanding of cultural loss and the enduring legacy of Partition in shaping personal and collective identities through digital gastronomy.

Bionote: Aalisha Chauhan is Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Government College Solan, H.P. She submitted her Doctoral research thesis (PhD in English) at the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University. Her research areas include the field of Indian Partition, Literary Poetics, and Memory Studies. Apart from her academics, she has experience in news-making and has interned with two print media houses, namely *The Indian Express* and *The Tribune*.

Aniket Kumar Jha: “Taboo, Temptation and Taste: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Pleasure and Repression in Food Porn and Mukbang”

Abstract: This paper examines the psychoanalytic concepts of surplus enjoyment and surplus repression to analyse digital food culture, specifically food porn and mukbang videos. Surplus enjoyment, a concept developed by Lacan, describes a form of pleasure that exceeds basic satisfaction and often involves elements of discomfort or transgression. Food porn and mukbang videos exemplify this through heightened sensory stimulation and performative excess, providing viewers with an intensified experience of desire and fantasy. These videos invite vicarious indulgence, turning consumption into a spectacle that challenges conventional boundaries.

Simultaneously, Herbert Marcuse's theory of surplus repression offers a critical framework to understand the social constraints imposed beyond biological necessity. Marcuse identifies surplus repression as "the restrictions necessitated by social domination" (*Eros and Civilization*), which serve to regulate and restrain human instincts to maintain capitalist productivity and social order. Mukbang and food porn videos act as sites where such repression is both revealed and subverted by displaying behaviour typically stigmatised, including overeating and messy consumption. This antagonism exposes underlying anxieties about the body, control, and socially acceptable eating practices.

Together, these concepts reveal a dialectic between individual desire and social regulation within these media forms. Food porn and mukbang videos offer both gratification and subversion, creating digital spaces where culturally repressed desires around food and the body find momentary liberation. As Marcuse asserts, human "desires must conform to the desires of the apparatus" under capitalism, reflecting the tension between instinct and control. This psychoanalytic lens thus illuminates why these videos captivate, highlighting how pleasure, repression, and digital media intertwine to shape contemporary understandings of consumption, identity, and social norms.

Bionote: Aniket Kumar Jha (23PHD0531) is a second year PhD candidate at Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore. His thesis is grounded in horror studies and cinema in particular. He completed his undergraduate degree at Shivaji College, D.U. in English Literature. After that, he finished his Master's degree in the same at English and Foreign Language University, Shillong.

Ashima Shrawan: "Recipes of Resistance and Resilience: Food, Caste, and Politics in Rajyashri Goody's Eat with Great Delight and Writing Recipes"

Abstract: The present paper interrogates the intersections of food, caste, and cultural memory in the artistic practice of Rajyashri Goody. By focusing on two of her most evocative projects—her "recipe booklets" (*Writing Recipes*) and the photographic series *Eat with Great Delight*—the paper questions how food functions simultaneously as a site of exclusion and as a medium of resistance within Dalit life-worlds.

Goody's *Writing Recipes* transforms fragments from Dalit autobiographies—often references to hunger, leftover food, or the indignities of eating—into reimagined recipes that are at once poignant and unworkable. The paper asserts that this act of rewriting interrupts dominant culinary narratives which privilege upper-caste cuisines. Goody's works reclaim stigmatized food memories as political archives. Similarly, *Eat with Great Delight* draws from family photographs to foreground moments of ordinariness and joy around meals, thereby resisting reductive representations of Dalit experience as solely marked by deprivation.

The present study examines how Goody's multimodal approach—blending text, photography, and visual installation—creates alternative aesthetic practices that challenge both archival silences and the politics of taste. It further questions how everyday acts of eating, when reframed through Dalit

perspectives, destabilize notions of food as merely cultural heritage, insisting instead on its role in negotiating dignity, belonging, and survival. To conclude, the paper asserts that Goody's works compel us to read food as a deeply political medium in India, where histories of caste exclusion continue to shape access, representation, and memory. By foregrounding Dalit foodways as sites of resistance, Goody's works extend the discourse on food cultures beyond aesthetics to encompass power, struggle, and resilience.

Bionote: Ashima Shrawan is Assistant Professor of English at Shri Bhagwandas Adarsh Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, Haridwar (Affiliated to Central Sanskrit University, New Delhi). She has published articles and papers in various journals, including *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (published by Springer, Netherlands), Scopus Indexed *IUP Journal of English Studies* and *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, Sahitya Academy's *Indian Literature* and the reputed *Himanjali*, published by the prestigious Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. Her paper was shortlisted for the prestigious C.D. Narasimhaiah Prize at the IACLALS Annual Conference in BITS Goa in 2024.

Gaurav Singh: "Performative Bereavement and Culinary Healing: Food, Death, and Widowhood in Chitrita Banerji's Culinary Memoirs"

Abstract: Culinary memoirs flourish on gustatory nostalgia to represent a memoirist's quotidian life-recollections as sensory archives. Food historians and diasporic culinary memoirists like Chitrita Banerji have explicated the feminist scholarship of Food Studies by intertwining feminised culinary scapes with the metaphysics of death and mourning. Banerji's life-writings interspersed with recipes and culinary memories offer critical perspectives on grief and resilience. The synesthetic memories in Banerji's food memoirs have narrativised performative bereavement and subsequent culinary healing. This essay intends to contextualise memories of death through recipes and food practices in Chitrita Banerji's *The Hour of the Goddess: Memories of Women, Food and Ritual in Bengal* (2001) and *A Taste of My Life: A Memoir in Essays and Recipes* (2021) to situate it within contemporary gastro-feminist discourse in the global south. The essay will problematise the intersection of gastro semantics of widowhood with female genealogy by mapping lived experiences of Banerji, her mother, and her grandmother through the framework of culinary performances. The cultural cosmopolitanism of culinary memorialisation in the Indian diaspora and the emergence of a transnational Bengali identity in Banerji's food memoirs have undergone scholarly interventions. However, the discourse of death, contested widowhood, ritualised social and personal mourning along with healing through Banerji's food-voice has not been interrogated. Drawing on theoretical insights from Barbara Frey Waxman, Anita Mannur, Barbara Parker, Arjun Appadurai, Candi K. Cann, Merry White, Richard Schechner, among others, the essay will underscore interlinkages between memory, performance and gustatory coping through critical discourse analysis. The alleviating properties of Banerji's food memories and recipes in navigating through a heterotopic diasporic feminised space as a transnational subject by negotiating familial and marital bereavement will be assessed.

Bionote: Gaurav Singh is Assistant Professor at the Department of English, The Bhawanipur Education Society College, Kolkata. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Food Studies from the Post Graduate and Research Department of English, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous) Kolkata. He holds an M.Phil. Degree in Women's Studies.

Sanyogita Singh: “Food and Futurity: Agrarian Songs at the Edge of Capital and Commons”

Abstract: Haryanvi oral tradition enacts relational knowledge through food, as “kaccheneemb ki nimbolisaamankadkadaave re” sustains cultural memory and cycles of nourishment. In one birth-song, the craving for jalebi is satisfied by mortgaging utensils and paying interest. Meanwhile, contemporary music recodes this repertoire into registers of bravado and aspiration. In “Yaar HaryaneTe,” virility is anchored to food (“choorma re khake ne yogaatpaala se”). In “Bhoj,” braggadocio thrives on edibility and land speculation (“sookhesookhepadethamne ghee dunga main bette ... karlobhoj”). Taste is yoked to property and property to selfhood in the cultural lexicon of modern Haryana. The edible is a tool of performative competence, staging the self in a competitive, commodified sonic space. Alongside consumption’s spectacle, vernacular also chronicles subjectivity in pragmatic intimacy through food. “Jat Clan” fashions the “rude” tone and culinary specificity as performative markers of situated competence (“hokka aur khat nidekhe, ... Boli thodi rude hai, different food hai”). However, women’s ritual labour, songs of care and the authority of transmission, is practically effaced in this digital food-/sound-scape of Haryana as symbolic kinship is annexed by masculine prestige. Guided by Banaji’s analysis of neoliberal reforms and erosion of agrarian solidarities, this paper situates such sonic/gastronomic transformations as a cultural fracture and within Franco Berardi’s vision of a future foreclosed. Here affect drains into presentist excess and spectacle, and rural maschismo hardens into an anxious overcompensation for exhausted solidarities. Further, drawing on Maurizio Lazzarato’s notion of the event, the paper reads these food images in songs as occasions that conscript affect into circuits of commodified attention. Haryanvi music thus emerges as a sonic apparatus of abandonment. From village ritual to digital spectacle, the paper reveals how food in agrarian memory and neoliberal desire enter an uneasy pact where taste manufactures dispossession.

Bionote: Sanyogita Singh is Assistant Professor of English at Govt College Malerkotla. Her PhD thesis delves into the varied textures of time, matter and their interactions.

Valedictory Address

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Chair’s Bio: Swati Pal, Professor and Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi, is a Fulbright-Nehru fellowship scholar, a Charles Wallace scholar and the first Asian scholar to receive the John McGrath Theatre Studies Scholarship at Edinburgh University. Author of several books on theatre, creative and academic writing, her newspaper articles articulate her views on education. Her areas of research interest include performance studies and cultural history. She translates from Hindi to English and several of her translations have been published. She writes poetry and her poems appear in several anthologies; she also has two collections entitled *In Absentia* and *Forever Yours* and a curated collection called Living On. She is the Vice Chair of the Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies and has been the recipient of several national and international awards, both as a teacher as well as an administrator.

Ramachandra Guha: “The Craft of Historical Biography”

Abstract: Biography is the branch of historical scholarship that is closest to literature. While it is based on primary unpublished sources, it pays far greater attention to the ebbs and flows of an individual life. It thus has to deal with human sensibilities, emotions and relationships far more

intensively than other fields such as social history, economic history, or political history, which focus on aggregate categories such as class, caste, race, gender, state, and nation.

Trained in sociology and social history, Ramachandra Guha became a biographer by accident. He has written lives of, among others, Verrier Elwin and Mahatma Gandhi. In his talk, he shall use his own experiments in life-writing to speak more broadly about the craft of historical biography.

Bio note: **Ramachandra Guha** is a renowned and prolific Indian historian, currently Distinguished University Professor at Krea History. His books include *Gandhi before India* and *Rebels against the Raj: Western Fighters for India's Freedom*.
