

The Vessel, The Wife And The Wagon:
Studying Gender, Migration And Resettlement in the Displaced
Punjabi Community through a Culinary Lens

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Abstract

This research seeks to explore the question of sustenance tackled by the Punjabi migrant women as part of the rehabilitation in Delhi after the Partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, which led to the creation of India and Pakistan as separate nations, along with the large-scale displacement, violence, and uprootment. Through the lens of food, I wish to look into the assertion and reclamation of agency by the women from the very kitchens where the gendered division of labour often relegates them to. This will gauge the process of changing gender dynamics within families, along with a change in the perceived notions of femininity and womanliness of the displaced women. The argument is twofold—contextualizing the creation of a new cuisine which neither was the part of the displaced community nor was consumed by the previous inhabitants of Delhi, but later went on to become synonymous to the quintessential ‘Punjabi’ food, making national and global presence, and; exploring the simultaneous evolution of food and identity of the migrant women as a character. The debate on the authenticity of the cuisine has been questioned and challenged by employing the socio-cultural dynamics of nostalgia, and the economic implications of recreation and innovation. These all arguments address the question of reading through the gendered culinary subaltern history of the Partition around which there has been a looming silence.

Woven strongly around oral narratives, the research aims to look into the voices of the subaltern—the women—reflected in the recipes they had written, narrated or prepared in a bid to preserve, and adapt to the changing idea of ‘home’.

Keywords: Agency, Subaltern, Gender, Culinary history, Oral narratives.

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Introduction

“They shook violently the roots of the land

And people were flung about who knows where,

None kept account of who perished who survived.”

(from *Broken Bengal* by Tasleema Nasrin)

The Partition of the Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan in August 1947 was a deeply traumatizing event in the history of South Asia which led to a large number of population migrating across the border between the newly formed countries. The violence, bloodshed and large scale displacement characterised this event and left a painful legacy behind in form of communal hatred and soured political relations (Menon & Bhasin, 1998; Talbot, 2006).

The Partition was the result of the historical events which were shaping up in the backdrop of the tensions brewing within different political groups of the Indian subcontinent in the mid 20th century, which at that time was a colony of Britain. A lot of socio-political factors went into the creation of the two nations—India and Pakistan. Described by the historians studying Modern India, the Partition was a three years’ (1945-47) ordeal of massacre, rapes, arson, riots, and mass population transfer, which increased after the failure of the Cabinet Mission in 1946. It was incited by the imposition of the Western sovereign state-form upon South Asia by British government in most hurried manner through haphazardly drawn boundaries (Bandopadhyaya, 2004). Neither the British colonizers nor the indigenous political elites prioritized the danger

to the masses and the violence this step would have invited. Rather, the separate sovereign statehoods to the two nations was seen as the chance to consolidate and increase their own power and wealth (Pandey; 2001: 2; Kaur, 2007: 79).

One of the goriest aspect of Partition was the large-scale violence against women in form of rapes, murder, physical mutilation, and even honour killings. They were often the most vulnerable target, whose experiences cannot be generalized due to the intersection of gender, caste, class and age (Menon & Bhasin, 1998). Their humiliation and capture was taken as a symbol of the conquest of one community over another, and their suffering and submitting to death to avoid being dishonoured was translated into reminders of heroic sacrifices made in order to preserve community (Pandey, 2001: 69; Butalia, 1998). Therefore, it is but pertinent to look into the history through a gendered lens to emphasize on the voices of women themselves to strengthen the subaltern discourse on Partition.

Being born and raised in Delhi, I was exposed to a strong sense of history and a lingering nostalgia. The city has been a centre of refuge for the millions of people who were rendered homeless during the 1947 Partition. It was in this refugee capital that innumerable uprooted families started a new chapter of their lives. Space and the subsequent idea of situatedness plays a great role in determining the sense of belongingness and alienation. Therefore, the legacy from the 'homeland' is challenged and altered as social hierarchies of labour are reformed and reimagined in Delhi .

Growing up in one such family, I have heard incisive stories of pain, regret, and longing to go back, along with the reminiscing on childhood folklores, sing-songs and routines. I, thus, well understood the importance of oral histories in preserving memories. Studying Subaltern history

as an undergraduate, I gathered these anecdotal accounts into a defined rubric and I could much appreciate the anecdotes, appreciating most those about the politics around temples and slaughterhouses, land revenues, alongside the ink-stained maps of our native village scribbled by my grandfather. I also learned how the myriad hues of nostalgia were painted at the dinner table, and how vegetables were pickled, spices were bottled, or a feast was prepared by a family then leading an entirely different life. The story of Partition is not only the memoir of violence and loss; it also entails the journey into rehabilitation and the struggle to recreate the familiar. As historian Gyanendra Pandey points out, the Partition is also “*a history of struggle—of people fighting to cope, to survive and to build anew.*” (Pandey, 2001: 18).

The migrant families who fled away from their homes had a difficult time acquiring a stable livelihood and often tried their hands at many enterprises (Butalia, 1998). While many of them decided to stick to their traditional occupations or the ones they practiced prior to partition, many others ventured into unknown entrepreneurial territories. Their social status and acceptance into the society was influenced immensely by the profession they adopted (*ibid*, 53). Butalia gives a vivid account of how migrants started doing odd jobs for sustenance, an observation backed by the participants of this research.

The narration of their back-breaking struggles to make ends meet—cleaning utensils at other’s houses (Gulati, 2013), or selling trinkets as the petty hawkers (Sarhadi Raj, 2000: 47)—is heart wrenching and deserves more heed. The Hindu and Sikh Punjabi migrants refused to live on donations like “*sharnarthis*” (refugees) and took to hard work like “*purusharthis*” (bread-winners) in order to start life from the scratch amidst all adversities (Gulati, 2013).

The term *purusharthis*—someone who possesses the manly virtue of hard work and dedication however, has to be analysed critically. Language is that powerful weapon which commands

not only our thoughts, but also expresses the implicit and explicit assumptions, prejudices and internalized social and gender hierarches. Such is the impact of the language that the social world is even viewed to be organized through everyday interaction (Garfinkel 1967; *cited in* Holmes and Meyerhoff (ed.), 2003). In that scenario, associating struggles and perseverance with men side-lines the role and contribution of women from the discourse. It has also led to the veiling of stories of empowerment, struggles, agency and resistance from what was relegated as the domain of women—food, and kitchen. Food practice, after all, are gendered and reveal the “*particularities of time, place and culture*” (Avakian & Haber, 2005: 7).

Food and the conversations around it, I realized, often makes the description of pain or happiness more vivid and personal. The discussions allow even the sexagenarian women from Punjabi migrant community to get loquacious about their experiences and emotions. Having internalised this trait of verbosity while growing up as one of the most natural characteristic, I expected being stereotyped as part of a community whose women have been “*feisty*”, “*boisterous*” and “*burly*”. Therefore, food and femininity were central to the most enriching and emotional conversations with the women who have survived the Partition. It has helped me delve deeper into their sociocultural past and perceptions of the self.

While there has been a significant focus on describing the political upheavals and chaos following Partition, little importance is given to the personal stories of individuals who suffered the traumas (Butalia, 1998). In fact, subaltern post-modern writers like Urvashi Butalia and Karuna Chanana have stated that Partition has had a very hegemonic history, which excludes the voices of the women refugees (Sarhadi, Raj: 2000; Wolpert, 2009). While a handful of Subaltern feminist historians like Vazira Zamindar (2007) have discussed the relationship between individual and family agency and the construction of new forms of state authority in

the years after partition, there's hardly any academic discussion on the intertwined relation between the former and construction of a collective cultural identity of women in particular.

Through this research, I wish to explore food and culinary culture as the medium to understand and analyse the change in the gender dynamics and division of labour within the families. It starts with *Introduction* to the context and situatedness of the research, and the positionality of the researcher and the participants, and proceeds to look into the importance of the research methodology in weaving together the experiences of the participants and the academic theories around food, gender and power for emphasizing the pertinence of pursuing this research in order to document the narratives of silence around food and gendered agency. A detailed theoretical grounding of the research is provided in the *Review of Literature*. It is followed by the analytical chapter on *Gender, Migration and Food* which analyses the various sociocultural and economic which affected or facilitated the physical and social mobility of women from the displaced Punjabi community, within their families and outside. The idea of food being *not* merely a catalyst, but an active stimulant in the process of acquiring and asserting agency for women can be best described in their own words, weaving the personal experiences into the narrative. These narratives are also crucial in weaving together a history of nostalgia and authenticity around cuisines to discuss the concept of identity—the issues which are questioned and explained in the next chapter which deals with *Debates around Authenticity*. In this research, food and the “Punjabi” cuisine in post-Partition Delhi is explored as a character, which evolved along with the identity of the migrant population. This process of evolution of the cuisine is inundated with anecdotes and instances of social assimilation, nostalgia of the homeland, the struggle to survive through securing economic means, and the socio-economic changes which the Partition brought to the meal platter of the displaced community.

Memories have a great effect on the process of construction of identity among individuals, and the remembered images of homeland design a collective sense of identity among immigrants; although, this collective identity is not a homogeneous and integrated national one, but it provides a feeling of belonging and affiliation for migratory subjects. Accounts of past are utilized as a communal instrument for sharing the suffering of marginalized groups such as women, to diminish the loneliness and alienation, in a foreign context (Lotfi *et al*, 2013: 386).

It is rooted in the Narrative approach, exploring individual memories in order to recover or preserve the past, to build a collective memory around the dynamics of food (Green, 2004:37). Recording the individual memories in form of narratives is also a process of acknowledging the importance of individual agency and experience. Individual narratives offer much in the way of anecdotal and qualitative evidence arising from personal experience, while reading such sources collectively illuminates patterns of meaning and myth (Epp, 2016: 369).

A narrative or a ‘story’, as explained by Bruner, could be seen as a disruption between the literary *pentad* (agent, action, goal, setting), which poetically and objectively, is an account of the “*trouble*”—a disruption in a practice, order, faith or norm. One of the most crucial pillars of narratives is the need to tell the story, which is as important as having the grammar to tell it right (2003: 32). New Historicism, the school of thought adapted from Clifford Geertz’s works, treats a work of literature not as a “*story worthy of analysis but as a representation of historical forces. There is no such thing as objective history because narratives are, like language, produced in a content and are governed by socio-economical, and political interests of the dominant groups or institutions*” (Nayar, 2013; cited in Butalia, 1998: 6). The semi structured interviews and the oral narratives are therefore part of a larger discourse, which links the

information it entails to the network of powers it is created by (Jayagopalan, 2016: 47). It is through the interviews and conversations that the power of remembrance and silence was revealed to me; I got to practice— as Ruth Behar has described it— “*listening vulnerably*” and observing not only what is remembered, but also how it is remembered by the survivors (Behar, 1996: 15-20 *cited in* Gailani, 2017: 2).

This process of working with narratives, on one hand, is dependent on the unique contextual experience of every group, while on the other, it talks of the universal female subjectivity through the cultural practices. Historian Luisa Passerini in her autobiography has compared the historical female subjectivity to an onion—an indispensable part of the meal throughout the world—to bring forth the multilayered intersectional oppressions faced by women. Delving deeper into their narratives is described by Passerini as peeling the layers of an onion, “*one woman inside another, one woman through another*” (1996: 3 *cited in* Divorski, 2008: 81).

One cannot draw away the attention from the politics of silence in memories. In a procedural process of memory making facilitated by the popular historical framework, survivors recall the experience of Partition primarily with the lens of violence, suffering and deprivation. But it never translates into a narrative encompassing a different perspective (in this instance, that of food). People either cannot accept a different narrative to the discourse, and the absence of exploration of that aspect of history has made it difficult for survivors to have a vocabulary to connect food as a dynamic aspect of rehabilitation and recreation, and not view it only as nostalgic artefact. One also has to carefully ‘read’ and analyse memories, because the process of translating memories to practice and eventual tradition is also very selective. However, I chose to take up this task as the researcher, because the point for the historian-anthropologist is not to take memory literally, but “*to analyse its operations in the formation of identity*”

(Passerini, 1996 *cited in* Epp, 2016: 369). The quest to situate the present identity of the Punjabi women through a culinary-historical narrative has been the objective of this research.

Narratives initiated through food or drink offer a way to understand how preparation, consumption and sharing of food and drink resources open up sites of fond remembering, cultural conflict, and mediation (Epp, 2015 *cited in* Gailani, 2017: 1). Food recollection in life stories and narratives appear factually anecdotal at times, but it provides a metaphorical shield to recount events that are too difficult to talk about directly. They also serve as descriptive tools which can either reveal or mask description of depressing or cherished experiences (Epp, 2010:367).

As a student of anthropology standing on the intersection of social theory, history, gender, and social work, I have realized that the process of exploring the identity and agency of individuals is an interdisciplinary exercise academically, and a political one in practice. Understanding the dynamics of food, gender and power are intrinsic to unpack the sociocultural subjugation and intersectional discrimination based on gender, caste and class. This understanding is the first step towards working on developing a narrative which uses the same cultural medium of food to present an alternate narrative of power and agency exercised by the participants.

Using memories and nostalgia as the carriers to facilitate the dynamic developments in gender relations, this research makes an attempt to record the alternate history of the Partition and post-Partition period, narrated through the feminist lens of memoirs and stories around food to explore *how do nostalgia, gender and food interplay to create identity for Punjabi women displaced during the Partition?* I believe that it is extremely important to have a subaltern

perspective of the popular historical discourse, which for decades has heavily focused on the gory facts of violence against women. While these accounts have undoubtedly been some of the most disturbing yet decisive facts in emphasizing the horrific repercussion of the Partition, but exploring the parallel narratives woven into the subaltern tapestry of the Partition—of the women not only as victims without a voice, but as the torchbearers of the struggle to rehabilitate and recreate home in the post-Partition period from their kitchens and hearth—is also a political act of associating the strength and agency to them, which is rightfully theirs and deserves a mention into the pages of history.

Chapter 1: Review of Literature

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This research is centrally focused around the Subaltern history, where the displaced Punjabi women form the ‘Subaltern’. It is therefore important to discuss the “voice” and agency of these women where food acts as the dynamic catalyst and medium of expression for these subalterns. In Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak’s seminal paper *Can The Subaltern Speak?* (1988), the idea of access to agency is further problematized to explore ‘who’ will get the agency to express one’s strength and dissent within the prescribed scholarly discourse – a reason why oral narratives become pertinent not only as a methodology, but also as a challenge to the existing scholarship which posits the scholars from different socio-economic and cultural background as the representatives of the cause of subalterns. This takes me back to Gurinder Bhambhra’s concept of the “*Social Interlocutor*” (2007: 74), a generic member who speaks on the behalf of a community but still comes from a positionality different from the actual subjects– an idea which Spivak is also cautious of. She iterates that a person's or group's identity is relational, a function of its place in a system of differences. There is no true or pure other; instead, the other always already exists in relation to the discourse that would name it as other (1988). She is against the idea of creating “saviours”—taking from Freud—in an attempt to speak on behalf of the subalterns. It forms the quintessential basis of my research of looking into the agency of the Punjabi women as practiced and theorised by themselves.

The research is grounded into Foucault’s *discursive formations*, and it involves reading and analysing the silence around the historical narratives which were either never discussed through a feminist culinary perspective, or were considered too simplistic to be included in the larger

historical narrative of the Partition (Rousse, 1994: 96). Discursivity entails the varying degree of power that determines the domination of one aspect of history over the other, and entitle the voices which will be heard and the others which will be silenced. Therefore, I have chosen the family and the ‘kitchen’ in the post-Partition Delhi as my ‘discursive field’ to understand the relationship between subjectivity, language and social institutions in the context of the accounts of women struggling to adapt to an alien city after the traumatic experience of displacement. This is a shift away from the previously used subaltern discursive field of the Partition, where the body of the woman has been discussed as the site of violence, conquest and exploitation (*see* Butalia, 1998; Kaur, 2007; Sidhwa, 1988). The role of food here is not only confined to that of an artefact of nostalgia which reminds them of the loss, but of a dynamic catalyst which politicized the existence of the women migrants and consequently led to significant changes in their positionality and creation of a new identity.

Understanding discursive formations is also important to uphold the agency of different women within the group of the Punjabi migrants to bring in the perspective of the Standpoint. The theorization of this difference brings me to a critique of Spivak’s *Can the Subaltern Speak* by instating that *different subalterns speak differently*—in critique of her stance that the subalterns do not have the vocabulary to represent themselves within the Western discourse. Even among the group of displaced Punjabi women (the subalterns in this case), the caste and class intersected to create a matrix of varied access and exercise of agency for different women within the group. The fact that this determination is also based on cultural artefact like culinary tradition—which entail the discriminatory aspect of purity and pollution—makes it even more pertinent to understand the intersectional elements of the identity. Through this research, my attempt is to use the culinary lens to explore the seldomly discussed gendered history of the

Partition, which looks at the struggles of adaptation, rehabilitation and assertion of agency through food.

This can be best explained with Indian sociologist Sharmila Rege's argument that "*differences be historically located in the real struggles of the marginalized women*", and that the marginalized women have a "*different voice*" (1998: 39) which speaks of the multilayered oppression and challenges to create an identity within the vulnerable sphere of displacement, uncertainly and disrupted social system of existence, and makes it even more pertinent to understand that the different ways in which the displaced Punjabi women reacted and adapted to the challenges was not only based on their previous affluence, but also on the caste group they came from. This was a strong determinant of their participation in culinary micro-enterprises and to get the 'permission' to cook for a larger public. The need for the Dalit¹ women to talk differently from their standpoint is located in the discourse of descent against the middle-class women's movement by the Dalit men (Guru, 1995 *cited in* Rege, 1998: 44). A transformation from "*their cause*" to "*our cause*" makes it possible to argue how scholars can reinvent themselves as Dalit feminists, and it moves beyond the debate around non-Dalit scholars speaking of and as Dalit women (*ibid*: 45). Caste based enterprise within the displaced Punjabi community is that one aspect of the research which I was keen to delve deeper into, but due to research constraints and limitations, could not explore it completely. Nevertheless, I could read through the presence of caste and implicit distinction and discrimination between the lines of the experience shared by the participants, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

¹ A generic term for the socio-economically marginalized communities in India who are discriminated primarily on the basis of caste or hereditary occupational identity.

Power and agency are intrinsically related to this topic focusing on gender dynamics. It is important to look deeper into the idea of division of labour to understand why the idea of femininity and gendered identity is shaped by the labour performed by the different members of the society, and how it is regulated. Often, the division of work between the genders has more to do with social constructions around the two sexes, for which the justification of biology is often given and used manipulatively to exploit and oppress the women (Mies, 1981). This process intends to control the sexuality of women, along with agency of power and authority by strictly controlling the areas/professions where women can work (Delphy, 1977). Therefore, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan has argued that in the realm of gender, autonomous access to agency is more important than just acquisition of power (2006). The complex relationship between women, power and food is a representative of the power dynamics which are either to be maintained and enforced, or to be changed (Muzzarelli *et al.*, 2008: 5). The bibliographic and other religious texts have been discussing the historical practice of asserting control over women and food, and consumption is often seen as a means to express desire and transgress authority (Heller and Moran, 2003 *cited in* Divorski, 2008: 79).

It is also interesting to see the tension of conflicting ideas of ‘moving away’ and resorting back to the gender roles in order to exercise agency, a lot of which has to do with Anthony Giddens’ idea of the socialization of the actors into the tradition of caste and occupation-based hierarchies, which classify and engenders labour. An agent’s capacity to carry out their practices is influenced by their access to resources. Equally important is the situated nature of social interaction (1984: 25), which is an important factor to determine the impact of socio-spatial position of the displaced Punjabi women in having access to the public spaces they were denied access to owing to the performance of the existing gender roles. This positionality is also important to understand the process of identity development which is an ongoing project throughout the course of life. Based on the situated context, it helps the agents to develop skills

necessary for socio-cultural navigation (Giddens, 1991: 53). Therefore, the social training of docility and defined ‘feminine’ roles (which limit women to the home and hearth, an argument which is further elaborated in the realm of protecting their ‘honour’ by not letting them get exposed to the outside harassment) saw a fluid transition during the decades following the Partition. The following chapters discuss how the physical mobility in some cases (both in terms of moving out of house, and taking up jobs/works which were not performed by women earlier) led to a change in the dynamics within the family. The fact that it is the agents which reproduce themselves and not the social structures give a strong basis to the argument favouring the creation of an uninhibited and empowered identity of femininity formed by the women of the displaced Punjabi community in India over the course of decades.

This identity of the displaced women is unique because it is not a quintessential ethno-cultural trait, but has evolved owing to the conditions faced by the group in their new *habitus*. One therefore cannot deny the role of the *habitus* in shaping and determining the degree of agency women can have access to, and the identity which was created as a ‘palimpsest’ over the existing distinctions of caste and class. This term is coined by Pierre Bourdieu, whose discussion on Weber’s “stylization of life” (1984: 176), talks about the cementing of social hierarchies based on a similarity in taste. He states it is the medium through which the class conditions itself into classifying practices. This system transforms necessities and luxuries strategically into needs and wants in conjuncture with the *habitus*. For instance, the observation of rituals and restraints on the Punjabi migrants’ dining table indicated that their *habitus* extends well beyond the familiar into the “external” space—an alien city in this context—as well, and the consciousness about routine and regulation on consumption is a part of everyday lifestyle. Taste, he states, is a virtue made out of necessity, and making consumption a social ceremony is a way of iterating the class hierarchies (*ibid*:187). This stance is crucial to critically

analyze the dynamism of culinary traditions and food based micro-enterprises in influencing (and getting influenced by) the erstwhile social status of the women and their family members. It also reflects the differences which the changed *habitus* owing to the displacement has created in their habits of consumptions—and in the gender roles which revolve around it (*ibid*:185). Delhi, an alien land thus became a breeding ground where nostalgia was commercialized in order to be sold for sustenance, and the previous identity was superimposed with changed gender roles.

Social groups, and especially social classes, exist twice, so to speak, and they do so prior to the intervention of the scientific gaze itself—

“they exist in the objectivity of the first order which is recorded by distributions of material properties; and they exist in the objectivity of the second order of the contrasted classifications and representations produced by agents on the basis of a practical knowledge of these distributions such as they are expressed in lifestyles” (Bourdieu, 1982: 296).

The tension due to the overlap and performance of these two identities among the Punjabi migrants in the post-Partition period created a fluid identity which was the result of the negotiations with the previously existing social orders and hierarchies from their familiar land. It explores how food—and the social rituals around it—became the agent of creating these fluid spaces of interaction and assimilation.

One also has to broaden the understanding of *habitus* to comprehend it in the cultural-geographical terms in the form of “*terroir*”—the taste of the place encompassing the topological and cultural aspects of the terrain— (Monterescu, 2017; Trubek, 2008), which is crucial to comprehend and analyze the complicated concept of ‘authenticity’ in the culinary realm. The classic definition of authenticity borrows from Bourdieu’s idea of distinction, which assigns a higher pedestal to the consumption patterns historically embedded into the ‘ancient’

practices tied deeply to the correlation between the produce of the land, the geographical-climatic factors influencing the production, preparation and consumption, and the social process of preparation (Bourdieu, 1984; Dutton, 2003). All of this lend uniqueness to the final product—the dish, and lead to its emergence as an important artefact in the identity formation of a land, geographical terrain, cultural *habitus* or of an individual. It also holds a special place in the narratives of nostalgia as a memory to be preserved. This classic idea of authenticity is challenged when the *terroir*—the ‘homeland’—is either lost or destroyed in times of political upheaval, migration and displacement. Collectively, it leads to formation of a unique identity based on the culinary habits and shared historicity of a community in terms of production and consumption, a process defined as *Gastronationalism* (DeSaucey, 2010: 433). Through this concept has been explored by sociologists primarily as a protectionist measure to safeguard identity and heritage, I will critically analyze its relevance through a socio-economic perspective for the displaced communities, where the challenge is to balance the uniqueness of identity with the survival instinct of adaption. Therefore, an attempt has been made to define the concept of authenticity for the Punjabi migrants through their own accounts, keeping these implications in mind.

This debate around the authenticity of the food grounds my research to the discussion around identity formation and commercialization. The discussion begins with food being an indispensable component of heritage, which is usually is seen as a subjective element due to its direct relation to a collective social memory. It is also described as “*a combination of recollections recognized by a given group*” (Baeta Neves Flores, 1995 *cited in* Bessière, 2002:26). Heritage therefore is more of a dynamic social construction—incorporating the changes and contextual experiences of community into the collective history—than something fossilized or unchanging which gets handed down from generation to the other. The

manifestation of heritage into the market is seen through the phenomenon of ethnic entrepreneurship. Defined as “*a set of connections and regular pattern of interactions among people sharing common national background or migration experience*” (Waldinger *et al*, 1990:3 *cited in* Volery, 2007: 30), these entrepreneurial ventures run by ethnic or immigrant groups include small and medium size businesses reminiscent of an artefact (food, jewellery etc) or a practice integral to the cultural identity. The research looks at these small food related enterprises started by the migrants to analyse if they can be classified as ethnic entrepreneur projects based on the involvement of members of Punjabi community on the work front, the type of food sold and the method of preparation. Moreover, this critically looks at the discussion around women as the ethnic entrepreneurs by the virtue of their culinary inventions and negotiations with traditions for the market. It will also explore the possible presence of the internalization of the socio-cultural stereotypes (Tuchman and Levine, 1992; Chow, 2005: 43) associated with the migrant Punjabi food in a bid to gain acceptance and eventual popularity in the culinary realm of Delhi.

The research goes on to question the very idea of gender discrimination present between the folds of heritage and its ‘preservers’ and ‘carriers’, which traditionally have been the women of any community (Daya, 2010: 482). I have made an attempt to understand and bring forth a narrative woven around culinary practices where women were empowered and got a chance to exercise their agency through a reversal of traditional hierarchies of which food became the most important medium (Avakian & Haber, 2005: 2).

1.2 Research Gap

While there has been a focus on describing the political upheavals and chaos following the Partition, little importance is given to the personal stories of individuals, especially women

who suffered the traumas but still continued the struggle (Butalia, 1998). Many subaltern post-modern writers have argued that Partition has had a very hegemonic history, which excludes the voices of the refugees, especially women (Sarhadi Raj, 2000; Wolpert, 2009; Kaur, 2007). The existing subaltern literature, as discussed previously in the chapter, too has been focused around discussing bodily violence, and looking at the body of women primarily as the site of conquest and exploitation, but not as the harbinger of an identity which speaks of the struggles of survival, adaptation and reclamation of familiarity.

The literature on the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 is voluminous in its description of the atrocities on the common people, but there is hardly much academic writing about how the migrant population started life from scratch in Delhi, and about the economic activities and occupations they had been involved in. There's also a paucity of literature on the rehabilitation of refugees in the post-Partition period from a socio-cultural perspective. The migrant families had a difficult time acquiring a stable livelihood and often tried their hands at many enterprises (Butalia, 1998; Bharadwaj; 2004), which were either in continuance with their existing social status or were a break away from it. The change in the arrangement of social and caste-based order which was brought about through these developments is essential to understand in order to appreciate the efforts of women and the dynamic role of the culinary practices in creating in challenging the gender roles within families.

Chapter 2: Gender, Migration and Food

*DIpo bhakShayate dhvAntam kajjalam cha prasUyate /
yadannam bhakShayennityam jAyate tAdRishI prajA //*

Lamp eats darkness and produces [black] soot!

What food (quality) [one] eats daily, so will [one] produce. ²

“In the refugee camps, my family would be grateful of a fistful of makai (corn) and chana (black gram) they would get. There would be no salt or condiment available. However, it was difficult to see little children crying for food in front of the eyes. It was a painful sight and made eating in front of them very a disturbing activity. However, there was never enough to share, and hunger makes you heartless sometimes”.³

“My mother had told me incidents of mothers with newborns often making them drink urine to quench their thirst so that they should not cry and attract attention during riots on the way to India.”⁴

The food, meant to nourish the body, can sometime fill you up with guilt and pain. Water, the elixir of life, is at times gulped down like acid, with every drop tearing the lining of the throat.

² दीपो भक्षयते ध्वान्तं कज्जलं च प्रसूयते ।

यदन्नं भक्षयेन्नित्यं जायते तादृशी प्रजा ॥

Source: Vriddha Chanakya Niti Darshan (Chanakya, 1888); PDF Creation (2014)

³ Anita, interviewed by the researcher.

⁴ Same as above.

Narrated by Anita, daughter of the partition survivor late Mrs. Kamal⁵, a resident of Rawalpindi who was all of seven when the Partition of the Indian subcontinent took place, these are two of the innumerable accounts of hardship and horror which followed this event. Her story is one of the innumerable stories of loss, pain and struggle which the survivors of the Partition have to share.

This chapter engenders the concept of labour and physical work by looking into the shift and changes in the dynamics of gender relations and division of labour which existed in the Punjabi families prior to the Partition. Beginning with narrating the struggles and hardships faced by the displaced families and women in particular, it moves forward to discuss the different ways in which women adapted to these changes and the new life in a new country. This discussion is specific to the important role played by food—cooking, changed dietary habits, restricted consumption—in the process of resettlement, and to understand how food affected the role and position of women within the family.

2.1 Background: How migration and displacement affected and changed the lives of families

Migration is not only limited to geographical transition; it also involves the displacement of knowledge, consciousness and identity. The idea of identity has been one of the most pressing ones for the refugees and brings to question the sense of belongingness and situatedness to a

⁵ Kamal came to India from Rawalpindi at the time of the massacres (which started around June and continued for a couple of months) in September 1947. She initially came to Udaipur to her aunt and stayed there for six months and then came to Delhi. Her father got his job back as a school teacher in Delhi after one year, upon applying to a scheme to give back jobs to government employees. Survival in poverty, the humiliation of staying with the sister's family (staying at the marital home of the daughter or sister is considered shameful for families in the popular Hindu tradition) and managing two square meals a day was the real struggle (interviewed by the researcher).

context, social cultural and geographical. More often than not, the transition from *residents* to *migrants* is not a smooth one, especially in the times of violence and turbulence. As Deepshikha Thakur discusses in her article,

“... because of the circus of legal demarcations of identity, we have neither the scope to celebrate the traditions these migrations have produced, nor the grace to mourn the enormous violence suffered on the way. Without that designation—”diaspora”—there is a corresponding loss of vocabulary to grapple with the struggles, crises, and paradoxes of changes in identity.” (Thakur, 2016)

The famous story *Toba Tek Singh*, written by Urdu author Sa’adat Hassan Manto and published in 1955, narrates the deep plight of the individuals through its protagonist who is declared lunatic and hails from the village which fell into ‘No Man’s Land’ after the Partition. This story narrated the real life agony of numerous survivors, who were still unsure of where they could associate their identity with, geographically and culturally. This stance of ambiguity of identity is problematised by Homi K. Bhabha as the “*double-ness of identity*” wherein he critically looks at the phenomenon of “*multiple identities*” and argues that the identities formed during the migrations are essentially the reiteration of negotiated identity in the new land, and its revision and relocation to balance the present and the past context (Bhabha, 1984: 12 *cited in* Lofti *et al*, 2013: 388).

Calling this event a bloody chapter in the history of South Asia is not an exaggeration. The 1951 Census of Pakistan identified the number of displaced persons in Pakistan at 7,226,600, presumably all Muslims who had entered Pakistan from India. Similarly, the 1951 Census of India enumerated 7,295,870 displaced persons, apparently all Hindus and Sikhs who had moved to India from Pakistan. The two numbers add up to 14.5 million (Bharadwaj, 2008). After partition, 59% of the total 1,744,000 population in Delhi comprised of migrants in 1951.⁶

⁶ Sourced from www.censusindia.gov.in

Numerous scholars, historians and authors have given a detailed account of the slaughter of Hindus and Muslims which took place on both sides of the border. Not only were the community specific colonies destroyed and set to fire, but even the trains and refugee camps in some pockets of Delhi were attacked (Pandey, 1997). Massacres were accompanied by looting and forceful acquisition of land. Jama Masjid and Sadar Bazaar were looted and the Muslims were thrown out by the Hindu/Sikh migrants who then occupied the property illegally. Communal hatred was at its peak. Partition of the country was an equally painful experience for all those who had to leave behind their houses and loved ones and move. Pandey has pointed out that “*the point of arrival of many in the physical sense.....was no different from the point of departure*” (*ibid*). Hence, resettlement the post-Partition Delhi started on a bloody note. Pandey even remarked that Delhi, the Lutyen’s capital turned into the “*refugee-stan*” (the land of refugees) (1997: 226).

While uprootment was an experience dreadful enough, the real ordeals began with the process of settling into the new place amidst strangers with scarce resources. Most of the displaced community had left behind their material assets and money when they fled to save their lives (Chanana, 1993). It deprived the individuals of any capital for initial venture into an enterprise and they often had to sell whatever little they had, or had to resort to menial work to sustain themselves and their families. Recalling this during the interview, Mohan, speaking of his mother, shared—

“My mother was 16 when she was married to a 35 years old man (my father) as he was in the army and was not given to vices. The financial conditions (of the family, after the Partition) were such that it was thought of as a relief to marry off one member of the family to be taken care of by someone else.”⁷

⁷ Mohan’s mother, Nimal (deceased), was from Chakwal district of the present-day Punjab province of Pakistan. Fortunately, she was already in Paharganj, Delhi prior to the massacre in Pakistan where her father was on the hit list by religious fundamentalist and had to escape in disguise, donning a *burqa*. Her other family members also fled away in life threatening situation and were helped in escaping by their Muslim neighbours. The family moved to Delhi from Amritsar airport and shifted to Devnagar camp in Delhi. From being an affluent local elite, they became poverty stricken and didn’t get any

He further discussed his mother's bitterness towards the local population of Delhi—the “*kayastha*” and the “*baniya*” (the caste based social groups who were primarily involved in business and government jobs)— who did not help the refugees.

It was also the emotional and psychological trauma of being the ‘refugee’ which continued to impact the migrated population over the decades. Many people ended up losing members of their family in the riots or during the journey within the two newly formed nations. One of the participants, 75 years old Sudeshna⁸ (a resident of Delhi and a practising gynaecologist), who was around four years of age at the time of Partition and migrated to Ambala from Kotra Kakrali village in Gujarat district of Pakistan, shared one such experience—

“My elder brother who was a member of RSS (A religious political group affiliated to right wing Hindu ideas) was held at the gunpoint by the ‘Pakistanis’ and my mother was threatened to go back saying he would be sent in two minutes. She kept waiting and he never came back. He was probably killed or shot. He was studying in class 10th at that time.”

The reference to the apparent murderers of her brother as ‘Pakistanis’ indicates how the socio-cultural relations changed drastically within a couple of days, and amiable neighbours and friends were reduced to being ‘Hindus’, ‘Mussalmaans’, ‘Hindustani’ and ‘Pakistani’—an identity which spoke of apprehension, fear, betrayal and hatred.

reimbursement as well. her mother was married off at an early age to his father, who was much older and had migrated from Rawalpindi and had joined Indian Army as a cadet.

⁸ Sudeshna later moved to Delhi from Ambala after her marriage eighteen years later. Her father was a famous *vaidya* (Ayurvedic doctor) back in Pakistan and the family was quite affluent. However, after losing everything in the Partition, he took to mendicancy and left home, unable to cope with the loss. The family learnt a couple of years after that he had died a painful death due to starvation and prolonged illness (interviewed by the researcher).

This anecdote is one among the many similar unfortunate ones which speak of killings and loss. The pain of losing a family members was also accompanied by the loss of an earning member and many a times the sole bread winner of the family (Kaur, 2007). Many also could not bear the shock of losing everything during the Partition and succumbed to the trauma, becoming terminally ill or passed away. Aloke, a septuagenarian participant who was born shortly after the Partition, shared the story of his father, who was a rich and respected businessman of Pind Dadan Khan (Punjab province, present day Pakistan). He had to leave the house immediately after learning about a possible attack next morning. The family could not bring anything along, except the jewellery that they all used to wear. His father lost everything and had to start from scratch. He tried his hands at a couple of businesses, but they all failed. He could not bear the dire poverty and deprivation that had fallen over the family. Back home, he used to occasionally smoke the pipe. With no money to afford it here (in Delhi, post Partition), he started smoking *beedis* (hand rolled cigarette with higher content of tobacco) and got respiratory problems. He died of cardiac arrest while sleeping. “*He was all of 56*”, shared Aloke, with a lump in his throat.

While many people succumbed to the trauma of the loss, the others who survived were faced with a bigger challenge—of sustaining the families amidst adversity and uncertainty. The following sections of the chapter discuss the different challenges faced by the survivors in the process of rehabilitation, and how they adapted to the new city and the changed culinary, dietary and social practices, in their quest for survival.

2.2 Starting the Life Afresh: Engendering Rehabilitation and Resettlement

The migrant families who fled away from their homes had a difficult time acquiring a stable livelihood and often tried their hands at many enterprises. It was also the time when the traditional structure of the family in terms of gender roles and division of labour underwent changes. Starting life from the scratch in India meant working harder towards recreating the same conditions of comfort and familiarity which were enjoyed back home. During the initial years of Partition, it was a struggle to survival in order to make both the ends meet. It but naturally affected and involved all members of the family who stepped beyond their socially assigned roles in the difficult times.

The question of whether the womenfolk of the family would go outside to work or not was a pertinent one. ‘Outside’, in the most commonly understood sense, meant stepping out of the house into the public space to work. This was hardly common in the Punjabi households before Partition as women were relegated to the boundaries of the household to take care of the children and family, and to cook (or oversee it) and manage the household affairs. But Partition brought a significant change to this arrangement. As recalled by Sudeshna,

“The women of the house would stay at home. They were helped by the Muslim domestic helpers. My father also had Muslim assistants. There was no question of women working in that comfortable scenario. However, after coming here (post-Partition), my mother was forced to work in the cotton factory and would work on the charkha (spinning wheel) for hours, making blankets and dhurries. My father went into a state of shock due to loss of income and the lavish lifestyle and took to life of mendicancy. Our mother worked really hard to earn and raise us.”

There was a visible sadness in her voice and she narrated how her mother was “forced” by the circumstances to go out and work. It was a pitiful and unfortunate fact that she had to go through this all, she believes. It was a disruption of an order which according to her, was both unwanted and unusual. Her mother, she says, would have never done that otherwise. In some families, the patriarch tried his best to maintain the existing order. Anita’s maternal grandfather chose to take up two jobs only to avoid the women of the family to go out and work.

The Partition marked the journey of many women who were uprooted from their home and the ‘familiar’. Many of them had never stepped out of their houses before, but when they did, they carved survival strategies for themselves and brought about significant socio-economic changes in their lives (Bhardwaj, 2004: 86). Their active participation in the economy was a crucial step towards their assimilation into the newly independent India. Equally important was the role of the women who pioneered small-scale enterprises and cottage industries (sewing, animal husbandry, pickle making, knitting, handicraft) to earn a living to earn a decent living and educate their children (*ibid*, 78-82). Most of the participants emphasized that while the communal ties are strong back home, here all the members were themselves going through a hard time and therefore, could not form a support system in the initial years of Partition to help with the small enterprises and means of sustenance.

One of the primary responsibility of the women working outside the family usually involved preparing food for the members, as was done earlier. Talking of his mother, Shyam⁹ shares,

“My mother would make thick chapattis for us in the morning before leaving. We would have them for breakfast and lunch with a dollop of butter and thick pink buttermilk for the two meals. The former would be made at home and the latter would be provided by an aunt in the community in Jind where we were resettled.”

Mohan also had similar experiences to share about his other Nimal who used to work at a factory and would cook the day’s meal in the morning for the family. She would never take lunch to work and would usually eat after coming back from the factory in the evening. The idea was to feed the young children (three sons and a daughter) and the husband so that they don’t go hungry. Every evening, she would eat a leftover chapatti or two, and would make

⁹ Shyam was born 5 years before the Partition, comes from a family who migrated to Jind (a town in Haryana neighbouring Delhi) from Rawalpindi (Peshawar) in the anticipation of riots. His mother started to work from 1942 soon after they migrated (interviewed by the researcher).

fresh rice or *khichdi* for the family. When the children would casually ask her, she would say someone has told her that stale chapattis are good for health. She continued eating the stale chapattis even years after their financial condition improved. Mohan recalls how his mother would never let her daughters-in-law waste food or throw away chapattis and would eat them herself until she lost all her teeth and couldn't chew them anymore. *"Now when I think of it, it is deeply hurtful. She (Nimal, his mother) came from such an affluent family and had to spend most of life eating the stale chapattis"*, he shares.

The cultural and economic pattern of consumption is also an indicator of gender division of labour in terms of how much and whose time will be devoted to cooking, as reflected in the example given by Bourdieu of the preparation of *pot-au-feu*, and the derogatory reference to the housewives (1984: 187). Also, consumption of certain types of food is an act of reiteration of gendered performance, determining the access to specific food items only for members of one gender group. Taste also clearly depends on the consciousness about the body and the impact food can have on it, thereby leading to creation of inherently class-based aesthetics of cultural consumptions.

However, in the families where there were no women, the practice of preparation and consumption of food was different, so was the division of labour. Madan, an 80 years old resident of West Delhi, came from Lahore at the time of Partition. His mother passed away when he was very young, leaving behind him, his four siblings and his father. For him, it was always his father who would cook for them all, with his elder brother helping him in the kitchen. Later, when he grew up, he would also lend a hand in chopping vegetables, cleaning dishes and making simple dal and rice.

"Mealtimes used to be nothing exciting to look forward in our household. My father, after coming from his work, would quickly prepare whatever he could. There was no

bua or chachi-tayi (paternal aunts) to make food for us. We all helped him as we grew older. There was no change in this routine even after Partition”¹⁰.

Therefore, in the absence of a woman member in the family, the gender roles were automatically altered, with the responsibility being shifted to either the eldest member of the family, or the woman next in line.

2.3 New Country, New Life: How the Partition changed the dietary habits

Immigration often results in the formation of diasporic communities. The host land can provide the necessary infrastructure for immigrants to explore aspects of their cross-cultural identities. While immigrants do not always seek to fundamentally alter the nation that they migrate to, they often prefer to establish their own cultural values within their newly adopted homes (Brighton, 2000: 32). The bid to survive in the new land also involves getting ample food to nourish the body, apart from other things. However, food doesn’t only provide nutrition to the body, but sustains the soul through a constant supply of comfort and familiarity. For the displaced community, this luxury became a part of nostalgia during their initial years in India, when they were engaged in back-breaking struggles to make the ends meet. Food—whenever one could get enough to feed all the members of the family—was reduced to a being a medium of sustenance, with its absence and limitation becoming a part of the painful memory for the survivors of the Partition. Sudeshna got teary eyed while sharing the story of hunger and helplessness her family and many others faced during the refugee camp in Ambala—

“There was hardly any food in the refugee camps. People would pluck turnips from the nearby field and will beg for some salt to have them raw. My elder siblings had often done that on days when their hunger would go out of control.”

¹⁰ Madan, interviewed by the researcher.

Even when people shifted out of the refugee camps, they still battled with the financial crisis and would often miss the abundant supply of dairy products they would eat back home. Anita, while talking about the initial years of struggle her mother's family went through, shared that *"they would be grateful if they managed to get chutney-roti or achaar-roti (pickle and bread) everyday. Those were the tough times and both the parents worked hard to make ends meet."* Her *nani* (maternal grandmother) could somehow managed to buy a buffalo so that the children could get some milk for nourishment, the responsibility for whose upkeep was on Kamal and her mother. These instances, shared rather gingerly and painfully by the participants, revealed that it was still easier for participants to discuss the pre-Partition food memories than talking about the post-Partition hardships. Taking from Epp's idea of developing vocabulary from the language of silence (2015: 376), the sense of loss and deprivation, therefore, formed the beginning of the vocabulary of culinary narratives in our discussions.

There was also a significant change in the number of times the food would be consumed, along with what would the family members consume during the mealtime. The portions would also differ for different members of the family. The instance shared by Mohan is already being discussed in the previous section, where his mother Nimal would never sit to eat with them and would come back from the work to have stale chapattis. Sudeshna also had something similar to share, where she reminisces about the "abundance" of food back home and how they could only have simple meal twice a day which her mother could barely afford. As discussed by Luisa Passerini in her autobiography, the food and taste associated with 'home' and 'tradition' are always associated with wealth and abundance when documented or revisited as a narrative (1996: 43 *cited in* Divorski, 2008: 80). This has been true of almost all participants' accounts

of the ‘lost land’—a past which is partly created and is a manifestation of nostalgia which is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

There has been an extensive sociological discussion on how making consumption a social ceremony is a way of iterating the class hierarchies by giving priority to the form over substance, in cementing and initiating new relationships, and in determining the social positionality of individuals (Bourdieu 1984, 188; Farb and Armelagos, 1980: 103). In the situation of disruptions in the routine and *status quo*—migration being one of the prominent examples—the change in the ceremonial practice brings with it alterations in the division of labour and arrangement of power within the social unit (family, in this case). The related discourse on food also an example of how food provides a link between social actors and their cultural past (Gabaccia, 1998 cited in DeSaucey, 2010: 434) which they either try to cherish, or lament its loss as a disruption in their narratives. Alope shared that while his mother would always eat in the end back home, after ensuring that her husband and children have eaten properly, the routine was changed in Delhi after they migrated. After the demise of his father, she started taking up a couple of odd jobs to sustain the family, which required her to go out of the house. One such work she started was frying the *pakor*s, which required her to sit outside continuously for hours in the scorching heat in front of a wok with bubbling oil, and she couldn’t take breaks lest there’s a customer. Therefore, in the morning, she would quickly have a cup of chai (tea) with a biscuit or two before going out. Her daughters would make food for the siblings once a day, which they would eat at night as well. Alope’s mother would only get to eat a proper meal in the evening.

With a significant constraint on the amount and quality of the food at disposal, the quest to survive included consuming whatever was easily and cheaply available. However, it also meant that a host of dietary restrictions which people would follow owing to different reasons—primarily religious and caste based—could also not be followed in the new land. This came as an implicit but strong challenge to the hierarchies which were maintained between the social groups owing to the dietary and culinary habits. Shyam, a septuagenarian member of the practicing Brahmin¹¹ family, shared that, *“before partition, we would not even eat onion and garlic in our diet. We had to eat that after coming here. There was no choice to be picky as the food options available to us were always scarce.”*

Food is the foremost indicator of caste and class identity and often reflects the social identity of the individual consuming it. It is an important constituent of the ‘in-group’ which defines the “us” associated with any internalized group membership, often at the expense of the out-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The usage of the popular slangs to ridicule the dietary habits of the others is therefore an act of asserting the social hierarchies. From calling certain groups barbaric and pauper (*jangli, bhangi*) to mistrusting a particular religious group for eating beef, food staunchly establishes the social hierarchy (Mehta, 2016: 60-63). This hierarchy is aptly described by food historian Pushpesh Pant (*cited in* Agrawal, 2016) –

“...caste is ingrained in our taste buds and eating habits. Food snobbery is a part of India and the food that belongs to upper castes has always been more celebrated. In a caste-sensitive India, labelling your product as Brahmin (one) is a way to communicate that it boasts of the highest form of purity.”

In fact, this difference in the dietary practices can lead to serious differences and the consequent animosity between the different social groups during the tumultuous times. Mohan shared in

¹¹ The highest category in the fourfold *varna* system whose task is to perform ritual sacrifices and impart religious education.

great detail the reason why some of the villagers from the Muslim community turned against his grandfather which forced them to leave their village and the homeland to flee to the newly formed India. He says that his grandfather, who was a very influential person in the district, opposed the opening of the *boochad-khana* (cow slaughterhouse) in the 1930s near Katas Raj¹². Although his grandfather was a non-vegetarian, he was a practicing Hindu and would not eat beef as cow is considered holy in the Hindu pantheon.¹³ Therefore, he thought that opening a slaughterhouse near a religious place will hurt the sentiments of many Hindus. At that time, many of his Muslim friends supported the idea and sided with him. However, as the communal tensions brewed up, some of the Muslims of the region started looking at him as a religious bigot and eventually he became one of the people on the hit list who was to be killed when the riots broke out.

*“Before Partition, all our close family friends were Muslims. My father would often host them in the house and they would all share meals. Unlike some other people, he would never keep separate ceramic plates for them and would serve them in regular brass thalis in which the family would eat.”*¹⁴

This religious distinction, which manifested as discrimination in this retrospective account can be understood by Bourdieu’s argument of distinction in the *habitus* of individuals (1984:176). This physical manifestation of culture in form of ‘learnt and acquired’ ingrained habits, skills

¹² A holy shrine for Hindus dedicated to Brahma, located in Potohar plateau region (Punjab province) in present day Pakistan.

¹³ This is a highly debatable and controversial stance. Mention of livestock and the state slaughterhouses is found in Vedic texts and likes of *Arthshastra* written before Common Era, which mentions consumption of buffalo and veal (Appadurai, 1986: 28; Singh, 1990). The concept of stigmatization of cow meat in the light of emergence of the meat commodity in India is offered by the conservative Hindu nationalist Sangh which includes the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and, currently, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). *“Their conservative account of Indian culture and the rise of meat eating is reflected in two branches of cultural politics— cow protection and anti-meat rhetoric.”* This has been the foundation of the legal ban on the cow slaughter and consequent actions of violence on communities which consume or earn their livelihood through beef. (Robbins, 1999: 414).

¹⁴ Aloke, interviewed by the researcher.

and dispositions of perceptions determine not only the consumption patterns, but also create a discrimination based on different socio-cultural aspects. In case like this, the distinction is primarily religious, giving rise to the discriminatory practices around diet while interacting with members of other communities.

Interaction with, and interaction through food defined the changing social relations within families, and between different communities immediately before and after the Partition. This chapter was a glance into how culinary culture and practices were intertwined into the process of rehabilitation for the migrants, especially women. Moving from the reality to the nostalgia, the following chapter will problematize the idea of authentic in terms of cuisine to understand how the displaced Punjabi community created an identity and a cuisine of their own in Delhi. It will also look into how the nostalgia around food was commercialized to provide sustenance, and how women became its carriers.

Chapter 3: Whose Food is it Anyway? Nostalgia, Authenticity and Identity

“My mother and her sisters would tell stories about how every morning, baskets of fresh fruits would be sent to their house from their gardens, back in Pind Dadan Khan. They would be full of apricots, figs, loquats depending on the season. They would choose the fruit of their choice and have it for breakfast. This story was narrated every time she would sit down to eat any fruit. She could never get the taste those fruits out of her mind”.¹⁵

The taste of nostalgia is not only a reminder of the familiarity, but it also reflects a strong sense of loss and heavy hearted attempts to recreate or replicate it. Narrated by Mohan, this instance about his mother Nimal and her fondness for the fruits from ‘back home’ also stands as a metaphor for how food and its memories shape the discourse of an alternate narrative which has either remain silent through the alleys of history, or is silenced by the dominant narratives around Partition. As reflected in this quote, the woman’s food reality might be less volatile in real life than her oral or written narrative might suggest, but the emphasis and exaggeration associated with food memories primarily reiterate the *“transformational divide between her pre- and post-migration life”* (Epp, 2015: 367).

The last chapter discussed how the members of the displaced community made Delhi their home. Food then was not only the witness to explain the process of their rehabilitation, but also a medium through which they negotiated with a sudden downgrading in socio-economic status and the struggles to survive in a new country. This chapter will shift its focus on how food led to creation of an identity of the displaced Punjabi, from *“refugees”* to *“Dilliwale”* - inhabitants of Delhi. This will question the very idea of authenticity, which is deemed a marker of identity, to debate what is ‘authentic’—the culturally preserved traditions and practices, or the ingenuity

¹⁵ Mohan, interviewed by the researcher.

of the people to improvise them in quest of survival and adaptation, and their agency to challenge the rigidity of cultural artefacts.

It will also explore how nostalgia has transformed itself from being an aching memory to a socio-economic means of sustenance—of individuals and of memories. The food associated with the displaced Punjabi community (as with any community) is not a mere emblem of their identity, but is a problematic narrative of the disapprovals, market validation, culinary dominance and unexplored flavours of the less pronounced members. Therefore, through food, I wish to explore in this chapter “*how the cooking of a society is a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure...*” (Levi-Strauss, 1968/97: 35; cited in Gunew, 2000: 228). Using the ethnographic data and personal narratives, I have tried to weave together the above-mentioned arguments using nostalgia around food as an active participant in the social rehabilitation process of the migrants, and to discover recipes which can become “folkways” (Jost Voth, 1990) into the identity of the women migrants.

3.1 Food as the Performance

“Eating is symbolically associated with the most deeply felt human experiences, and thus expresses things that are sometimes difficult to articulate in everyday language” (Farb and Armelagos, 1980:111).

This quote from the chapter *Meal as Metaphor* in the book *Consuming Passions* aptly describes the importance of the power of food to ‘interact’ with the social traditions and institutions throughout the different eras of history. Indian mythological author Devdutt Patnaik has also discussed in his article *The Talking Thali* that— “*It is in the kitchen that a language is spoken that addresses the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and even the skin, all five senses... By*

cooking Chinese food in the Chinese way, the Chinese mother makes her child Chinese” (Pattnaik, 2011). Food plays a significant role in the socialization of an individual. Equally important and political is the process of recalling the memories associated with food. Food recollections in life stories might be factually anecdotal, but they can also function in a metaphorical way, as a means to recount events that are too difficult to talk about directly, or as descriptive tools that can either reveal or mask emotions related to experiences, both painful or cheerful (Epp, 2015: 366).

Eating—consuming food—therefore is a performance which reasserts and challenges the existing social orders and practices at the same time. The consumption, as explained by Bourdieu, has three types of distinctions – food, culture and presentation, based on the social class of the individual. In the economic realm, taste is a virtue made out of necessity (1984: 177). The presentation involves the performance which traces its roots to the socio-economic and cultural status of the people involved, and is often not stationary, especially during the tumultuous times when social orders are disrupted. This argument translates well in Anita’s anecdote about her family’s favorite dessert which was her mother’s favored dish as well. She shared—

“My mother would love to eat sewaiyan (vermicelli). When her family came to India from Pakistan, her mother on some occasions, would roll it with her hands to make the special treat. It is usually had with milk. On days when there would be no milk, they would make it only with sugar. She would make it the same way for us sometimes and we got so used to that taste that even now we prefer our sewaiyan (jualein) without milk.”

This recipe for a family favourite speaks of a culinary ingenuity which was born out of a sense of deprivation and became a habit due to its frequent appearance over a period of time. For the members of the family who have never been exposed to the taste of creamy milk or nuts or other delights from Rawalpindi where Anita’s mother, Kamal was born, this version of recipe

is that culinary taste inherited from their mother which is an integral part of their memories, and the tradition. Its preparation in Kamal's home was an "outlet of the creativity" born out of the deprivation, loss of resource and a struggle to revive and recreate the familiarity of the land the elders of the family were forced to leave (Avakian, 1998 *cited in* Avakian & Haber, 2005: 2). This is one of the apparent ways in which women exercise their agency by changing, tweaking and at time, defying the norms of preparation and presentation of food.

On many occasions, the performance of consumption of food at times can also revoke the bitter and disturbing memories of loss, which are neither incorporated in reminiscing nor in the practice, but are rather tried to be forgotten, or are seldom recalled with great pain. Sudeshna, while discussing about the presence of food during the initial years of hardship, had her eyes welled up when she narrated this—

"Even if we all missed the food back home, we had seen worse days following Partition and would be thankful for getting at least two meals a day. Back in the refugee camp, we had to spread our hands and beg for a chapatti and wouldn't even get it sometimes. We would have to eat raw turnips on some days when there would be no food. We knew our mother was working hard to put food on our table".

For her, the memories of food at the refugee camps involved 'begging' for food by stretching out the hands, which was an experience so humiliating that she didn't wish to recall it ever after. Therefore, the process of translating memories to practice to eventual tradition is also very selective (though involuntary at times of a continuous disruption of previous order and stability) (Epp, 2015; DeSilva, 1996). Therefore, while the anecdotes of a culinary ingenuity become the beginning of a new tradition, the bitter memories of stripping off one's agency and self-worth in a bid to fill one's belly are often locked up inside, never to be discussed again.

3.2 Gastronomical Entrepreneurs and Ambassadors: Women Migrants through a Culinary lens

Reproduction of nostalgia and culture through food, as discussed in the last section, also has to be viewed through the agency of the people facilitating it—not as mere catalysts, but as active participants. To begin the discussion around different approaches to the reproduction of culture, one should look at *who* does that; the ones who are displaced of course—by the virtue of war, civil strife, political tensions, livelihood aspirations, and marriage. The journey into the world of the ‘other’ brings along alignment of food with body and place, which brings both rootedness and routes of dispersal (Khare and Rao, 1986: 6). It is from here that the quest of finding and creating the authentic begins—for oneself and for the others, where the acquaintance of the latter with the authentic variation of the culture is also an act of carving a space, an identity for oneself in the foreign milieu.

This is where the role of women in being the culinary ambassadors come into picture, which is surprisingly neither celebrated nor discussed often in the popular realm of history and literature. Be it the painful struggle to convert the limited resources into a square meal, or the ingenuity to turn the memories of taste into a culinary enterprise—the women from the displaced communities have been privy to these experiences. The women-run Chinese restaurants in the American Jew Towns (Tuchman and Levine, 1992), and the Anglo-Indian cuisine of the erstwhile Indian princely state created by the princesses marrying into the family from different regions and ethnic-cultural backgrounds (Jhala, 2008) have been the prominent examples of gendered gastronomical entrepreneurship as an attempt to retain their individual identity and agency.

Sudeshna shared that the food in Pakistan used to be very lavish and royal. There used to be a lot of dairy products and fruits. In Ambala and Delhi, there was nothing. She and her siblings became visibly weak due to lack of nutrition-rich food, which used to be the main concern of her mother. The main source of sustenance and nutrition, food, and the bid to get enough for all the members of the family was one of the major challenges faced by the women of the household, who, as Epp has discussed, faced it as a “*challenge to their motherhood*” (2015: 371). She explains that for women in circumstances where food scarcity meant they were unable to feed their children, their gendered sense of selves as ‘mothers’ responsible for family care was deeply challenged (*ibid*).

While I felt that this perception towards self was a reiteration of the gender roles and consequent responsibilities, the detailed discussion with the participants made me look at the situation through another perspective—this challenge led to many culinary inventions which stand as a strong testimony to the process of the struggle to accommodate frugality within the folds of nutrition and sustenance. Critically looking at Spivak’s concept of the ways in which the voice of the subalterns is taken away (1988), I feel that different Subalterns speak ‘differently’, and expression of one’s agency against the socio-economic odds and challenges through food is indeed a way of ‘speaking’—successfully interacting with the available socioeconomic resources to taper and alter the “folkways”, (taking from Jost Voth, 1990) through meals and dining practices. This is reflected in an account shared by Anita about her grandmother trying to battle the constraint of resources through different ways.

“My naniji (maternal grandmother), on days of extreme deprivation, would boil some corn, dry them and make murunda (a sweet made with jaggery and puffed corn) for children. That will make the kids happy with something like a candy when there would be money for nothing.”

An prominent yet ironical example of the uncredited struggle of women can be found in the by-lanes of old Delhi at Paharganj, where *Sitaram Diwanchand* has been selling extremely popular *chhole bhatoore* (spicy curried chickpeas with puffed up fried leavened bread) to the Delhiites, a delicacy which is an indispensable part of the culinary identity of Delhi.¹⁶

The success of this venture owes largely to the Sitaram's wife, who worker equally hard with her husband to set up and run the business. But in the popular narration and accounts, she is mostly relegated in the background and hardly talked about. So much so that during the ethnographic visits, her great grandson had difficulty even recalling her name and eventually didn't succeed. This has to be examined through the dynamics of gender roles and physical mobility. While feeding the children is a challenge to the motherhood, the onus of earning the bread and butter, as echoed by most of the participants of this research, is believed to be on the shoulders of the menfolk. Women going out to work to earn a livelihood was an exception which occurred only during the time of 'disruption', they felt. Therefore, in the exercise of recollection of memories, their identities as the bread-winners is often hazy and disputed.

However, it should not be overlooked that this very period of disruption facilitated the mobility of many of the women outside their homes—often reluctantly, in retrospect—which brought about a change not only in the gender dynamics within the family, but also in the way women would perceive themselves. Alope, whose mother Raji started selling bread-*pakodas* (fritters with chickpea flour batter) in a makeshift shack outside their home in Delhi in 1951 (which today has taken the shape of a famous snack shop and catering company in Patel Nagar, West

¹⁶ It was started by Sitaram Kohli in 1950 who migrated from Lahore in 1947. This was not part of his family occupation. He and his wife would sell *chhole-bhatoore* on the push cart in and around Paharganj. His wife would prepare both the items at home (later his sons learnt to prepare it) and then they would proceed to sell it. He was supported by Diwanchand, his spiritual mentor in Delhi who was also a migrant and whose name still appears in the venture.

Delhi) shared that her mother would sit outside in the “public” (footpath outside the house, which denotes the area outside the confines of the home) and would fry *pakodas*. Soon, she got the permission to go sell the pakodas and samosas in the adjacent school during the lunch break. Since it was a girls-only school, she couldn’t send Alope over there and thus would go herself with the basket of fried fritters everyday for more than two decades. Alope identifies her mother as this strong feisty woman who was not scared of stepping out of the house unaccompanied by a male member. The guardsmen and the errands boy in the school used to respect her a lot.

The positionality of women also played a major role in determining their access to public spaces specifically in the culinary realm. It is important to note here that both Raji and Sitaram’s wife came from Mohyal (Brahmin) and Khatri (Vaishya/merchant) caste groups respectively, those among the top three of the fourfold varna order whose touch is not considered polluting, and the food prepared by whom could generally be consumed by everyone. Although the caste hierarchies and discrimination were significantly weakened during the tumultuous period following Partition (as discussed in the last chapter), they were consciously practiced whenever possible when it came to food. Just like fluid identities, this social negotiation also took time to crystallize to become a pattern (Banerji, 2007). This complicated phenomenon finds a context in Sharmila Rege’s argument in Chapter 2, in which she argues how historical differences lead to differentiated opportunities and access to them. It is pertinent to understand that the different ways in which the displaced Punjabi women reacted and adapted to the challenges was not only based on their previous affluence, but also on the caste group they came from, which was a strong determinant of their participation in culinary micro-enterprises. Therefore, I go back to Homi Bhabha’s argument about the creation of the “*imaginative counter discourse*” as a side development of the mainstream historical accounts, which, on one hand, leads to creation of a contextual identity of the migrants, while

on the other it complicates the already vulnerable and multi-layered identity of the refugees (Dalit women migrants, in this case) which is an attempt at balancing the identities of the past while accepting the present ones (1984, 11).

3.3 What is Authentic? Critically Analysing the Concept of Authenticity

The political debate around identity could also be seen as a result of extension of the idea of authenticity in the culinary realm, seeping deep into the social orders and hierarchy beyond the recent trends and fads. The definition of traditional has been a contentious territory which can often lead to standardization and elimination of the diverse tapestry of flavors, preparation process and memories related to the recipe (Appadurai, 1988: 4) as well as negligence of the historical value of the material artefact (Aistara, 2014: 7).

It is important to explore how ‘authenticity’ has been contextualized and recreated by the diaspora and the displaced communities for the market consumption which promotes (and has takers for) nostalgia driven livelihood. Rey Chow has stated that fusion food is “*precisely the transgression, indeed violation, of set cultural boundaries that becomes celebrated as sources of sophisticated pleasure*” (2005: 21) to lay emphasis on her argument about the market forces which make the community members themselves internalise these new additions and adaptations. However, the discussion around the process of fusing different cultures and consequent social adaptation through cuisines often misses out on the aspect of the ‘loss’—of the memories, characteristic traits and the social relations.

Bansi, while talking about his fondness for *vadis* (bite size dumplings made with lentils and spices from a meringue like batter), recalls that the most fascinating part was the preparation

of *vadis*, which was always a community affair. It involved Bansi's mother and her friends from neighbourhood coming together on the terrace and preparing it together. It involved pureeing the lentils with spices and placing the batter on *mulmul chaddars* (cloth lining sheets made of muslin) to dry. He further shared that the children would have a great time on those days when the mothers will be away, running around the house. Those *vadis*, he said, were so flavourful and crisp even when added to a simple potato-onion curry. It's not that the store bought *vadis* nowadays are not good, he says, but they can never manage to evoke the same cherished memories involved in witnessing that cheerful communal process of preparation. His mother stopped making *vadis* after coming to Delhi post-Partition, for there was no leisure time, space or resources to make them. Besides, that was a communal activity best done with friends over endless rounds of tea, *sherbet* and chattering. Partition, along with many things, also took away those friends and a sense of familiar leisure from women. Hence, between the descriptions of my participants' reminiscing over the taste of 'authentic' food and recipes from their home back in Pakistan, I could read that the disapproval to the tastes of the new land spoke of the loss of familiar practices and performances which went into the performance of preparing and consuming food.

The sociological explanation behind the creation of these new dishes like corn *murunda* which eventually became a staple in the diet of some of the Punjabi households goes back to Bourdieu's argument, where he states that the absence of sophisticated taste (for example, intricate recipes which requires time and labour) is a result of the paucity of time and resources, which leads to the creation of quick fix meals. As he has explained in his work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, the taste in culture and cuisine are but a matter of intellect and class exposure one has access to, which determine the knowledge, accessibility and enjoyment of the same (1984: 177-86). In case of the migrant community, the biggest

determinant of the taste was socio-economic in nature—availability of the resources. With many members of the family to feed, the idea behind preparation of every meal involved making dishes which are filling and could have multiple servings. Mohan shared that a typical meal while growing up used to be a huge pot of *daal* (lentil soup) or potato curry, which was on most days runny (adding more water to the curry increases the quantity) with thick chapattis or a potful of *khichdi* (rice cooked with lentils). The soft, puffy *phulkas* (thin chapattis which puff up on toasting) were unheard of during his growing up years as his mother Nimal didn't have the time nor the ample resources to sit and puff up one *phulka* at a time to feed “four ravenous children”. He says,

“Even today, I sometimes take daal in a bowl and slurp it off straight instead of eating it with a spoon, because my earliest memories of daal is that of a runny one. My wife used to scoff at me in the beginning for this embarrassing act. But that’s how I have grown up having daal.”

The similar sentiment is also reflected in Bansi's narrative about his fondness for *rot* (a thick girdle toasted chapatti made with bajra-pearl millet). Traditionally, the *rot* is smothered with molten *ghee* (clarified butter) to cut across the dryness of the bread and is usually eaten either with a generous helping of jaggery, or pickle. However, Bansi shared that he is fond of having *rot* without *ghee*, because during his adolescent years in Delhi, it was such a luxury to have dairy products in abundance, and his mother would simply prepare these filling chapattis which he would then have with whatever little jaggery or leftover vegetable dish was available and would gulp it down with buttermilk. Back home, it would have been a case of culinary blasphemy to have *rot* without *ghee*, but frequent consumption of this bread with buttermilk made him fond of this combination, and it still is his favorite breakfast on some days, despite his family members' insistence to add *ghee* to the meal. These two instances therefore speak of an acquired taste owes more to the socio-economic reasons than cultural. Therefore, the

definition of the *terroir* should also be extended to include the taste created and developed by the context of the people in a certain socio-spatial context.

While for some, frugality became a taste, for many others it became a horrid memory which they tried to masque in the following years when scarcity was no longer an issue. This practice can be understood through Bourdieu's argument about the coarseness of consumption, which doesn't get completely censored even after the disappearance of the economic constraints and eventually becomes a habit. He saw it as a trait of the *nouveau riche* or newly rich, thereby instating the class hierarchy even beyond the economic resource acquisition (Bourdieu, 1984: 177). Many of the members of the community, after facing a severe deprivation and poverty, went on to invest more and more in expensive products of consumption (food and otherwise) as a mechanism to overcome the trauma of loss experienced during and after Partition.¹⁷ It was also an attempt to create in one's memory a counter narrative of deprivation and loss, the indicators of a "*bad time*" (Epp, 2015: 374). This is clearly reflected in what is now popular as the 'Punjabi cuisine' throughout the country—an abundance of red meat and dairy products, which, more than showing the culinary heritage of the land, is a reflection of the bid to overcompensate for the experience of hunger and deprivation experienced through the decades after the Partition. The representation of identity, in Bourdieu's words, is through "*food, culture and presentation*" (1984: 175). Therefore, the creation of the cultural identity of the Punjabi migrants in Delhi was based on the presentation of their culinary culture, where food undoubtedly became the metaphor of how the community in general is perceived—pompous, lavish and at times, garish. This popular description however does not give a deeper sociological context of the history and the struggles of the community, and their process of

¹⁷ As described by the participants Sudeshna, Bansi, Mohan and Prabhat.

adaptation (to be discussed in the later sections of the chapter) which led to development of practices and characteristic traits.

Despite acquiring the taste for the dishes invented in times of frugality, the migrants still pined for the familiar tastes. The foundation and conception of the idea of opening the enterprises catering to this craving was based on this nostalgia. This development could be understood as A prominent example of this is the *Multan Moth Bhandar*¹⁸ at Multani Dhandha, Delhi.

The current owner's claim of authenticity, if analyzed through a critical lens, explain that the aspect which can be deemed 'authentic' in such situations—apart from the ingredients and style of cooking—is the nostalgia on which the superstructure of identity, memories and cultural enterprise is built upon for its market consumption.

Understanding and exploring the factors which determine what makes a culinary dish authentic requires a nuanced understanding of the circumstances, conditions and objective of its preparation. Food after all, derives its social status by *how*, *by whom* and *for whom* it is prepared. In words of Indian social scientist Ashis Nandy, the sociological definition of inauthenticity is as follows—

“The term ‘inauthentic’ has usually two meanings – compromises made with the taste of those who do not belong to the ethnic cuisine for commercial or other reasons extraneous to local taste, and compromises made with recipes to cope with the unavailability or paucity of ingredients. Such a concept of authenticity presumes the existence of boundaries that are difficult to associate with Indian food.” (2004: 11).

¹⁸ *Multan Moth Bhandar* was started by Seth Nand Lal Chawla in 1949 who migrated from Multan. He used to sell *moth kachauri* in a shop outside his haveli back in Pakistan as well. He knew cooking and therefore would cook it himself. He would initially sell the delicacy on his cycle in the areas of Paharganj and Karol Bagh. The same recipe is used by his fourth generation as well, who manages the shop at Multani Dhandha in Delhi.

Therefore, availability of resources and the demand for the adaptation into the new cultural milieu play a significant role in problematizing the discourse around authenticity. This could be best explained through looking at a culinary dish invented by the migrant Punjabis after settling in Delhi. The dish which resulted from the dynamic interaction between the nostalgia, entrepreneurial ingenuity and a domestic concern to avoid wastage was (now globally renowned) Butter Chicken¹⁹, which is now an emblem of Punjabi identity, taking the community on the international map with Chicken Tikka Masala (a variation of Butter Chicken) being touted as the ‘National Dish of Britain’ (Sen and Sen, 1988, *cited in* Taylor Sen, 2015: 282).

Tandoori chicken has been popular among the men from the northern part of the Indian Subcontinent, prepared on skewers on the open fire clay ovens in small eateries by men. They are a standard accompaniment to whiskey or beer. Therefore, adding moisture to this dish through the addition of juicy tomatoes and dairy products, in this context, can be interpreted as making it more culturally acceptable to be consumed even by the women. Levi Strauss in his seminal work *The Culinary Triangle* has explained how roasting as a form of cooking is a cultural practice associated with men and masculinity. Roasting, usually done on the open fire with a temporary receptacle outside the ‘hearth’ and often for a communal eating alludes to two central ideas—the fact that roasting is a compromise between cooked and raw, invented in

¹⁹ Butter Chicken was invented by Kundan Lal Gujral, a partition survivor who migrated from Peshawar to Delhi. Back in Pakistan, he used to work for a catering shop turned restaurant which specialized in clay oven kababs (minced meats roasted patties/cutlets). After the Partition, Gujral opened a small eatery in the walled interiors of Delhi—Daryaganj—and named it Moti Mahal. He prepared *tandoori* (roasted in clay oven) delicacies. The story (which is now recorded as a famous urban culinary legend) is that to avoid the tandoori chicken from getting wasted (it would get hard as roasting takes away the moisture of the food if not consumed immediately), he came up with a sauce laden with pureed tomatoes, dried fenugreek, cream and butter to add the pieces of tandoori chicken to it. Over a period of time, this dish became so famous that it became synonymous to the Punjabi cuisine, the ubiquitous dish found in all Mughlai/Punjabi/North Indian restaurants.

absence of stationary paraphernalia and is more of a natural form of cooking, and; roasting as a cultural practice associated with game food which has primarily been the domain of the menfolk as opposed to the cooked/boiled food prepared privately with utensils mostly by women (Levi-Strauss, 1997: 38-42). The roasted food could interestingly be translated as the ‘*dude food*’, prepared and consumed usually at the public spaces frequented by men after rounds of drinks, hence the name.

Despite all the market hype, butter chicken has essentially been a restaurant dish with each family having its favorite *dhaba* (roadside eatery)/restaurant to dote on. A reason for its infrequent preparation at homes can also be assigned to the fact that the clay oven (*tandoor*) was usually a communal thing—centrally located within a *mohalla* (neighbourhood). Only the very affluent ones had in within their houses, Shyam shares. After the partition, given the lack of space and resources in the city of Delhi with cramped housing during the initial years following the Partition, it was unimaginable to think of an oven at the house. Therefore, Butter Chicken remained the restaurant dish—an example of the hybrid dish encompassing the elements of two different cuisines—the Punjabi and the Delhiite. While guidebooks invariably described Moti Mahal as the embodiment of traditional Delhi food, in reality, its offerings were a reinterpreted mix of Punjabi staples, which eventually found favour among foreigners as among *dilliwallahs* (Taylor Sen, 2014; Siegel, 2010: 78).²⁰ This however, was an eventual development and did not find many takers among the members of the Punjabi refugee community for long.

²⁰ There is also an apparent irony in the hegemonic rise of “Delhi” cuisine in restaurants across India—the city’s mishmash of united provinces and frontier food developed as a result of post-Partition demographic shift. It now represents an imagined national cuisine—owing much to the migrants and travellers who, in turn, have exported it from the wealthy capital to the rest of the country (Siegel 2010, 89).

While growing up, there weren't many members of the older generation who migrated from Pakistan who took a fancy to this dish. I could understand the reason behind their aversion to this 'restaurant dish' only during the interviews. Two of the octogenarian participants, Bansi and Prabhat²¹, while talking of the change in the dietary patterns post-Partition, expressed their disdain towards addition of too much tomatoes in the dish. Prabhat said that the tomatoes didn't grow in abundance in Pakistan, so it was hardly used in the cooking. "*Tamatar swaad ekdum kharab kar dete hain*" (*the tomatoes spoil the taste of the dish*), he shares. Here in India, they started to be used due to their availability and that the fact that they added body to the dish at times when food resources were scarce. He further added that at times when tomatoes would be expensive, it would serve as a good reason for completely shunning the use of tomatoes in everyday cooking. He emphasized that tomatoes weren't an important part of the "traditional" cuisine. These accounts are further validated by the third-generation owners of two of the most popular eateries in Delhi, opened after the Partition by the Punjabi survivors—*Sitaram Diwanchand* and *Multan Moth Bhandar*.²²

As discussed earlier, the overarching presence of the market cannot be undermined or ignored while looking at these enterprises. The flexibility to adapt, the willingness to experiment, or the firmness to remain unchanged—all accrue to the dynamics of the market and the consumers who are the patrons of these dishes and the enterprises. This is the process of the internalization

²¹ Prabhat migrated to Delhi from Mandi Bhoorewala in Multan (Punjab, Pakistan) in 1946.

²² The *chhole* (spiced chickpeas) are made using the same recipe which was used by Mr. Sitaram Kohli and his wife, reminiscent of what they would eat at home usually in Lahore. The *chhole* are prepared using a spice mix mainly containing clove, black pepper, cinnamon, and nutmeg. The souring agent is *anardana* (dried seeds of pomegranate), which is typical to Punjabi households to add a fruity tartness to the dishes instead of tomatoes. Similarly, the fourth-generation owner of Multan Moth Bhandar informed that the preparation of moth *daal* (a thick lentil soup made with moth beans which is tangy and spicy) does not use any tomatoes at all.

of the market gaze (Chow, 2005; Levine and Tuchman, 1992; Guthman, 2008), as discussed in the Second Chapter. In some cases, the tabooed stereotypes have been internalized by the communities as a compliance to the greater forces of cultural economic validation of the “market”, whereas other enterprises exemplify retention of erstwhile practices to translate them (deliberately or eventually) as their unique selling factor. This serves as a good example of how gastro-identities are created through bringing nostalgia in everyday practice.

Through a sociological lens, I have tried to understand the patterns of mobility of migrant women in two ways—reclamation of the public space by the women through buying the food sold on the streets (considered the domain of the menfolk) by men, and; recreating the familiar by getting to meet the neighbours and initiating/continuing conversations through the process of getting out of the house to get food. The food could then classify as the means of nourishment of not only the body, but of the social existence as well of the women.

Talking of the market and the popularity gained by the culinary enterprises started by the Punjabi migrants from Pakistan, it is important to gauge the context of the community and the city to understand its acceptance of the food prepared and served ‘outside’ of the household kitchen. The culture of eating out does not find favour in many parts of the India where dietary restrictions, hygiene and sanitation concerns, and caste hierarchy are strongly enforced (Banerji, 2007). The elaborate measures and precautions enlisted in the Vedic texts around preparation of food in the house also negates the cultural presence of consuming food outside of the home in the ancient times, except when it is prepared during a religious gathering by the cooks from the highest *varna* order and is served as *prasada* (consecrated food) (*ibid*). The culture of eating out was first introduced to the Indian subcontinent with the advent of Mughal rule in the 16th century. However, it was, for many centuries, limited only to the soldiers,

western tourists, elites within their havelis, or men living away from the family's strict observing eye. Public eating in Delhi was transgressive, because while it was an acceptable act at the time of traveling or working, it was not considered a desirable activity for families or polite society. And it was strictly gendered, with women having no access to those eateries (Banerji, 2007; Siegel, 2010: 77).

With the influx of a large number of displaced population in Delhi in the 1940s and 50s after the Partition, the involvement in small-time manual activities and odd jobs for sustenance became very common. Due to the lack of time and available resources, many of the working class members would choose to eat something outside from the roadside shack, again run by the members of the displaced community, available for a reasonable price. However, this was still not a hugely encouraged practice and certainly gender-specific, available primarily to the working class members (Achaya, 1994; Appadurai, 1986 *cited in* Siegel, 2010: 78). But there's a need to understand these gender dynamics beyond these generic explanations. It is pertinent to look at the cultural set-up of the Punjabi community, where communal *tandoors* and *bhattis* (clay ovens) were commonplace in every neighbourhood, and where women would go for the baked bread, or to get the nuts/grains roasted.²³ It would also be the time for the women to catch up with the other women, which created a safe space within the public domain for interaction. Therefore, they were not completely alien to the idea of public preparation and selling of food which was not religious in nature. The owner of *Multan Moth Bhandar* shared that when his great grandfather started selling *moth-kachauris* on his cycle around the area of Multani Dhandha (Paharganj, Delhi), many women would come out and line up with their utensils to buy it for their families.

²³ As shared by Bansi, Anita and Mohan during the interviews.

3.4 Engendering the codification of recipes – feeding the ‘market’ and the ‘identity’

The previous sections of the chapter have discussed in detail the evolution of different culinary practices and habits in post-Partition Delhi. This section continues the discussion by asking the pertinent questions around the codification of these practices. Codification of the culinary tradition as a concept and as a process is inundated with connotations of labour division, dynamics of hierarchy and division, and most importantly, with the question agency of the subalterns. In Bourdieu’s term, this process is usually classified under the “*objectified*” state of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 47). It establishes the traditions and practices, and decides whose practices will be codified in the process of demanding and claiming one’s own narrative within the discourse of history. For me, the prime objective of looking at the process of codification is to explore if there’s a robust recording of the ‘voices’ of women behind these accounts/practices upholding the agency of the subalterns whose history is tracked through the culinary tradition.

Through ethnography and interviews, I tried to explore the different ways to codify culinary history and traditions, and realized that recipes indeed create safe spaces for women to express themselves through spoonfuls and ounces. They “*allow women from one group to explore the taste of another, just as cookbooks allow women from one group to be represented to another*” (Appadurai, 1988: 6), and they “*remain one means by which women can commute with earlier female kin*” (Tye, 2010: 35 cited in Epp, 2015: 370). Apart from facilitating generational transmission of food memories, they are also are an instructional guide to the traditional food intertwined with stories of “*famine and food trauma*” (Hunchuk, 2012 cited in *ibid*).

A potent medium of dissemination of culture, the recipes carried along by refugees and migrants are a precious heirloom to them. However, in what form they manifest over in the new place and alien context is both interesting and intriguing. While recipe books have been an important artefact in the Western world as part of the larger discourse on domestication of women²⁴, in India, recipes have been missing from the Vedic texts of the ancient era.²⁵

Before other writers were alert to the possibilities of food as a way to gauge human mood and behaviour, the western women cookery book authors like Elizabeth David and M.F.K. Fisher understood that food allowed them the scope they needed to express their views (Avakian and Haber, 2005:4). Back in India, the last decade was a breakthrough in bringing forth the voice of the marginalized community and intersectional oppression of Dalit women in form of *Anna He Apoorva Brahma* (2015) and *Isn't This Plate Indian?* (2009). Woven strongly around the discourse of humiliation and oppression of Dalits which is reflected in their resource-deprived and frugal diet, these books are a pioneer in the documentation of recipes which speak more of the cook and 'her' context—something which is sorely missing in the pantheon of Punjabi cookbooks. While these cookbooks documenting the culinary tradition of the marginalized community serve as the important critical reading into the social history and politics of oppression, the question stands if this genre of recipe books can be equally successful as the

²⁴ The American cookbooks written between the Civil War and the World war II era were part of the larger discourse to relegate the women to the domestic sphere as homemakers—a famous one being *To The Bride* first published in 1956 (Neuhaus, 1999). However, in the 20th century, M.F.K. Fisher and Elizabeth David were the pioneer women writers who wrote cookery books which spoke not only of the traditional recipes, but also challenged the traditional notions of good meals, balanced diets and nutritional standards.

²⁵ As noted by food anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, “while there is an immense amount written about eating and feeding, precious little is said about cooking in Hindu legal medical or philosophical texts...food is principally either a moral or medical matter in traditional Hindu thought.” (1988: 3 cited in Taylor-Sen, 2015: 9). Recipes first find mention in official texts and courtly literature of the Mughal period, of which *Ain-e-Akbari* is a prominent example (*ibid*).

recipe book in the society where food and cookbooks are glorified and celebrated as the marker of social prosperity²⁶, not a chronicler of the marginalization, deprivation and struggles.

While talking to the participants to discuss about some of the culinary practices and dishes which became part of the tradition and got codified eventually (many of them have been discussed in the previous sections), I realized that one of the more dynamic ways to codify a recipe, apart from narrating or writing it down, is the process of continuing to cook with the same recipe, style and ingredients—a process which speaks of not only the willingness to retain a habit acquired through stable or tumultuous times, but also of revering it as the “*social capital*” (Bourdieu, 1986; also see *Chapter 2: Review of Literature*) once the ‘disruption’ is over.

Most of the participants I interviewed had a story of the codification of the recipe from the time of the Partition, a phenomenon which is also well reflected in the business practice of *Sitaram Diwanchand*, *Multan Moth Bhandar* and *Mehta Caterers*, the eateries where I conducted my ethnography. Reading through these recipes (metaphorically) gave me an insight into the untold stories of women and their negotiations with the social structures reflected and expressed through food, which are not recorded in the mainstream historical narratives.

One of the most interesting account has been that of Alope, the current owner of *Mehta Caterers* which is famous for their samosas, *matthris* and bread *pakodas*, served with a tangy tamarind chutney. The spicy potato filling, which is a favourite of both the regular customers

²⁶ Many cookbooks in India glorify the caste hierarchies by strictly defining themselves as ‘*Tamil Brahmin Cookbook*’, ‘*Gaud Saraswat Brahmin Cookbook*’ or ‘*A Higher Taste: A Guide to Gourmet Vegetarian Cooking*’ where the word higher has a spiritual connotation and therefore indicates vegetarianism as a metaphor for purity.

and the schoolkids from the adjacent government school, is something which reminds Alope of his mother.²⁷ Even now, he has taught the cooks at his eatery to make the potato filling in the same way. “*We even use the same filling at home to make aloo paranthas. This started as a homegrown business and that it will always be*”, he says. He talked fondly of his mother’s struggles to raise him and his five unmarried siblings, and says that he wish she could have lived long enough to see how her hard work has borne fruits and the business has prospered. The same story was shared by the owners of *Sitaram Diwanchand*, who have not made any change in the recipe which was first used by his grandparents.²⁸

The practices adopted by these two eateries are an example of how the position and struggles of the women entrepreneurs is acknowledged through the practice of establishing their recipes. These two factors, combined with economic situation and religious-cultural dynamics lead to the creation of many *ethnic entrepreneurs* among the migrants, whose identity was created by the commercialization of the nostalgia for ‘home’.

The stories of these women entailed in these recipes and enterprises also reflect the transition of these women from the ‘private’ to the ‘public’ sphere with food as the catalyst (Strauss, 1997: 38), which changed their notions of femininity and womanliness—from that of the docile, submissive housewives to the breadwinners of the family, a change which reflects not

²⁷ He shared that when his mother started the shack with no business acumen or plan, she used the same potato filling for the bread *pakodas* and samosas as she would use for making *aloo paranthas* at home. This was a family favorite as her mother was famous for making flaky, *ghee*-laden *paranthas*.

²⁸ Unlike many other iconic eateries who refuse to share the ‘secret ingredients’ of their famous recipes, the folks at *Sitaram Diwanchand* have always been open about the spices which goes into their *chhole*. In the recent times, they have also started selling the packets of the spice mix they use, along with a recipe of preparing the *chhole*.

only in their language and demeanour, but also in their streetwise approach of problem solving replete with sarcasm and humorous lashing.

This chapter started with the discussion around the idea of authenticity. The exhaustive conversations with the participants and the ethnography of the eateries made me realize that for the Partition survivors, the nostalgia of the *terroir* plays a significant role in their food memories. However, what holds the utmost importance for them is the effort of replication of familiarity—through an interplay of available ingredients and comforting memories. Therefore, while Prabhat disapproved of the taste of the almonds available in Delhi, his favourite dish is still the *badam halwa* which his mother used to make for his birthday, and continued making it with whatever available ingredients even after migrating to India. That dish is one of the numerous delicacies ‘authentic’ to Delhi, for they developed their present form in the process of cultural amalgamation facilitated by frugality and ingenuity.

There are innumerable dishes like these which taste of historical and sociological developments, but there’s an absence of a cookbook in India documenting the stories of hunger, food deprivation and gendered struggle of the migrants through a feminist lens, beyond the glorification of meal as a stagnant memory from the past (Rege, 2009; Jost Voth, 1990). The documentation of some of these recipes with an evident context of their origin and evolution, I believe, will be an interdisciplinary intervention towards taking sociology from its familiar ‘armchair’ domain out into the dynamic ‘field’ of food and gender relations.

Conclusion

This research has been a process of emotional labour in terms of talking to Partition survivors about their experiences through a lens different from that of the violence and suffering around which the mainstream narrative of the Partition has been woven and presented. It required a great deal of effort in breaking the metaphorical ice with the participants to discuss the accounts of hunger, starvation and deprivation. It further involved reading between the lines to understand and make sense of the meagre vocabulary and silence around the dynamic role of food in struggles and the newly defined identities of the survivors (DeSilva, 1996). Nevertheless, the information and anecdotes gathered from those conversations and interviews have been vivid and rich without doubt.

It has been a journey into the exploring the voices of women intertwined in the cultural and culinary dynamics. In the times of molecular gastronomy and culinary science, taking a step back and understanding the substance and context of the dishes, I feel, is crucial to instate that food is not only a medium to please the bodily senses, but indeed is the manifestation of the socioeconomic interplay of gendered identity, cultural practices, market validation and the process of remembrance. The food has always been part of the bigger picture in the manner it amplifies and interacts with the complex social issues of gender, labour and the sociocultural repercussion of a political action like the Partition.

While the quest is to explore a robust vocabulary to build a culinary narrative of the Partition is still in progress, I did get a chance to understand and appreciate food as the part of the performance—of gender, of its power and position within the family, and that of the agency it facilitates in form of its preparation and consumption. Codification of some of these recipes

as part of the research have been part of the effort to acknowledge the women who found their strength in their struggle, and who understood that food could travel from hearth to the *haat* (marketplace) onto the path of agency. And, it is also the beginning of the journey to reclaim identity for many women like Sitaram's wife, whose hard work and efforts have been overshadowed by her male counterpart in the popular narratives and dominant memories.

Food is also a potent cultural tool of caste based discrimination and segregation. I could not get a chance to interview the members of the Dalit Punjabi community to get a more nuanced perspective into the intersectionality between caste, class and gender, due to the limited time and consequently, the restrictive Snowball sampling style. However, I wish to develop this research further into a framework to document the voices of the Indian migrant women through their culinary habits, in form of a cook book which record not only the recipes, but the intersectional struggles within the subaltern historical narrative to reclaim their identity. This is a part of a long term project I wish to undertake with the women I have worked, or will work with as a practicing feminist social worker trained in the discipline of Social Anthropology, to bring out their 'stories' in their own languages and 'voices'. The feminist ideal of agency talks of enablers, not "interlocuters", after all!

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