Bangladeshi Food Voices from Diaspora: Narratives of Six Case Studies from the UK, USA and Hungary

By Shehreen Ataur Khan

Submitted to Central European University – Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfilment for the ERASMUS MUNDUS MA in Women's and Gender Studies (GEMMA)

Main supervisor: Nadia Jones-Gailani, PhD (Central European University)

Second reader: Adelina Sanchez Espinosa, PhD (University of Granada)

Budapest

2019

Bangladeshi Food Voices from Diaspora: Narratives of Six Case Studies from the UK, USA and Hungary

By Shehreen Ataur Khan

Submitted to Central European University – Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfilment for the ERASMUS MUNDUS MA in Women's and Gender Studies (GEMMA)

Main supervisor: Nadia Jones-Gailani, PhD (Central European University)

Second reader: Adelina Sanchez Espinosa, PhD (University of Granada)

Abstract

This thesis is focused on Bangladeshi culinary representations in the diaspora. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the Bangladeshi migrants who are involved in the culinary industry. I joined these two strands together and formed the kernel of my dissertation, which is to examine the layers of Bangladeshi migrant identities that are orchestrated through their culinary expressions in diaspora. My dissertation is based on six case studies from the UK, USA, and Hungary. Because of the diverse backgrounds of the case studies, there was an eclectic mix in their culinary projects, and I have analyzed them through the theoretical lens of food histories, food narratives, postcolonial studies, migrant identifies, and oral history. This research reveals how their culinary projects are coming to terms with a new reality, an expression of their hybrid identity, and at the same time, celebrating the connection with their homelands.

Keywords: Bangladeshi Cuisine-Diasporic Identity-Cookbook- Authenticity- Memory Making- Oral History

Reseña

Esta tesis se ocupa de las representaciones culinarias bangladesíes en la diáspora. El propósito de esta investigación es adquirir un mejor conocimiento de los migrantes bangladesíes involucrados en la industria culinaria. Estas dos dimensiones son el núcleo de esta disertación que examina la complejidad de las identidades migrantes bangladesíes que se forman a través de expresiones culinarias en la diáspora. Esta investigación está basada en seis casos de estudio en el Reino Unido, los Estados Unidos y Hungría. Estos casos representan, debido a la diversidad de sus contextos, una combinación ecléctica de proyectos culinarios y por ello han sido analizados a través de las perspectivas teóricas que brindan las historias de la comida, las narrativas de la comida, los estudios poscoloniales, las identidades migrantes y la historia oral. Este análisis revela cómo estos proyectos culinarios responden a una nueva realidad, siendo una expresión de su identidad híbrida, al tiempo que una celebración de la conexión con sus patrias.

Palabras claves: Cocina bangladesí, Identidad diaspórica, Libro de cocina, Autenticidad, Construcción de memoria, Historia oral

Declaration of Original Content

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 31, 312 words

Entire manuscript: 36,493 words

Signed: Shehreen Ataur Khan

Acknowledgment

Gratitude to my supervisor, Nadia Jones Gailani, without whom I wouldn't even know that there is an entire horizon of food studies, waiting to be explored! You helped me to find my inspiration and belonging. You are gifted with a magic wand that can transform a blank mind into a repository of narratives and wonderful ideas. Thank you for your guidance and constant support at every step of this thesis, without you, it would go nowhere!

Gratitude to my second reader, Adelina Sanchez Espinosa, for being the source of courage and inspiration when I was in Granada.

Thank you, Professor Jasmina Lukic, for being there from the day I started my journey with GEMMA.

Thank you, Tek Jung Mahat, for letting me know about this amazing world of Erasmus Scholarship.

Gratitude to all my interviewees, who graciously agreed to be a part of this project and have been amazingly cooperative throughout the entire process of writing!

Glenda, you have been the blessing in the entire process of writing, words are not enough to describe your support! Fatima, Jorge, Rebecca, thank you for never abandoning me amidst all sorts of mess, and always rescue me with your love, knowledge and sense of humor. Thank you to the GEMMA squad of Budapest- Jona, Katya, Saima, and our honorary GEMMA member, Max. All of you were the source of joy, and companions of my panic attacks in Budapest, thank you for being there. Thank you to all who were present in the Thesis Workshop! You guys are in one of my chapters now.

Gratitude to the two people who have been my rock since 2015. Thank you for patiently listening to all my ranting, distress, despair, and nonstop blabbering for hours and hours. Thank you for taking care of maa. Thank you for holding her strong when I was not there. Abrar and Shagar, I can't tell how indebted I am to both of you.

Lastly, to my best friend, you are literally the reason for where I am right now and writing this acknowledgment. From the moment you conceived, you have been protecting me from the world. You have sacrificed everything for me, I wish I could give you the life you really deserve! I am not going to write anything to you because then it would be twice the length of my current thesis, which I am not allowed to do here. I just want to say I owe you my life, maa.

Dedication

To My Mother

Who Has Sacrificed Her Own Wings So That I Could Fly

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

> An immigrant travels with luggage of several kinds. There are suitcases packed with practical goods and memorabilia (for example, a handwritten cookbook, a lefse rolling pin, or a gefilte fish pot, such as those in the museum on Ellis Island), and there is the baggage carried only in the mind, which contains flavors, aromas, and images from the kitchens of homeland and family.[1]

As Cara De Silva delineates, the event of migration leaves migrants with a heap of luggage; luggage that one can see, and luggage that cannot be seen but only to be felt. When people emigrate from their homeland, this baggage becomes the remnants of their home and identity. With the idea of home comes the perception, imaginary and production of food, which is central to this identity. The food and the ingredients one buys, cooks, and eats reflect the identity of a greater community.[2] Furthermore, food, in a migration setting, evokes a sense of nostalgia because "taste and smell evoke memories."[3] This dissertation engages Bangladeshi migrant identity and Bangladeshi transnational identity, through the expression of their food that is represented in the migrants' culinary businesses. My thesis is based on six case studies of Bangladeshi diaspora food businesses that are established and run by Bangladeshi migrants who are currently living in the different parts of the UK, US, and Hungary. Since my interviewees are migrants of different countries, and so I weave together the strands of migration histories of those locations in order to understand how food is the lens through which these migrants negotiate identity in a new place.

Throughout this dissertation I draw from different literatures that focus on the (re)construction of migrant identities through food. I situate the interviewees' responses on the existing literature of memory-making and recipe sharing in a diasporic context in order to produce my own reflection on the case studies. My intention is to highlight the visibility of Bangladeshi

[1] Annie Hauck-Lawson and Jonathan Deutsch, eds., *Gastropolis: Food and New York City*, Arts and Traditions of the Table (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 5.
[2] Yael Raviv, *Falafel Nation: Cuisine and the Making of National Identity in Israel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 3.
[3] Raviv, 3.

cuisine and how that complicated visibility is creating a narrative of Bangladeshi migrant identities in the diaspora as well as in the host countries. Through the oral history material that I collected during my fieldwork, I explore the ways these migrants create a route to their homelands, memories and express their fluid identities by the medium of their culinary projects. I also reflect on how they are channelizing that emotional connection on the platform of social media.

Dealing with the history of the migration of Bangladeshi people is problematic because of the multilayered past of this country, and since the emergence of Bangladesh as a nation-state is a comparatively new phenomenon in comparison to its more populous neighboring countries, India and Pakistan. Before the partition of 1947, its location was part of the Bengal province in the Subcontinent and it was formally known as East Bengal. After the Partition of the Subcontinent in 1947, "Bengal was cut into two"[4] and was divided between India and Pakistan. East Bengal became a part of Pakistan, and West Bengal became a part of India. To reinforce East Bengal's identity as a part of Pakistan, in 1955, East Bengal got an official new name: East Pakistan.[5] The fate of East Pakistan spanned only 24 years as it became independent from the rule of Pakistan through a nine-month-long sanguinary war of independence in 1971. The complexity of the historical context makes any attempt to deal with the identity of Bangladeshi migrants challenging since they are in the earlier period difficult to distinguish from other postcolonial migrants who came and settled after the collapse of the British Empire.

However, I believe that it does not and should not stop researchers from delving into the various expressions of Bangladeshi identity and analyzing them. In one of his essays, Ceri peach mentioned about this complexity and points at the gap of statistics and historical accounts about

[4] Willem van Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 96.
[5] Ibid.

Bangladeshi migrants living in the UK: since Bangladesh had emerged as a nation-state in 1971, the people who emigrated from Bangladesh were not known nor recognized as Bangladeshi before 1971. They were recognized by the UK only in 1972.[6] Therefore, the official statistics about Bangladeshi migrants are registered in the UK for the first time in the 1981 census. [7] Hence, there is a gap in the official data of Bangladeshi migrants prior to 1981 because the Bangladeshi people started to migrate to the UK long before the independence of their nation, and even before the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. To distinguish Bangladeshi people from their fellow South Asians is essential in terms of ethnography since "they differ significantly from the Pakistani and other South Asian populations."[8] It is different from Pakistan in terms of geography, since it is a low lying land and delta. Because of this geographical position, the agriculture of this region is widely different from that of Pakistan which results in dissimilar culinary practice. On the other hand, because of the difference in the religious belief, in many aspects, their culture differs from India.[9] From my positioning as a Bangladeshi researcher, I am working from an insider perspective as a Bangladeshi migrant who has left voluntarily for the purpose of education.

Historically and socio-politically the 1940's brought significant changes in the lives of people of the Indian Subcontinent because of the impacts of World War II and Partition. Around the 1940s and 1950s, people started to emigrate from these newly independent countries to the UK in search of financial sustenance. While speaking about the migration flow in the UK, Peach points out the skilled migration flow was often disrupted by the unskilled "peasant background"[10] from

[6] Ceri Peach, "South Asian Migration and Settlement in Great Britain, 1951–2001," *Contemporary South Asia* 15, no. 2 (June 2006): 141, https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930600955234.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ceri Peach, "Estimating the Growth of the Bangladeshi Population of Great Britain," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 16, no. 4 (July 1990): 141, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1990.9976202.
[9] Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*.
[10] Peach, "South Asian Migration and Settlement in Great Britain, 1951–2001," 133.

India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. He notes that people who emigrated from these three countries have settled economically in dissimilar ways:

> the major flow started in the early 1950s, the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, and, indeed, the South Asian Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities, have developed in very different ways—with Hindus and Sikhs following an embourgeoisement trajectory, while the Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims occupy more vulnerable areas of the economy.[11]

Peach further traces the difference in the location of these migrant settlement as well. He points out that the "South Asian groups were not only segregated from the white population, but also from each other. The most extreme case is that of the Sylheti Bangladeshis. "The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee estimated that perhaps 95 percent of the Bangladesh born population living in Britain originated from [Sylhet] district (House of Commons 1986: v)."[12] Nearly one-quarter of the British Bangladeshi population lives in the single London Borough of Tower Hamlets."[13] It is crucial to mention here also, that the street -Brick Lane- is a widely-known reference point for the Bangladeshi diaspora, and has given rise to a novel which became a film about their lives and integration across generations of migrants.[14]

While discussing the migrant history of Bangladeshi people in the UK, it is also imperative to investigate their socio-economic status in the host country. The Bangladeshi migration movement in the UK peaked in the early 1980s[15] which is only a decade after the nation was born. The timeline suggests people were eager to have better living than staying in a war-torn country and consequently started to emigrate from their homeland. Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrants occupied comparatively more vulnerable areas of the economy than their counterparts

[11] Ibid.
[12] Peach, "Estimating the Growth of the Bangladeshi Population of Great Britain," 483.
[13] Ibid.137.
[14] Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (New York: Scribner, 2004).
[15] Peach, "South Asian Migration and Settlement in Great Britain, 1951–2001," 135.

from India. They also have the "worst living conditions of all ethnic groups, and Bangladeshis had the least white-collar occupational structure."[16] Both Bangladeshi and Pakistani women have the lowest levels of economic activity of all minority ethnic populations; less than 30% were economically active, about one-half of the level for Hindu and Sikh women."[17]

The Sylheti people who arrived in the UK during or after World War II were mostly seamen or *Laskar.*[18] When they entered the UK workforce, they started opening Bengali coffee shops, and later they moved on to open Indian restaurants, which were homogenously known as curry houses.[19] These Bangladeshi restaurants were "relatively poor and eager to succeed, so they adapted their offerings to their perception of a working-class palate."[20] Bangladeshi people called their restaurants 'Indian' because "India, rather their own country, is associated with the romance of the exotic."[21] These restaurants were solely run by men; women were only working in "behind-the-scenes food preparation."[22]During 1960, the number of Bangladeshi restaurants serving specifically Indian dishes started to increase. The highest number of restaurants peaked up around the 1980s when the migration rate for Bangladeshis was also on the rise.[23]However, from the last decade of the 1990s, many restaurants run by Bangladeshi people were closed down because of

[16] Peach, 143.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Caroline Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers: Life Stories of Pioneer Sylhetti Settlers in Britain* (London: THAP Books, 1987).
[19] Adams, 47.
[20] Stephen A. Fielding, "Currying Flavor: Authenticity, Cultural Capital, and the Rise of Indian Food in the United Kingdom," in *The Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World*, ed. Russell Cobb (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 42, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137353832_4.
[21] Ravi Arvind Palat, "Empire, Food and the Diaspora: Indian Restaurants in Britain," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 175, https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2015.1019603.
[22] Palat, 179.
[23] Elizabeth Buettner, "Chicken Tikka Masala, Flock Wallpaper, and 'Real' Home Cooking: Assessing Britain's 'Indian' Restaurant Traditions," *Food and History* 7, no. 2 (January 2009): 208, https://doi.org/10.1484/J.FOOD.1.100656.

the lack of novelty, lack of professional chefs, and unwillingness to carry the family lineage of restaurant business among the next generations.[24]

Researchers such as Johan Pottier has found a trend rising around the beginning of the twenty-first century, where Bangladeshi migrants started to actively promote Bangladeshi cuisine.[25] Pottier further points out that during the 2009 Brick Lane Curry Competition, Bangladeshi migrants had a strong sentiment where they feel that "it is time for the cuisine of Bangladesh to be more widely available." [26] In this dissertation, three of my case studies that are based in the UK are reflecting their positioning through their culinary projects. Among the three of them, one respondent who is a first-generation male restaurateur, and owns two restaurants in Swindon, does not endorse Bangladeshi food for his restaurant. Both of his restaurants serve predominantly Indian dishes. The other two interviewees are second-generation female food writers who are working towards the promotion of Bangladeshi cuisines through pop-ups, food festival appearances and by giving food talks. Both of them have published cookbooks focusing their Bangladeshi migrant identities through the books and recipes.

Two of my interviewees are from the US. They are second-generation Bangladeshi migrants, and are promoting Bangladeshi food through their projects. One of them is running a social-entrepreneurship through Bangladeshi street food, and the other respondent is running a restaurant with her first-generation Bangladeshi mother. In comparison to their migrations into the UK, Bangladeshis in the US are more recent and therefore there is not as much information about them available. The number of migrants from Bangladesh who have immigrated to the US has

[24] Panikos Panayi, *Spicing Up Britain: The Multicultural History of British Food* (Reaktion Books, 2010), 162. See also Buettner's "Chicken Tikka Masala, Flock Wallpaper, and "Real" Home Cooking: Assessing Britain's "Indian" Restaurant Traditions", page 208.
[25] Johan Pottier, "Savoring 'The Authentic': The Emergence of a Bangladeshi Cuisine in East London," *Food, Culture & Society* 17, no. 1 (March 2014): 7, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174413X13758634982173.
[26] Pottier, 15.

grown dramatically over the past decades beginning in the 1990s.[27] Before 1990, the number of Bangladeshi migrants in the US was small, but in 1990, with the initiation of the Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery, thousands of Bangladeshis got US green card and migrated to the US. Thus, while the US census enumerated 5800 Bangladeshis in 1980, it reached 57,412 in 2000 and 1, 47,300 in 2010.[28]Till the 1980s, the Bangladeshi migrants who were living in the USA, were usually educated, upwardly mobile professionals or students, or immigrants on employer-based preferences who, upon completing their degrees, adjusted their visa status. But since the DV Lottery category was not aimed for skilled migration, a significant amount of migrants immigrated to the US who had comparatively less academic and social capital at their disposal than their previous cohorts.[29]

According to a report published in 2014, approximately 277,000 Bangladeshi immigrants and their children (the first and second generations) live in the United States, accounting for a small share of the total U.S. foreign-born population: 0.5 percent.[30] About half of them arrived in the US during or after 2000 (48 percent), which shows that most of the Bangladeshi migrants are recently settled.[31] Among all the Bangladeshi migrants living in the US, New York has over 40 percent of the Bangladeshi population.[32]Another report published by the American Community Survey (ACS) shows that in 2015, New York City's Bangladeshi population was among the

[27] "Profile of New York City's Bangladeshi Americans," accessed October 5, 2019, http://aafederation.org/cic/briefs/2019bn.pdf.
[28] "Bangladeshi Americans' in Asian American Society: An Encyclopedia," ResearchGate, accessed October 7, 2019, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259583794_Bangladeshi_Americans_in_Asian_American_Society_An_Encyclopedia.
[29] Ronald H. Bayor, ed., *Multicultural America: An Encyclopedia of the Newest Americans* (Santa Barbara, Calif: Greenwood, 2011), 109.
[30] Migration Policy Institute, "The Bangladeshi Diaspora in the United States," *Prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD)*, July 2014, 1.
[31] Ibid.
[32] "There Are More Foreign-Born New Yorkers Than There Are People In Chicago," HuffPost, 58:43 500, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/new-york-city-immigrants_n_4475197.

fastest-growing Asian ethnic groups.[33] All these numbers and statistics refer to the fact that the Bangladeshi migrant community in the US is going through the phase of building a community of their own to set their footing in the diasporic context of the US. New York is regarded as one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world and "the social, political, and cultural climate of the city (New York) is inextricably linked to the foods that have immigrated here from around the world, along with the people who brought them, to start a new life in this most diverse city."[34] One of my respondents, Jhal NYC, successfully promote Bangladeshi street food and so their agenda resonates with this quote as it reveals a welcoming attitude of New York, towards the diversified ethnic foods offered by the immigrants. The other Bangladeshi American respondent from my case studies is based on the Jersey City, in the state of New Jersey, which is also city with a diverse immigrant background where more than one in five residents is an immigrant, though there is no significant number of Bangladeshi migrants living in this state like that of New York. [35]

As I mentioned earlier, a historical background of the Bangladeshi migration of my respondents' location is important because it sets the context of the case studies and also builds an understanding of the perspective of the interviewees' in terms of their identity formation as well as the manifestation and performance of those identities. The core of my dissertation is the expression of Bangladeshi migrant identities through the foods they are presenting in their culinary projects. While doing so, it is also crucial to set a background for the geographical location and the food of Bangladesh. "Bordered on the south by the Bay of Bengal, on the north, east and west

[33] "Profile of New York City's Bangladeshi Americans," 1.Data derived from analysis by the Asian American Federation Census Information Center, http://www.aafny.org/cic/briefs/bangladeshi2013.pdf

[34] Annie Hauck-Lawson and Jonathan Deutsch, eds., *Gastropolis: Food and New York City*, Arts and Traditions of the Table (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), xiii.

[35] "Immigrants in New Jersey | American Immigration Council," accessed October 7, 2019, https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-new-jersey.

by India and in the southeast by Myanmar" [36] geographically Bangladesh is a low lying country with only a few hills in its northeast and southeast part. The land is crisscrossed by hundreds of rivers resulting in a favorable situation for an abundance of fish in its rivers, *beels,* and *haors* (lakes and wetlands).[37] Because of its tropical nature, humid weather, and low-lying land, Bangladesh's main crop is rice. The abundance of fish and the main crop rice, is responsible for the proverbial stature of Bengali: "A Bengali is made of fish and rice" ("*mache bhaat e Bangali"*).[38] Therefore, it is evident that Bangladeshi and Bengali identity is ingrained with fish and rice. A ubiquitous Bengali meal would comprise parboiled rice and dal and fish stew (*macher jhol).*[39]

In this thesis, I specifically write about Bangladeshi food voices, and not about those that can be considered from West Bengal. I have mentioned only those foods that are being used by my respondents in their diasporic culinary endeavors. During the research, my focus was to search for the narratives of their foods and to understand the nuanced difference of those foods between the two parts of Bengals or between the Bangladeshi version and other South Asian versions. In a few sections, however, I have discussed a number of typical cuisines shared and celebrated by both Bengals, and I have indicated this difference in the use of Bengali versus Bangladeshi foods and foodways.

Part of my research reflects on why the Bangladeshi diaspora still promotes Indian cuisine under the guise of Bangladeshi cuisine. In doing so, I will also present four case studies that promote Bangladeshi cuisine and are actively attempting to create a niche market in the diasporic community for Bangladeshi cuisine. Since all of these four case studies that promote

[36] Niaz Zaman, *Bosha Bhat to Biryani: The Legacy of Bangladeshi Cuisine*, 1st Edition (The University Press Limited, 2012), 1.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Pottier, "Savoring 'The Authentic,'" March 2014, 16. See also Niaz Zaman, *Bosha Bhat to Biryani: The Legacy of Bangladeshi Cuisine*, 1st Edition (The University Press Limited, 2012), 1
[39] Ibid.

Bangladeshi cuisine have women in the central role of food production, I am employing a gendered lens to enquire how women are contributing to the changing trends and exhibit their embodied experience in the culinary industry of diaspora. The purpose of this dissertation is thus, to reflect on the potential diasporic culinary projects that are working towards the promotion of Bangladeshi cuisine, a research area that is largely unexplored, and to trace a gendered pattern where women are taking the lead of such alternative food voices in order to be set apart from the culinary dominance of Indian cuisine and establish their own footing in the diasporic culinary industry.

One of my research interests includes the influence of diasporic cookbooks and recipe writing on the identities and memory recollection of Bangladeshi diaspora. The dissertation explores the scope of the cookbooks and recipes that shape their identities and instilled a sensory connection to their homeland. I trace the routes of the recipe sharing and the writing of cookbooks, and analyze how such recipes invoke nostalgia for an imagined land.

In this thesis, I aim to uncover part of the history behind some of the dishes promoted by the case studies in order to understand how national borders play a role in promoting those dishes. In a country which has gone through one episode of partition and one episode of liberation, finding foods with a clear authentic origin is almost impossible. However, my research intention is not to claim the authenticity of Bangladeshi foods. Instead I aim to trace the journey of that food, and look for the changes it has gone through over the passage of time, and how it has transformed and is being prepared in today's Bangladeshi diaspora. Through the analysis of my case studies, I intend to trace a pattern of how Bangladeshi culinary traditions are surfacing in the diasporic settings, recently after a long period of invisibility. The food voices of the Bangladeshi diaspora are like a muffled hum at the background in a high pitched orchestra of South Asian diaspora. This

dissertation hopes to bring some prominence to those muffled voices so that others get to know lucidly about the Bangladeshi diaspora.

Since the expression of migrant identity through food plays a pivotal role in my dissertation, the literature review section will analyze the concept of memory making, nostalgia, traveling foods, and changing foodways in migrant communities. I will explore the facets of what does it mean to produce a piece of Bangladesh within the diaspora. While doing so, I have kept in my mind that national borders are pervasive and essential to represent nationalities, yet the expression of my respondents and the analysis that I am doing is beyond borders. Therefore, the borders do matter, but the exploration of the borders concerns how food travels. In the methodology section, I will reveal the patterns of my interviews and how I have positioned myself in the research by drawing upon examples and theoretical frameworks developed in the field of oral history.

Literature Review

Literature on diasporic communities often reflects upon the aspects of migrant identities, memory making, and the communities' representation through their cultural practices, customs and food. On the other hand the literature on food history and foodways of diaspora specifically focuses on the construction and reconstruction of the identities of migrants through food. In the literature review section of my dissertation, I will situate myself on existing scholarly literatures on diasporic identities and their food expressions with a focus on Bangladeshi diaspora.

Sidney Mintz explains how food travels throughout the world contributing to the construction and reconstruction of ethnic, religious, class, and national identities.[40] Mintz uses examples from the food movement and food exchange that happened when Columbus 'intruded'

[40] Sidney Mintz, "Food and Diaspora," *Food, Culture & Society* 11, no. 4 (December 2008): 510, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174408X389157.

into the frontiers of America and brought an immense change in the food habit of the Native Americans. Mentioning Mintz's idea of the movement of food, I draw upon Edward Said's concept of "traveling theories"[41] and situate this theory as one of the major arguments of my thesis. I use Said's concept to exemplify how foods are transformed and translated while crossing national borders. My analysis shows how the transformation and translation occur depending on the availability of the ingredients, prevalent cultural and religious belief of one's community, and the negotiation between the migrants and their host countries. As foods and foodways travel, they sometimes face resistance from the host community because of the neophobia[42] and in the process traveling foods undergo certain changes and negotiations in order to be accepted in the host country. In other cases, the traveling foods get accepted because of the neophilia,[43] where the host community welcomes the migrants' food practices and foods, which eventually integrate into the host community's culinary practices. My reasoning in drawing upon Said's postcolonial theory in my research is to show that foods are complex and layered just like any theories proposed by the scholars and can be used as an analytical tool for identity (re)construction of any community. Foods are also connected to the "intimate spaces of Empire" in which power negotiations are reconfigured through the daily interactions of individuals.[44]

My understanding of the distinction between the cuisines of two Bengals, builds upon Krishnendu Ray's concept of there is no "standardized version"[45] of Bengali food, it varies according to the location and people's identity. This concept relates back to the central question of

[41] Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226.
[42] Ann Veeck, "Encounters with Extreme Foods: Neophilic/Neophobic Tendencies and Novel Foods," *Journal of Food Products Marketing* 16, no. 2 (March 25, 2010): 246, https://doi.org/10.1080/10454440903413316.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006).
[45] Krishnendu Ray, *The Migrant's Table: Meals and Memories in Bengali-American Households* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 154.

the thesis where the discussion on existence of Bangladeshi cuisine begins. My aim in the research is to highlight the nuanced differences that distinguishes those cuisines from that of West Bengal and contribute to the current scholarship of Bengal cuisines. By doing so I hope to fill the gap of current research where the facets of Bangladeshi cuisines are so far ignored. As an un-silencing project, I aim to give voice to the distinctions that migrants make in their choices to interpret their own identities through the production of their homeland in the foods they prepare for others to consume.

Because of the lack of resources on Bangladeshi cuisines, situating my argument of dissimilarities in the cuisines becomes a difficult task. However, to support my cause, I draw upon Niaz Zaman and Chitrita Banerji's work who point out the subtle differences in the food and food practices adopted by two Bengals. Even though Banerji's book focuses on the cuisines of West Bengal, as she spent a few years in Bangladesh, and as such she brings in the variances of cuisines of West Bengal and Bangladesh in her book. The variations she points out occur because of the difference in food habit across borders and religion.[46] On the other hand, Zaman diligently traces out the origin of a few popular dishes of Bangladesh and gives a genealogy of those foods.[47] I position their works within an earlier framework developed by Arjun Appadurai, which focuses on cookbook's role of instilling national identities.[48]

Since I am exploring the narratives of migrants and their identities through the representation of food in the diasporic culinary industry, sharing recipes and writing cookbooks has a concrete presence in the dissertation. For this reason, I situate my analysis within the

[46] Chitrita Banerji, *Life and Food in Bengal* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), Introduction.
[47] Zaman, *Bosha Bhat to Biryani: The Legacy of Bangladeshi Cuisine*.
[48] Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (January 1988): 3–24, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015024.

conceptual frameworks developed by Marlene Epp, Razia Parveen and Swinbank. I laid the foundation of recipe sharing concept by borrowing Epp's idea where she highlights the memory making process in a migrant setting.[49] Epp gives an elaborate account of how, lonely migrant women use recipe sharing as a communication tool which eventually leads into a formation of a community where migrant women find companionship. She also reflects upon the multigenerational aspects of sharing recipes where second-generation migrant women often get the culinary knowledge from their predecessors through recipe sharing. Swinbank and Parveen both echo Epp's reflection and point out recipe sharing as a woman-based survival practice within a migrant community.[50] I emphasize on their concepts to reinforce my argument on recipe sharing by the respondents of my case studies. I use their concepts to analyze the respondents' current recipe sharing methods where they are using social media platforms to disseminate their works. This is where I bring in new perspective in the current scholarship and situate my analysis to reflect on the previous scholars' works. I want to show that the previous practice of sharing recipes in migrant communities still remains, even though the recipe is being shared has undergone a lot of changes because of the usage of social media (Facebook, Instagram, blogging). In a diasporic setting, migrant women are still creating communities on their own by following each other on social media and eventually reconstructing their migrant identities.

[49] Marlene Epp, "'The Dumpling in My Soup Was Lonely Just like Me': Food in the Memories of Mennonite Women Refugees," *Women's History Review* 25, no. 3 (May 3, 2016): 365–81, https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1071575.

[50] Both Swinbak and Razia Parveen explore recipe sharing as practice by migrant women and a tool to create kinship among them, please see their works for more details: Razia Parveen's *Recipes and Songs: An Analysis of Cultural Practices from South Asia*.Parveen also speaks about the same phenomenon in her journal article: "Food to remember: culinary practice and diasporic identity." Swinbank's article "The Sexual Politics of Cooking: A Feminist Analysis of Culinary Hierarchy in Western Culture" speaks about women's contribution in the recipe sharing and the discrimination faced by them in patriarchal situation.

To focus on the "hybrid identities" of my respondents, I draw also upon the ideas of hybridity developed by Homi K. Bhabha.[51] Throughout the dissertation, my focus is to explore the ways in which my respondents construct their hybrid identities and represent those identities through their culinary projects. Bhabha delineates how the hybrid position creates a fluid identity where strands of different cultures are fused, negotiated and transformed.[52]I use his theory to expand the criteria of my respondents' identities through their lived experiences. To delve deeper into the facets of migrant identity and culture, I explore Stuart Hall's argument of diasporic identity[53] whereas Hall explores the continuous construction and reconstruction of identity of migrants through their homeland. Drawing from various excerpts of my interviews, I demonstrate how the Bangladeshi migrants are shaping and reshaping their identities by forming a connection with Bangladesh. During the discussion of their identity, I also focus on the ways my respondents are making their identities visible through different social media handles, by using hashtags (#). These social media handles are used to create a place for their fluid identity and reflect the connection to their homeland on the cyber space.

While dealing with the connection to my respondents' homeland (Bangladesh), I have frequently drawn from the theory of "imagined homeland" by Benedict Anderson.[54] I highlight their strong sense of connection to Bangladesh and situate that sense of belonging under the lens of Anderson's imagined community. My reasoning for using this theory, is the concept of homeland stays in the second-generation migrants' mind usually through the reminiscent of their first-generation parents or family members or through the brief moment when they visit their

[51] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004).
[52] Ibid.
[53] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 1996, 16.
[54] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed (London ; New York: Verso, 2006).

homeland. In my analysis, I show that food memories are narrated by the first-generation migrants who create a sense of belonging and establish an idea of an imaginary homeland in the second-generation.

One of my thesis questions involves how migrants create a sense of place and culture through food. To deal with this question, I draw from the books of Yael Raviv and Vijay Agnew. I place my argument in Raviv's claim where she says, "food is central to our perception of 'home' and identity."[55]Through the examples of my respondents and the excerpts from their interviews, I analyze Raviv's argument and try to understand how the image of home is perceived in my respondents' minds and how they are evoking the sense of home through their representation of Bangladeshi food. Through this observation, I reflect on the negotiation of their identities in the diaspora mean a revisiting of the understanding of Bangladeshi within their diasporic culinary projects. I bring in Vijay Agnew's work to pair it with Raviv's argument where Vijay puts emphasis on the subjectivity of migrants while dealing with their identities. He further argues on how diaspora creates identities through their expression of culture, language and food.[56]

For the analysis of my respondents' identity through food, I draw from several works by Fabio Parasecoli. In one of his essay Parasecoli points out how migrants use the concepts of authenticity and exoticism to promote their food expression in a diasporic setting.[57] I situate my analysis in this conceptual framework because four of my respondents are using the term 'authentic' while promoting their food in their respective diasporic communities. To explore the concept of 'authenticity' in a more detailed manner, I use Russell Cobb's book, *Paradox of*

[55] Raviv, *Falafel Nation*, 3.
[56] Vijay Agnew, ed., *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
[57] Fabio Parasecoli, *Bite Me: Food in Popular Culture* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2008).

Authenticity in a Globalized World. In the essays of this book, the authors analyze the current trait of authenticity in the diasporic culinary industry. Michael Martin mentions how "symbolic authenticity" is currently taking the culinary industry ahead and this authenticity is actually a "process," where people involved in the culinary setting are constructing a continuous narrative of authenticity. [58] On the other hand, Rosella Ceccarini points out how authenticity itself can be used and abused to shape collective or group identities beyond the homeland.[59] I use Ceccarini's idea to reflect on the Bangladeshi migrants are representing their collective identity through promoting 'authentic' Bangladeshi cuisines. To move further with my analysis, I bring in the concept of "staged authenticity"[60] proposed by MacCannell and validate the traits of my respondents' culinary expressions through his theories. By bringing in different elements of Bangladeshi culture and interior décor applied by my respondents, I explore the concept of authenticity and how it becomes a performance in attracting consumers through mentioning examples from my respondents' culinary activities.

While dealing with concept of authenticity I also substantiate it with Stephen Fielding′s work on how the "white gaze"[61] of clients is a reference point for the way Bangladeshi restaurateurs promote Indian cuisines because of the widespread familiarity with Indian food in the West. I further elaborate on this concept by using Uma Narayan′s work on the ignorance of the Global South in western food cultures especially when we consider how food origins are conflated and homogenized.[62]

[58] Russell Cobb, ed., *Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 21.
[59] Ibid. 23.
[60] Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings," *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (November 1973): 589–603, https://doi.org/10.1086/225585.
[61] Fielding, "Currying Flavor."
[62] Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Finally, the work of Donna Gabaccia on the development of national identity through food production is an important comparative case study for my focus on Bangladeshi Americans. I try to explain their success through Gabaccia's lens of Americans inclination towards "individualistic affiliations to the foodways."[63]Her claim reflects to the pool of American clientele who are interested to taste the 'ethnic' cuisines. She shows how migrants of the US, try to maintain their ethnicity through the expression of food to attract more customers; as a result ethnicity becomes a "necessary ingredient" of New York City.[64] Lisa Heldke[65]also echoes Gabaccia's claim in her book, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* where she focuses on the clients who want to have an adventurous experience by eating at the ethnic restaurants. While exploring my case studies from the US, I combine Gabaccia and Heldke's reflection together to situate my analysis of interviews conducted with respondents who are representing their ethnic identities through food and food practices in their restaurants and pop-ups.

Further theorizing of the representation of food using social media is developed using works of Signe Rousseau, and Nevana Stajcic.[66] While explaining and analyzing my case studies, I reflect on their usage of social media as well. I analyze how virtual spaces help the current diasporic culinary industry to grow a sense of community on the basis of their migrant identities and nostalgic longings for home.[67] With the explicit usage of social media migrant communities strengthen their group ties and establish a sense of belonging among them even without meeting

[63] Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 9.
[64] Ibid.94.
[65] Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (Routledge, 2015).
[66] Nevana Stajcic, "Understanding Culture: Food as a Means of Communication," *Hemispheres. Studies on Cultures and Societies*, no. 28 (2013): 77–87.
[67] Signe Rousseau, *Food and Social Media: You Are What You Tweet* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2012).

each other in-person. Exploring such sense of belonging further helps the migrant community to flourish not only virtually but also physically.

Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, where the first chapter deals with the methodology of the thesis. Then chapter two focuses on the transnational recipes and cookbooks in Bangladeshi migrant society and their impact on the identity formation in a diasporic context. This chapter explores the ways food travel during the migration of people. It also reflects on the aspects of sharing recipes in a cross border situation and how such sharing eventually leads to instill a sense of belonging to a bigger community of migrants' identity.

Chapter Three reveals the oscillation between serving Bangladeshi and Indian food in the culinary ventures of my respondents. I bring out examples from my interviewees' responses and show the readers, how by negating 'Indian' culinary expressions, they are constructing Bangladeshi identities in their culinary context of diaspora. This chapter also traces differences in the representation of Bangladeshi identity between first and second-generation migrants.

The last chapter concentrates on the construction and reconstruction of the hybrid identity of Bangladeshi migrants who are involved in the culinary industry. The core of this chapter reflects on how my respondents are using the concept of 'authenticity' in their culinary ventures and manifesting their hybrid identities through those 'authentic' food voices. The chapter also explores the interviewees' usage of social media which plays a significant role in disseminating their culinary identities.

Chapter 1-Methodology

We cross borders, but we don't erase them; we take our borders with us.[68]

For this dissertation, I have conducted five online interviews and one in-person interview of six Bangladeshi migrants who are working in the culinary industry of Bangladeshi diaspora in six different places of the UK, US, and Hungary. Throughout the thesis, I aim to give voices to their notion of the borders they have crossed but are carrying throughout each expression of their migrant life. Since the foundation of my analysis is the interviews of my interviewees, theories of oral history have shaped my investigation throughout the dissertation. Dealing with memories of food and crossing borders instills a sense of nostalgia of home and life that one has left behind, or has imagined in mind. Since "food is central to collective and individual identity, [it] may be especially important to note in oral and written memoirs because it functions as a means of recalling that is part of daily routine."[69] Throughout the research, I predominantly rely on the methods of oral history theories and narratives by Valerie Yow and Ruth Behar. While taking the interviews, I always kept in my mind:

> [specific] memories can be elicited only by specific tastes and smells are fragile: they can easily disappear because there are few opportunities for them to surface. [But] having remained dormant for long periods of time, the sudden appearance of seemingly lost experiences cued by tastes or smells is a startling event. Oral historians and reminiscence workers know that sensory triggers, such as interviewing in situation or the use of photos, can often enable rich and even unexpected remembering.[70]

Since the focus of my interviews were based on the culinary practices which the respondents

[68] Ruth Behar, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*, 10 edition (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003), 320.
[69] Epp, "'The Dumpling in My Soup Was Lonely Just like Me,'" 7.
[70] Alistair Thomson, *Memory and Remembering in Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2012), 84, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195339550.013.0006. Thomson quoted Daniel Schacter here to reinforce his idea on the impact of food on oral histories.

represent in their own diasporic community, in most of the cases during the interviews, my respondents were transposed to their past while mentioning about particular food recipes, meals and food memories with their parents and their homeland, Bangladesh. To theorize those memories, I have frequently turned to the ideas of oral history and its methodology.

My six interviewees for this research have narrated their involvements in the diasporic culinary industry by drawing from their personal lives, memories with parents, and anecdotes from their childhood. The memories and the stories that are shared with me are in most of the cases related to their homeland, Bangladesh. They have mentioned how being a Bangladeshi migrant and promoting Bangladeshi food has constructed their relationship with their host countries and other diasporas. During each interview, I was fascinated by the way they weave their multiple identities through food and represent them on social media platforms. An urge to create a platform for the Bangladeshi food in their diasporic context is the common thread among five of my respondents. This common thread eventually places them in the core of my analysis and discussion of the dissertation. Since the responses of the interviewees were mostly related to the memories of their lived experience, in each of their cases, I make conscious and careful effort to contextualize them, place them in their personal and social agenda and attempt to look beyond the event they described to me[71]. These consequent efforts helped me to recognize the subtexts and silences in their responses.[72]

Among my six respondents, two of them are first-generation migrants, and the rest of them are second-generation migrants. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the location of their work stations are different from each other. Two of my respondents are based in the US,

[71] Joan Sangster, "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History," *Women's History Review* 3, no. 1 (March 1994): 7, https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029400200046.
[72] Ibid.

and three of them are based in the UK, and one interviewee is working in Budapest, Hungary. The reason why the locations the fieldwork are such a diverse and extensive range is partly because of the category of their functions and their availability but mainly because of my inability to travel to either New York or London due to the time consuming and complicated visa procedures as an Asian student studying in Central Europe. If I could go to any one of these places, the fieldwork would have included a detailed account of the culinary industry of that particular location.

My initial plan was to include only two case studies from the US, who are based in New York (Jhal NYC) and New Jersey (Korai Kitchen). When I started my research and delved more in-depth, I realized more people are working towards the promotion of Bangladeshi cuisine in diasporic setting, and eventually, one of the criteria of choosing these interviewees was based on the similarities of the work they are involved in, which is promoting Bangladeshi food. I got to know more people through researching the platforms of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Blogs, YouTube channels). Since I could not visit them in person; I tried to contact them via calling, sending emails, sending texts on their Messenger. Some people responded, but when I replied, they did not respond anymore. During this process, two individual food writers and chefs from the UK, Dina Begum and Saira Hamilton, were willing to be interviewed and eventually were added as my case studies. To utilize my current location, Budapest, one Bangladeshi owned restaurant from Budapest (Bangla Bufe) was added to my case studies, and to pair this restaurant with a similar type, two restaurants- Abbey Mead Indian Restaurant and The Burj Indian Restaurant (both of them are located in Swindon, England, and both of them will be regarded as one case study since the owner is the same) were added. The owner of these two restaurants was a family acquaintance who graciously agreed to be interviewed. Looking back to all these participants whom I worked with for this research, four of them does form a close network of similar nods

working in different locations to promote Bangladeshi food in the diaspora while the rest of two posit as a contrast of these four initiatives as well as represent the stereotype of Bangladeshi owned restaurants in diaspora.

The idea of why Bangladeshi migrants engaged in the culinary industry are not promoting their own food came to my mind eight years ago when I went to the US as an exchange student in a Media Studies program in 2011. The exchange program had twenty students from four South Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, where we used to have long debates and discussions on culture and tradition in most of our classes. During one such session, a friend from India claimed there is no such thing called Bangladeshi cuisine; it is the same as what they have in India. Growing up in Dhaka at a household where food was something celebrated almost every day with a vigor, I was not ready to agree with her and had a passionate debate over the entire topic. While we were having this debate, my friend was drawing on the similar foods we share across the borders, and I was thinking about different foods and the nuanced tastes even if they might look the same. My traveling experience in different parts of India, and my interest for food helped me to realize the different texture, aroma and spices between the borders but since none of my friends felt it, I was the odd one out in the discussion, and the question of Bangladeshi cuisine always remained at the back of my mind. After this incident, whenever I traveled outside of Bangladesh, I looked for Bangladeshi restaurants serving Bangladeshi foods, but each time I was disappointed. Bangladeshi migrants as owners of restaurants and working in restaurants were easy to find, but almost always, there was never anything Bangladeshi in the food they offered. My decision to get into research to find out the expression of Bangladeshi food in the diasporic community thus initiated eight years ago.

Each of my interviews is semi-structured in-depth interviews, where the questions were loosely constructed, and the focus was to get more information from the interviewees in whichever way they felt comfortable. As Yow writes, each of these in-depth interviews has evoked "images and symbols to express feelings about their [the respondents'] experiences."[73] In most of the cases, the symbols were related to food from home or a particular cuisine prepared by a mother figure. Since "[t]here is no better way to glean information on how the subject sees and interprets her/ [his] experience than to ask in the context of the life review"[74], during the interviews I cautiously managed not to interrupt the interviewees when they were narrating their life stories related to the involvement of the culinary industry. And as they were all semi-structured interviews, I often asked them follow up questions regarding their narration that helped both the respondents and myself to immerse into the details of their experiences. During the procedure of this research and analysis, I voluntarily decided to write vulnerably and as expose myself as a spectator in the thesis who intends to take the reader somewhere that the readers cannot go otherwise[75]. While doing so, I constantly tried to place myself "not as a decorative flourish, [nor] as an exposure for [my] own sake."[76] Throughout the writing of the dissertation, I aim to use my language to reveal the respondents' emotion and sentiment and render a space where the readers can get the sense of the researcher's and respondent's conceptual proximity.

As a feminist researcher, my own situatedness also played a central role during the interviews. In most of the cases, the respondents spontaneously expressed themselves, which was resulted because of my own positionality. Therefore, while I was doing this research and taking

[73] Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History : A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Second Edition (Altamira Press, 2005), 13.
[74] Ibid, 14.
[75] Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, 1St Edition edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 14.
[76] Ibid.15.

interviews, I was continually shifting my role between an insider and outsider[77] with the interviewees because of my identity as a Bangladeshi and being an expatriate for two years to get an academic diploma in a Western institution. With this dual positionality I regarded myself as a "halfie researcher" like Lila Abu Lughod and Binaya Subedi, because during the interviews I was not only their interviewer but someone with whom the participants could connect by sharing their background, sometimes an imaginary background (imaginary because three of my participants were born and brought up outside of Bangladesh and one participant migrated when she was only four years old) and sometimes they shared their past (which they had lived once) which I could easily relate to. All these connections were possible because of having a common background and understanding of Bangladeshi food practice and cuisine. This "in-between status"[78] requires me to be more cautious about how I represent their identities through the interviews. Moreover, sharing similar interests about Bangladeshi food thus created a form of kinship which worked in favor of the interviews and created a space where participants felt comfortable to share their experiences.[79]

Because I have dealt with migrants who have layered identities due to their migration history, I always had to be aware of their positionalities as Lughod points out, "every view is a view from somewhere and every act of speaking a speaking from somewhere."[80] As a researcher, my task is to unearth the underlying meaning of their responses to the interview questions. I tried to analyze the source of their answers, their past history, migration journey and involvement with the host community. Therefore, the subject position of the interviewees was not one but of

[77] Binaya Subedi, "Theorizing a 'Halfie' Researcher's Identity in Transnational Fieldwork," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 5 (September 2006): 573, https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390600886353.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Rosemary Baird, "Constructing Lives: A New Approach to Understanding Migrants' Oral History Narratives," *Oral History* 40, no. 1, (2012): 58.
[80] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Writing Against Culture," in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. Richard G. Fox (School of American Research Press, 1996), 468.

multiple, as Spivak points out, "there are many subject positions which one must inhabit; one is not just one thing."[81] The respondents of this study possess more than one identity: identities of their host countries, identities regarding their migratory history and homeland, identities related to their educational and professional experience, geographic locations and gender.

Throughout the interviews and while analyzing them, it was always at the back of my mind that these six participants are coming from varied backgrounds with a wide range of migration history. Therefore, I do not have a monolithic group of migrants as my case study. Though their locations are diverse, four of them can be connected to an emerging network of people, working to create a new demand for Bangladeshi cuisine and promoting it around their surroundings to find a niche audience. I conceptualize the frameworks of food and memory to situate the narratives of my respondents. To substantiate their practice of writing on Bangladeshi cuisine and recipes, I draw from the theories of memory recollection through food by Shameem Black and Arjun Appadurai's proposition of the construction of national identity by food. The respondents' narrative reflects the sense of dislocation and loss during the interviews whenever they reminisced about the food from their own homeland. Except for one case study, all five respondents shared memories about their parents and Bangladesh whenever they speak about food from their home. Such trait intricately places them on the threshold of memory-making and remaking through the long lost aroma, colors, flavors, and textures of food and a home.

To explore the ways in which my respondents are expressing and (re)constructing their identities, I conceptualize Homi .K. Bhabha's theory of "hybrid identity" and the idea of "in-between" places in diaspora.[82] I borrow the idea of fluid identity from Stuart Hall to trace the

[81] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Sarah Harasym, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 60.
[82] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

everyday identities of my respondents. My aim is to show that for the migrants, the narratives of identities never cease to develop and therefore, there is always a continuous saga of shaping and reshaping identities in a diaspora. I use Donna Gabaccia's idea of food as an expression of identity to delineate how food becomes a contributory tool in the migrants' saga of identity creation.

One of the restrictions of my case studies is the sample size since I have only six case studies. As I have mentioned earlier, the complicated and time-consuming visa process as a Bangladeshi student was the primary reason why I was unable to travel to either the UK or US. For the ongoing Brexit issue as a third country national citizen, I have to obtain a visa to go to the UK. I had applied for the visa application, but the visa appointment was scheduled three and a half weeks later. And it was also not confirmed if I would get the visa for the recent Pan European migration issue. Therefore, I was advised by my Supervisors and Professors to go for online interviews for the research. I believe if I could have traveled to any of these two regions for conducting interviews, the findings would have been strengthened by more shreds of evidence. And I will always have this emptiness in this project regarding not being able to have the interviews while sharing food with my interviewees because sharing foods holds the immaculate strength of communication. As Annie Hauck Lawson mentions in her essay "food serves as a vehicle to convey abundant meaning and aspects of identity, it serves as a voice, a food voice."[83] While reading her essay I realized even though I couldn't share food with my respondents, during each of my interview, the interviewees shared intimate memoirs, numerous incidents which evoke joy in their faces. Since I am trained in qualitative method and among six interviews, four of them took place over video calling, one in person, I tried to apply participant observation as much as possible. Though the observation would have more effective and detailed if the interviews had

[83] Hauck-Lawson and Deutsch, *Gastropolis*, 2009, 68.

happened in person, I still ruminated on the respondents' facial expressions, and gestures. Through their intonations, facial expressions and gestures while speaking about food and memory, each of our conversation was charged with emotion, nostalgia and brimming with memories of food.

Another limitation of this research was the lack of secondary resources. There is almost no literature available specifically on Bangladeshi cuisine, whereas there are plenty of resources about South Asian and Indian cuisines. Researchers have produced numerous journals and books based on Indian cuisine, and researchers like Krishnendu Ray has produced literature about West Bengal's cuisine, which is also Bengali but differs in a number of aspects from Bangladeshi cuisine[84]. I needed to distinguish the regional differences that exist between the cuisines of Bangladesh and West Bengal. The reason for this distinction is I tried to speak for the cuisines that are well known and celebrated in Bangladesh, and some of my case studies are using those cuisines to promote their culinary businesses while others in my case studies are obliterating the same cuisines. My aim is to reflect on the diversity of the cuisines that two Bengals have and bring out the nuanced differences between them. For making a distinction between the Bengal's cuisines, I have relied on the cookbooks and recipes by Madhur Jaffrey, Niaz Zaman, Chitrita Banerjee, and Saira Hamilton[85]. While writing my dissertation, I have been well aware that the question of

[84] For more references, please see: Krishnendu Ray's book, *The Migrant's Table: Meals and Memories in Bengali American Households*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004. *The Ethnic Restaurateur*. 1st ed. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Chitrita Banerjee's *Life and Food in Bengal*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson (1991) and *Eating India: An Odyssey into the Food and Culture of the Land of Spices*-Bloomsbury USA (2007). Utsa Ray's *Culinary Culture in Colonial India: A Cosmopolitan Platter and the Middle Class*.

[85] Madhur Jaffrey's *At Home with Madhur Jaffrey_ Simple, Delectable Dishes from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka*. 1st Edition. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. Niaz Zaman's *Bosha Bhat to Biryani: The Legacy of Bangladeshi Cuisine*. 1st Edition. The University Press Limited, 2012. Saira Hamilton's *My Bangladesh Kitchen*. 1st ed. UK: Lorenz Books, 2018.

'authentic' food has always been debated, defended and argued throughout the world because food is not something that can be divided by the borders like cartographers do while illustrating maps.

Chapter 2 - Traveling Foods, Transnational Recipes and Diasporic Cookbooks: Constructing Identities across Borders

> [f]ood plays a dynamic role in the way people think of themselves and others. … Food tells not only how people live but also how they think of themselves in relation to others. A people's cuisine, or a particular food, often marks the boundary between the collective self and the other, for example, as a basis of discrimination against other people.[86]

In the excerpt above Emiko Ohnuki reflects on the identity creation process through food, while at the same time indicating how people perceive the identities of others. Through food, the creation of self and others is shaped, resulting in discrimination and hierarchy. As Eagleton reminds us, food is always layered with meaning: "If there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food. … food is endlessly interpretable, as gift, threat, poison, recompense, barter, seduction, solidarity, and suffocation[87]." In diaspora, the interpretation of food becomes profoundly relatable to identity formation, identity politics, and transnational consciousness.

My interest in food as a category of study in the context of diaspora started in a thesis workshop session when, an exciting episode occurred during my presentation which made me realize the immense significance of food as "endlessly interpretable."[88] During this session, each student presented a preliminary dissertation chapter for comment by the class and the instructor. When my turn came, I began the presentation with a description of *phuchka*[89]that is being promoted as a Bangladeshi street foods by one of my respondents, Jhal NYC, based in New York, US. While mentioning Jhal NYC's promotion of *phuchka*, I also mentioned the different variations

[86] Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3.
[87] "Edible Ecriture | Times Higher Education (THE)," accessed October 4, 2019, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/edible-ecriture/104281.article.
[88] Ibid.
[89] *Phuchka* is a small crunchy hollow semolina shells that are stuffed with boiled yellow peas and spices.

of it which exist in different part of South Asian countries.[90] When it was time for the participants to give their feedback on my presentation, a long passionate discussion transpired instead of a brief feedback session because of the mentioning of *phuchka* as a distinctly Bangladeshi street food. The conversation which emerged, was between four students including myself who come from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan; the rest of the class, along with our professors, were observers of this episode.[91] In an outburst that disrupted the otherwise calm tone of the seminar, these students began a heated argument about the origins of *phuchka*, as well as how the substitution of different ingredients is related directly to claims on identity and nationality through this dish. The reason why my friends from India and Pakistan felt offended by Jhal NYC's claim of *phuchka* as a Bangladeshi street food, is multilayered and interwoven with issues that lie at the intersection of identity politics, narratives of power, and the nation-state borders within South Asia. It also reflects on the ways food becomes a symbol of national identity, and people can feel defensive toward their nationality through food. During the workshop, I realized how intricately we are still carrying the baggage of the history of Indian Subcontinent on our backs.[92]

This entire incident had a huge impact on my research, and I tried to be as impartial as possible while analyzing and contextualizing my case studies with the prevailing theories developed by food historians and anthropologists. The incident encouraged me to analyze how migrations of people, recipes and cuisine are intertwined in such a way that we learn a lot from looking at migrant identities in diaspora through the study of food. I was intrigued to know more

[90] In different parts of India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka *phucka* is known as 'panipuri', 'golgappa', 'gup chup', 'pani ka patashe', 'phulki. Since I am dealing with food that are presented by Bangladeshi diaspora, I will be using *phucka* throughout this research unless mentioned otherwise.

[91] Thesis Writing Workshop, March 21, 2019, Department of Gender Studies, Central European University, Budapest.

[92] Forward by Toni Cade Bambara, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, 2nd edition (New York, NY: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1983).

about the nuanced differences of cuisines that are shared among the people from different national borders. This chapter focuses on how food and recipes travel when people emigrate from their homeland and start to live in the host country. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first section discusses why and how differences operate through food, and how elements of food and its preparation take on meaning in constructions of identity, ethnicity, race, and religion outside of the homeland. I give two examples of such food that are shared and acclaimed widely in different parts of South Asia to emphasize their nuanced differences from location to location. I have conceptualized Edward Said's "traveling theory" and incorporate it into the narrative of foods for this section. In the second section, my focus is on how diasporic cookbooks function to represent identities in diaspora. For this section, I analyze two cookbooks that have been written by my respondents. My investigation indicates that both cookbooks function as memoirs and symbol of the authors' Bangladeshi migrant identity. The analysis builds on Arjun Appadurai and Susan J. Leonardi's framework of the influence of cookbooks' in creating food narratives and identities. The analysis is further developed using the works of Nadia Jones Gailani, Shameem Black and Maya Parmar. The chapter also reflects on the gendered aspect of cookbook and recipe sharing, and sheds light on the changing trend of recipe sharing through social media. The central argument of the chapter thus formulates based on the questions of migrant identities revealed through traveled foods, transnational recipes and cookbooks. It also traces the function of cookbook as a tool of memory recollection and recipe sharing from a close community of women to a global network of women through social media.

2.1. Traveling Foods

In one of his groundbreaking theories, Edward Said wrote about the phenomena of "traveling" and "traveling theories." According to Said, , "Like people and school of criticism,

ideas and theories travel- from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another."[93] This traveling theory can be aptly applied in case of food and recipes because, like people, foods travel too, especially when migration and diaspora are involved in the framework. One of the founders of the field of food history studies, Sidney Mintz claims that, "Food and foodways travel the globe, contributing to the (re)production of ethnic, religious, class and national identities."[94] This statement provides explicit evidence of traveling of food, recipes, and its impact on the identities of people because of traveling. It can also be well backed up with the four phases of "traveling theory" anticipated by Said.

According to Said, there are four stages of how a theory travels, all of which can be related to how food and food recipes travel within global diasporas of migrants. Firstly, there is seemingly a point of origin where the food and recipe are originated or supposedly originated. Secondly, when people are traveling, more explicitly migrating, with them, their food recipes also move from a particular place and time to another place and time. During this course of traveling, sometimes national borders are crossed, and even when there are no borders are being crossed, traveling from one place to another means the traveled foods and recipe get pressure from the recipes that already existed in that particular area. Therefore on the basis of the changed context, the traveling food and recipes become more or less significant depending on how and where they migrate to, and in what ways they must be modified to fit new realities of daily life. Third, like theories, there is a set of conditions applicable for foods and recipes too. I translate these conditions as the accessibility of certain ingredients and suitable circumstances for the production of 'home' foods. For example, the people who migrate to areas away from coastal or river regions whose diet was

[93] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 226.
[94] Sidney Mintz, "Food and Diaspora," *Food, Culture & Society* 11, no. 4 (December 2008): 510, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174408X389157.

heavily based on fish must amend their diet to adapt their foodways in their new site of settlement. In which case, traveled food and recipes will receive a certain amount of resistance from the surroundings since the environment is not suitable for fish and therefore, they have to rely on other protein sources than fish. Another example of this kind of negotiation relates to religious rules and customs such as migrants who only eat halal or kosher foods based on their Muslim or Jewish traditions. Here as well, the foodways, recipes, and the food that has traveled are getting a certain amount of resistance from the already established foods of that host community, and as a result of the tour, and the prevalence of the previously established culinary practices, the food, recipes, and the foodways are being transformed. At the fourth and final stage, after going through all the resistances or negotiations between the local recipes and traveled food, recipes and foodways, the traveled food and recipes will be "transformed by their new use, their reimagined position in a new time and place."[95]

2.2. *Phuchka and Korma* and their Variations

Drawing upon Said's idea of "traveling theories" and Mintz's notion of "foodways", the following section traces how certain foods within the diaspora take on different meanings as they travel through different histories, geographies and peoples. Since the mention of *phuchka* was the starting point of the stimulating discussion that followed my presentation of the preliminary findings of the research, I will reflect on the nuanced differences in the preparation of *phuchka* in different locations of South Asia.

Phucka is the most popular street food in Bangladesh. It is a small crunchy hollow shells made out of semolina and plain flour dough and then is deep fried in oil. While frying, the

[95] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic, 227.*

shells are puffed up and are removed from the heat. These puffed up shells are later filled with yellow peas with fresh spices. The process might not sound appealing, but a *phucka* filled well with stuffing and sprinkled with spices is a delectable snack not only in Bangladesh but in other South Asian countries as well. Unfortunately there are no academic articles that reflect on the differences of preparing *phuchka* in South Asian countries; therefore, I rely on my primary resources, personal communication with a number of South Asian stores situated in Budapest for my findings, and communication with several street vendors located in Dhaka.

Figure 1: *Phuchka* at an event of Jhal NYC[96]

[96] "Jhal NYC (@jhalnyc) • Instagram Photos and Videos," accessed October 11, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/BsUFUvBl9s2/.

While researching and reading recipes of *phucka* throughout the internet and speaking with the South Asian stores in Budapest, I got to know about the wide range of difference in the stuffing for *phucka*. For example: in different regions of India 'boondi' ("a water droplet sized deep fried crispy snack made out of gram flour"[97]), chickpeas, mashed potato, boiled moong lentil, yellow peas are used as filling for *phucka*.[98] Whereas in Bangladesh, the stuffing is solely a mixture of yellow peas and boiled potatoes, neither chickpeas nor moong lentil is used for the stuffing of *phucka*[99] anywhere in Bangladesh

There are also striking differences in the chutney or *tok*[100] that is served with *phucka* in different parts of South Asia. The *tok* is an inseparable item for *phucka*. It is something that completes the flavors of the stuffing and adds a sweet and sour taste. This *tok* has two varieties, one is a watery concoction of lime-cilantro-mint, and another is a comparatively thick and rich mixture of fresh tamarind soaked water prepared with back salt, sugar, chili flakes and *chaat* masala[101]. In many places across India and Pakistan, mango chutney is also served along with these above-mentioned *tok*. However, in Bangladesh, there is no varieties in case of *tok*, and everywhere *phucka* is served with the concoction of tamarind water spiced with black salt, sugar, chili flakes, *chaat* masala and a dash of ground cumin seeds. Krishnendu Ray has mentioned about such differences in Bengali cuisines and noted that Bengali cuisines are not standardized. To emphasize the variety of food, Ray says: "in fact, Bengali food is not the same even between

[97] "Boondi Recipe - Crisp and Lightly Salted Indian Snack of Gram Flour," accessed August 20, 2019, http://foodviva.com/snacks-recipes/boondi-recipe/.
[98] "TBI Food Secrets: If You Love Pani Puri, You Will Love the Interesting Story Behind Its Origins Too!," The Better India, March 3, 2017, https://www.thebetterindia.com/90031/pani-puri-golgappa-phuchka-history-magadh-mahabharat/.
[99] Personal communication with a number of chefs and thorough research on the street vendors selling *phucka* in Dhaka.
[100] A sweet and sour liquid, which is thinner than sauce and chutney.
[101] A masala specifically prepared for *chotpoti* and *phuchka*. It is a blend of ground cumin, mango powder, black salt, black pepper and coriander powder.

households of the same caste, class, and sect."[102] This reflection reveals Bengali cuisine as an amorphous cuisine that shares many similarities with other regionally specific dishes and ways of preparing food.

Since one of my thesis questions is to enquire about the history behind the food items mentioned recurrently in the dissertation, there was a constant search for the origin or history of *phucka*. In her book *Bosha Bhat to Biryani,* Niaz Zaman traces a historical account of a number of popular cuisines of Bangladesh. On the topic of Bangladesh's distinct cuisine, she writes:

> The final ingredient in the legacy of Bangladeshi cuisine was that injected by the Bihari *mohajir*[103]. In 1947, the British left India, partitioning the subcontinent into two nations: India and Pakistan, the latter formed two wings, East Pakistan, present Bangladesh, and West Pakistan, present Pakistan. The partition meant an influx of countless refugees from West Bengal and Bihar into East Pakistan. These people brought their own food habits and recipes with them, many of which have become an indispensable part of Bangladeshi cuisine: chotpoti, doi bara [...][104]

Though there is no mention of *phuchka* in this quotation, since it is complementary to the dish *chotpoti*, it is implied that along with *chotpoti*, *phuchka* was also brought in to Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) by the Bihari *mohajirs.* The complex historical and political background of India-Pakistan and Bangladesh is reflected in the quote as well.[105] From the moment of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, these three countries have gone through several remarkable changes in their national borders, demography and history. Specifically, in the case of Bangladesh, the question of identity becomes a layered one because of its comparatively fresh emergence as a nation-state. Prior to 1947, present Bangladesh was known as East Bengal and was part of India, after the partition of 1947, East Bengal became a part of Pakistan and was known as East Pakistan

[102] Ray, *The Migrant's Table*, 154.
[103] Mohajirs are Urdu speaking Muslim people who left India and immigrated to Pakistan permanently during the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947.
[104] Zaman, *Bosha Bhat to Biryani: The Legacy of Bangladeshi Cuisine*, 13.
[105] Uma Narayan, "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity and Indian Food," *Social Identities* 1, no. 1 (February 1995): 71, https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.1995.9959426.

and after 24 years, in 1971 through the liberation war against Pakistan, it has become an independent nation-state and emerged as Bangladesh. During these periods, there were numerous accounts of migration happened in these region. When people emigrated from their homeland, and immigrated to the neighboring countries, along with many memoirs and trauma, they also brought in the baggage of nostalgia, culture and food recipes. Therefore, dealing with the background history of any food is an intricately diligent task especially where the countries share borders, histories of partitions, wars and migrations.[106]

The example of *phuchka*, having several variations in the stuffing and *tok* shows the different approaches of different regions of South Asia and consumer behavior along with the accessibility of the ingredients in those areas. In this case, *phuchka* has got transformations on a large scale while traveling to different regions of South Asia, and interestingly it gets popularity as a street food almost in the same scale wherever it had traveled. Even though native food enthusiasts might know the difference between each regional varieties of *phuchka*, engaging repertoire about the origins of such dish, one that occurred during my presentation, can always ensue because of its sheer popularity in the consumer society irrespective of its region.

Korma is another acclaimed dish that is prevalent across South Asia, but it had traveled all the way from Turkey. The reason why I mention korma in particular instead of any other food is the same as specified for *phucka.* Korma is also one of the food items that Jhal NYC takes order from their customers (it is also on their website). Moreover, since almost the entire South Asia has this dish, I will be tracing its legacy with the assistance of secondary resources. For tracing the legacy of korma, I have to look back to the history of Bengal. In her book, Zaman gives a detailed account of the historical background of korma. From 1301 AD, Muslims started to rule over the

[106] Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*.

Bengal region (the then Bangladesh belonged to this region). Along with Turks, Arabs, Pathans, and Persians flocked to Bengal at that same time. The Muslims ruled for the next six centuries in Bengal, and as a result, their costumes, foods, recipes as well as religion became an integral part of this particular region. She writes, "The Turkish words korma and *pilau* became a part of the culinary vocabulary of Bengal."[107]

Even though korma is now present in foodways all over South Asia, it has several variations. In her cookbook, the celebrated food writer Madhur Jaffrey, who introduced Indian cuisine to the British public through her prolific body of cookbooks, writes about the Bangladeshi variation of korma and gives the recipe for the readers. Unlike its neighboring varieties, fresh cream is not used in Bangladeshi korma, instead only yogurt is used, which makes the korma mild and light in taste. No colored spices are added while cooking the korma; therefore the dish maintains its pale color.[108] She also have Indian cooking shows broadcasted on BBC in the late 1960s. With her demonstrations and writing, she distinguishes Indian cuisine from other South Asian cuisines and pointed out the inauthenticity of Indian foods which were being served at the curry houses in contemporary England.[109] As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, the decades followed by 1950s and onwards, were the time when England saw an influx of migrants coming from the South Asian countries. It was also the time when colonized migrants' cuisines and culinary practices started to radiate out from colony, eventually trickled down to metropole in the breakup of the Empire where Indian people earned their living by serving the

[107] Zaman, *Bosha Bhat to Biryani: The Legacy of Bangladeshi Cuisine*, 12.
[108] Madhur Jaffrey, *At Home with Madhur Jaffrey_ Simple, Delectable Dishes from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka*, 1st Edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 127.
[109] Fielding, "Currying Flavor," 45.

British. Uma Narayan has a postcolonial reading of this phenomenon, labels this example as: "feeding the hand that bites you!"[110]

The two foods (*phuchka* and korma) and their recipes mentioned in this chapter bear the signs of the four stages of traveling elaborated by Edward Said. Both of them have traveled, sometimes have crossed borders, which have shaped over time and the foodways and transmission of the dishes according to the original form, and have emerged as local recipes and dish, gained popularity with their new established variations. In his theory, Said anticipates the same outcome for the traveling theory as well. He writes, "[…] once an idea gains currency because it is clearly effective and powerful, there is every likelihood that during its peregrinations, it will be reduced, codified, and institutionalized."[111] Here, instead of idea, the recipes and foods gain currency as they fulfill the gastronomic demand of the consumers, because during the process of their journey, they have undergone transformations, negotiations, and innovation according to the site of transmission and negotiation.

According to Arjun Appadurai, cookbooks function as a symbol of nationalist identities.[112] And Shameem Black points out, such discourse of nationalist identity grows more intensified in a diasporic or ethnic minority settings where the cooking practices of the diaspora continually negotiate with its surrounding cultures.[113] From the discussion of traveling foods, their nuanced differences and their impacts on the identity politics of the people across national borders, this chapter's next section will address diasporic cookbook and their multifaceted functions, which are discussed along with the excerpts from my case studies and the respondents' interviews.

[110] Uma Narayan, "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity and Indian Food," *Social Identities* 1, no. 1 (February 1995): 73, https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.1995.9959426.
[111] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 239.
[112] Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine."
[113] Shameem Black, "Recipes for Cosmopolitanism: Cooking across Borders in the South Asian Diaspora," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 31, no. 1 (2010): 4, https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.31.1.1.

2.3. Diasporic Cookbooks, Transnational Recipes and their Function

Among my six respondents, Saira Hamilton and Dina Begum have published a cookbook that reflects their memories and food narratives through recipes. Hamilton's book, as the name suggests - *My Bangladesh Kitchen* - only reflects on Bangladeshi cuisine while Dina Begum's *Brick Lane Cookbook* echoes a collection of the popular recipes of Brick Lane's restaurants, and a number of home-cooked Bangladeshi recipes. These two books are well received by the Bangladeshi diaspora as well as the food enthusiasts of the UK.[114] Even though the focus of these two cookbooks is not entirely the same, they are similar in their lucid articulations of Bangladeshi cuisine. These two cookbooks inform how diasporic identities and connection to their homeland are revealed through their emotionally charged introductions and the recipes. I analyze the ways in which Bangladesh's nature and landscapes have been used in these books to create a sense of nostalgia and identity among the diaspora. While analyzing their traits, I indicate to the problems of recurrent mentioning of natural seasons of Bangladesh[115] to create a sense of a distinctive aura for Bangladeshi cuisine. In the last section of the chapter, I explore the idea of diasporic cookbook's influence on constructing a specific sense of community.

Another cookbook that is similar in nature to these mentioned above is Chitrita Banerji's recipe book that is written from the perspective of a first-generation migrant. She is a writer from West Bengal and has permanently settled in the US in the 1990s.[116] There are a number of books where her focus is foods that are related to Bengal (both West Bengal and Bangladesh). By bringing in examples from her book *Life and Food in Bengal,* I show how her cookbook differs from my respondents' cookbooks in creating a sense of West Bengal's community both in the

[114] The range of readership was discussed with Dina Begum and Saira Hamilton during their online interview with author, Budapest.
[115] Bangladesh is called the land of six seasons to reflect its diverse natural atmosphere.
[116] "About Chitrita Banerji —," accessed September 3, 2019, http://www.chitritabanerji.com/about-chitrita-banerji.

diaspora and in her homeland. The last segment of the chapter points to the gendered aspect of recipes and cookbooks that has been discussed by others within this field, most notably Marlene Epp, Razia Parveen and Signe Rousseau.

Cookbooks and recipes has always been an opulent source of memories, and oral history:

> Splattered with oil, marked with notes, and worn with time, cookbooks testify to the links between writing and life…They emerge as forms that mediate between oral and written traditions, often in structure and voice seeking to recreate communities of cooks who share experience and expertise. Perhaps even more directly than other genres of print culture, cookbooks work to create imagined communities and shared ideological values among their implied readers.[117]

Stylistically both Saira Hamilton and Dina Begum's cookbooks reflect a blend of oral and written traditions, and aim to create imagined communities with ideological values. Before each recipe of their books, Hamilton and Begum give brief narratives about each recipe. Sometimes the narrative involves their personal memories with family members, and on other occasions respectively the narrative speaks to the historical aspects of that particular recipe. Often such narratives bring out the memories of their homeland, especially in the case of Saira Hamilton's book as it is entirely dedicated to Bangladeshi cuisine. It is also worth noting how, along with her personal memories, she explores the historical aspect of Bangladesh and Indian subcontinent at the onset of her book to position Bangladeshi cuisine among the neighboring countries. By giving an account of the historical, geographical, and cultural background, Hamilton crafts a relationship with the readers, and such effort reinforces the diasporic urge to create "imagined communities"[118]. The chunks of narratives written before the recipes thus open up spaces as an expedition to memories and remembering, inviting readers to be a part of those memories by recreating and reproducing those recipes.[119] On the other hand, though the focus of Dina Begum's cookbook is to represent Brick

[117] Black, "Recipes for Cosmopolitanism," 3.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Nadia Jones-Gailani, "*Qahwa* and *Kleiche* : Drinking Coffee in Oral History Interviews with Iraqi Women in Diaspora," *Global Food History* 3, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 94, https://doi.org/10.1080/20549547.2017.1278347.

Lane's popular recipes from different ethnic restaurants, Bangladeshi recipes have a major share in the book mainly because of Begum's own migration history and the dominance of Bangladeshi population in Brick Lane. However, while writing Bangladeshi recipes, she too has used a number of memories related to her family and their migration from Bangladesh.

My respondent Saira Hamilton shared her feelings about writing her cookbook, and mentions that she lost her parents five years ago and writing the cookbook was a way to preserve their memories. She said the book was a way to keep a close relationship with her homeland, the connection which was established by her parents through memories of food.[120]Her experience echoes "memories ignite our imaginations and enable us to vividly recreate our recollections of home as a haven filled with nostalgia, longing and desire."[121] For Saira Hamilton, her food recollections are ingrained with the relationship with her parents and Bangladesh and therefore those recollections are embodied. She also thinks that losing her parents gave her a different kind of motivation to write the cookbook because she was not confident about writing a cookbook entirely based on Bangladeshi recipes. Her recollections about her parents are paradoxical since the memories incite a sense of loss while at the same time gives her solace and rumination about the bond her parents initiated in her second-generation migrant journey.

Recipes always work as a two-way communication between the reader and the writer.[122] The authors write recipes so that readers can follow them in order to recreate the dishes. Along with recipes, diasporic cookbooks offer more layers of narratives. They often add contexts, memories, the author's migratory journey, a sense of loss, and central to the context of my analysis – a sense of common belonging. The subtitle of Saira Hamilton's cookbook reflects on such a

[120] Online interview with author, May 27, 2019, Budapest.
[121] Agnew, *Diaspora, Memory and Identity*, 10.
[122] Susan J. Leonardi, "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster a La Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie," *PMLA* 104, no. 3 (May 1989): 340, https://doi.org/10.2307/462443.

journey to her Bangladeshi origins, where she uses "Recipes and food memories from a family table."[123] Her positioning of the book evokes a sense of intimacy and hint to the sharing of memories on the part of the readers. By inviting the readers into the personal memories and recipes, she is also recreating her own self in the process. There is a similar resonance in the invitation to share a series of memories at the opening of Dina Begum's introduction: "My love affair with Brick Lane started in the market. I've always loved the hustle and bustle of traders displaying their wares, offering samples, enticing you in with voices soft and loud, punctuated by the lilt of global accents."[124] Like Hamilton, Begum's words give indications to memories that are related to Brick Lane and her childhood. Such reminiscing instills a sense of "some interesting relationship to both reading and writing. […] like a story, a recipe needs a recommendation, a context, a point, a reason to be."[125] Saira Hamilton and Dina Begum's cookbooks thus create a background of their memories, and their relationship with their homeland and families. Therefore, when the readers are reading the recipes, they are also getting attached to the memories and the context of that particular recipe and relating to the positioning of the authors within their own family histories. Here it is noticeable that both of them are second-generation migrants in the UK. Saira Hamilton was born in the UK, and Dina Begum came to UK at the age of four. In their diasporic life, Hamilton has been to Bangladesh with her parents and elder sister on a frequent basis during her childhood.[126] Whereas Dina Begum has been to Bangladesh only once.[127] Though their country of origin, is different, the approaches towards foodways and their historical migrations are quite similar in creating a common milieu of memories and imagined places. Those places are imagined

[123] Saira Hamilton, *My Bangladesh Kitchen*, 1st ed. (UK: Lorenz Books, 2018).
[124] Dina Begum, *Brick Lane Cookbook* (UK: Kitchen Press, 2018), 1.
[125] Leonardi, "Recipes for Reading," 340.
[126] Online interview with author; May 27, 2019, Budapest.
[127] Online interview with author, May 17, 2019, Budapest.

because it is like a silhouette of their first generation's lives that does not exist in the same material reality to that of the second generation's lives. Despite being non-existent in their present lives, the food, the aroma, the taste, the flavors still remain in their mind and are being published on the cookbooks through the recipes and also through the articles where they share recipes. While Hamilton and Begum are writing recipes that are connected to Bangladesh, they are at the same time exploring the connection with their country of origin and revealing the memories related to that particular recipes. During the interview, Saira Hamilton relates how those memories formed the foundation of her cookbook:

> This cookbook is like a collection of memories and recollections of the food. When you are dealing with food, the narrative is as important as the dish itself. I genuinely think food tastes better if it emerges in the experience. I mean you can always eat food and leave, but if you really want to involve yourself in food, then the stories, the memories become important.[128]

Hence the authors are creating food narratives that are intimate in the sense of both what they convey and how they aim to connect with the reader. In a way with such a relationship with the readers, the recipes of diasporic cookbooks become windows through which the readers can peer at the lives that have been passed. This makes the audience for such diasporic cookbooks complex in that it invites both migrants from these communities as well as others who want to partake in this view into diasporic foods and their histories.

2.4. Cookbooks and Stories of Migration

Cookbooks usually includes recipes that are popular, traditional and unique in migrants' home countries. In her cookbook, Dina Begum has included two of such recipes that are collected from one of the pioneers of a Bangladeshi sweetmeat store, Alauddin Sweets. It opened their store in Brick Lane back in 1990s.[129] Begum listed recipes of the two most famous deserts of this store,

[128] Online interview with author, May 27, 2019, Budapest.
[129] Begum, *Brick Lane Cookbook*, 206.

Roshgolla and *Kalojaam*[130]. She also includes a brief history of this sweetmeat store. The owner Mr. Alauddin who migrated from Lucknow (a state situated in the north of India) to the east of India and came to Bangladesh (then East Bengal) in 1894, and opened his store Alauddin Halwai,[131] which later was renamed Alauddin Sweets. This store eventually becomes one of the pioneers among all the sweet meat stores in Bangladesh. Such tiny chunks of ethnic histories before the recipes are what Arjun Appadurai calls "ethnic cameos"[132] that gives an insight into the particular recipe in the cookbook. This brief history of Alauddin Sweets included in Begum's cookbook encapsulates the complex and layered background of the Indian subcontinent's food history and food politics in a way because in 1894 the owner of the Alauddin Sweets migrated internally from Lucknow to East Bengal but after the partition of Indian subcontinent by British government in 1947, his migrated place became a part of another country. The immense popularity of his store even after Partition, proved the relocation of migrant experience sometimes might be "fraught with communication problems, culinary practices can be understood as a form of translation."[133] The migration history of Alauddin Sweet's owner also reveals that tracing and exploring food histories of a state like Bangladesh can be a demanding task because before its independence as a nation-state in 1971, it was a part of two different countries and as a result has gone through a series of historical changes. Therefore, the people of this vicinity who have gone through the phases of migration, either internally or internationally, in which their identities have enmeshed with histories of partition of the Indian subcontinent and the liberation war of Bangladesh.

[130] Begum, 208,209,210. *Roshgolla* is "sweet milk dumplings in syrup" and *Kalojaam "*is deep-fried dumplings in syrup."
[131] Halwai is a social caste of Hindu caste system, whose traditional occupation was to make sweets.
[132] Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine," 16.
[133] Maya Parmar, *Reading Cultural Representations of the Double Diaspora: Britain, East Africa, Gujarat.* (S.l.: Springer Nature, 2019), 35.

As with many trends in first generation migrant foodways, sometimes the foods were translated, sometimes transformed and sometimes remained the same as its "original" forms. *Roshgolla* and *Kalojaam* are two of such deserts that are celebrated and enjoyed in both Bengals (Bangladesh and West Bengal), and both claim these two sweets as their own authentic deserts. About the origins of these sweets in her book Chitrita Banerji mentions that Bangladeshi historian Professor Abdur Razzaque assumes these sweets were formulated by the professional, sweet makers of the contemporary Bengal back in nineteenth-century.[134]

2.5. Diasporic Recipes and their Imagined Landscapes

> Memories are not fixed and ready to be accessed when needed, but are relived each time in different ways and with different emotional attachments. In fact, the embodied and emotional experiences connected with them (pleasure, pain, fear) influence their storage and retrieval. This is particularly evident in the case of food-related recollections.[135]

The idea of imagined places and memories that are not practically been lived is an aspect of diasporic life and recipes from diaspora are good examples of exhibiting such traits. Dina Begum is a food writer who shares recipes on different news portals around the UK. In one of her articles, she reflects on the idea of memories as they relate to food, and the imagined place that only exists in the migrant's mind. Bangladesh is known to have six seasons in a year where each season has specialized foods to offer. As a result, a diverse range of foods is always at the disposal of the local people. In one of her articles, Begum gives an elaborate account of the seasons and the array of foods that come with each season.[136] Through her writing she has evoked a sensory transition in the readers and created the ambiance of those seasons, even though she "does not have subjective

[134] Chitrita Banerji, *Life and Food in Bengal* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 17.
[135] Fabio Parasecoli, "Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities," June 2014, 416.
[136] "Here's What You Need to Know about the Six Seasons of Bangladesh and Its Food," *Metro* (blog), September 16, 2017,https://metro.co.uk/2017/09/16/heres-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-six-seasons-of-bangladesh-and-its-food-6913967/.

memories" [137](because she has visited Bangladesh only once[138] and therefore cannot possibly have memories of each season); she has access to the memories from home from her parents and other relatives and thus recreates the entire aura of six seasons in her mind through the memories of their shared pasts,. In her cookbook, Hamilton ruminates about memories related to her village as an idyllic place, and she expresses her joy because she got to spend a good amount of her childhood in Bangladesh because of her parents.[139] The cookbook and the recipes therefore become memories of loss and nostalgia. Even though in the case of second-generation migrants, the histories of migration and the sense of landscape from one's own home do not necessarily have an explicit impact, they are always embedded in their imagined lands.

As a researcher, this reminiscing of six seasons and the presentation of the seasons as a sign of plentiful food and source of diverse vegetation seems problematic and unrealistic to me. And for the justification of my claim I would like to once again mention my positionality as a researcher in this dissertation where I have the privilege to have an "insider-outsider"[140] status. Apart from the first generation migrants, when other migrants recall memories, they often draw upon from what they had heard from their families or they extract chunks of memories when they had visited their homeland in the past. As a result, usually, there is a rupture between the past and the present situation. Specifically, in the case of describing the Bangladeshi landscape, the difference is stark because of the radical deforestation, unplanned urbanization, and dense population. Also, there is a steep rise in the overall temperature of the entire country and less rainfall owing to climate change all over the world. Hence, from the last few decades, there have

[137] Jones-Gailani, "*Qahwa* and *Kleiche*," 92.
[138] Online interview with author in Budapest, May 17, 2019.
[139] Hamilton, *My Bangladesh Kitchen*, 1.
[140] Subedi, "Theorizing a 'Halfie' Researcher's Identity in Transnational Fieldwork," 573.

been significant changes in the patterns of seasons in Bangladesh.[141] An article published in 2017 shows how the seasons are now merging together, the duration of summer is increasing while the length of winter is decreasing, and as a result, the entire phenomena of having six seasons are running the risk of becoming extinct.[142] Since I have been living in Bangladesh throughout my life except for the period of my higher studies, like other residents, I have been experiencing the difference in the landscape and the weather. But changes like these can only be perceived if experienced closely. It is difficult for those writing and living in diaspora to recognize these ruptures, and therefore, the distance from the reality of migrants to their homeland, results in the romanticizing of features of the homelands that hardly exist anymore. When written in the cookbooks, the readers in the diaspora also, therefore, do not get the portrayal of dysfunctional reality; on the contrary, what the reader takes away is a static and idyllic sense of a long-ago place that is the homeland.

2.6. Cookbook as a Symbol of Diasporic Group Ties

Through diasporic cookbooks, even though the readers might not always get an idealized version of the author's homeland, the cookbooks and recipes usually aim to promote a sense of kinship among the readers of that particular diaspora.[143] As mentioned earlier, among six interviewees for my thesis, Saira Hamilton and Dina Begum are the only ones who have engaged themselves with the dissemination of Bangladeshi recipes, in a similar fashion to instilling a kind of group identity, since "… modern scholarly accounts frequently present cookbooks as powerful

[141] Moinul Islam, Koji Kotani, and Shunsuke Managi, "Climate Perception and Flood Mitigation Cooperation: A Bangladesh Case Study," *Economic Analysis and Policy* 49 (March 1, 2016): 117–33, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eap.2016.01.001.
[142] "Does Bangladesh Still Have Six Seasons?," Dhaka Tribune, December 8, 2017, https://www.dhakatribune.com/climate-change/2017/12/08/bangladesh-six-seasons.
[143] Krishnendu Ray, *Themigrant's Table: Meals and Memories in Bengali-American Households* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 153.

allegories for the formation of particular group ties."[144] Through their vivid description of Bangladeshi landscape along with specific foods and spices, the recipes invoke a sense of Bangladeshi identity among the diaspora. However, because of the complex shared history and national borders, a number of foods which are included in Hamilton and Begum's cookbook are also available and notable mostly in West Bengal and sporadically in different parts of South Asia as well. Though Hamilton and Begum acknowledge the existence of such common cuisines and have mentioned about the common traits and similarities in the narratives of those recipes they have not mentioned the deciding spices which usually vary in making of the dishes across borders. Therefore, it seems to me that even though Saira Hamilton and Dina Begum are specifically writing about Bangladeshi foods, there is no effort to create any distinction among the cuisines that differ in tastes and texture in and across the borders that fracture the historical ties in the region. As a result, instead of instilling a sense of a particular group tie, in this case the creation of specifically Bangladeshi connections, their recipes give out a sense of generic connection to both India and Bangladesh. Although during her interview, Saira Hamilton mentions about her effort to make a distinction between Bangladeshi and Bengali food since the title of her book suggests that the book is specifically about Bangladeshi cuisine, even though the "ethnic cameos"[145] of her book do not make any such distinctions.[146]

As Marlene Epp argues in her work, "Recipes remain one means by which women can commune with earlier female kin…The passing on of food traditions through oral and written recipes is one medium for the survival of memory.[147] Epp points out how recipe sharing among women migrants has always created a sense of belonging and developed a bond amongst women

[144] Black, "Recipes for Cosmopolitanism," 4.
[145] Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine," 16.
[146] Hamilton, *My Bangladesh Kitchen*.
[147] Epp, "'The Dumpling in My Soup Was Lonely Just like Me,'" 6.

who are dislocated from their home country and situated often in a space where they do not know the language or local customs of the host countries. Disconnected from familiar spaces and daily access to ingredients or means of preparing home dishes, migrant women often find comfort in the community of other migrant women who come from the same homeland or neighboring countries. Women bonding through cooking in unfamiliar places as part of claiming and negotiating new domestic spaces has also been studied by Vicki Swinbank. [148] Recipe sharing also reflects the relationship between mother and daughter and often reflects the lineage because "recipes are authoritative in expressing maternal transmission of genealogy." [149] Both Dina Begum and Saira Hamilton's cookbook writing reflect the impacts of recipe sharing in their migrant lives and families. Both trace their affection and connection towards their homeland (imagined as it might be), Bangladesh, through foods they consume from home, and memories of food told to them by their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sister-in-laws. Begum and Hamilton, therefore carry the legacies that were shared to them by first generation culinary knowledge which they reproduce by adding or changing ingredients. Therefore, while writing recipes, sharing them online or writing cookbooks with those recipes giving them an opportunity to negotiate their ethnic identity in relation to new spaces in diaspora.

The idea of recipe-sharing in a migrant setting, has changed its mode and is reshaped according to the increasing popularity of social media and its use in the culinary industry. During the research, my findings reveal a new pattern in recipe-sharing through an extensive use of social media by migrant women. These migrant women share recipes on Instagram and Facebook, make stories with a detailed version of the recipes by showing videos of their cooking,. They share

[148] Vicki A. Swinbank, "The Sexual Politics of Cooking: A Feminist Analysis of Culinary Hierarchy in Western Culture," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 15, no. 4 (December 2002): 465, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6443.00188.
[149] Razia Parveen, *Recipes and Songs: An Analysis of Cultural Practices from South Asia* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 57, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50246-5.

recipes on blogs, vlogs (video blogging), along with anecdotes, photographs of their family members eventually exhibiting their identities and claiming spaces in the migrant situation. The virtual spaces occupied by women migrants who share recipes and memories related to food in their social media account or on their websites or blogs provide a new site from which to reproduce narratives of their migrant identities each time they upload posts about food preparation and cooking. By creating such narratives, hashtags, twitter handles and virtual stories, they have created a virtual space tailored for the expression of their migrant identity through food.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have discussed several aspects of food, recipes and cookbooks in a migrant settings with a regard to my case studies and my findings. I have showed even the foods might look same, the taste and the texture, the presentation differ according to the geographic location, national borders, race, class, and even religion. I think such acknowledgement about differences brings out the diversity of our identities. The aim of this chapter, therefore, was not to claim ownership of any particular food but to claim the nuanced differences of foods which are shared in several locations of a particular regional area because "cuisines are not static entities that remain unchanged over time, nor is each one rigidly separated from other cuisines such that we can tell where that one stops and this one starts."[150]

[150] Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, 2015, xix.

Chapter 3- To be Bangladeshi or to be Indian: The Dilemma of Bangladeshi Food in a Migrant Community

"Food practices help to create a sense of diasporic identity."[151] This chapter explores how the respondents interviewed for this research, use Bangladeshi food to solidify their identities in diaspora. By analyzing key excerpts from my interviews, I will explore the embodied experience of first and second-generation migrants with regards to the construction of the imaginary of 'Bangladeshi' cuisine. There is a direct correlation between the negotiation of identity in the diaspora and the simultaneous process of constructing Bangladeshi cuisine. The core of this chapter builds on the question of how Bangladeshi cuisine has always been overshadowed by the broad range of diversified Indian cuisine and is more recently trying to establish its own distinct place in the diasporic context. In the second section of this chapter, I explore how my respondents answered questions during our interview regarding the promotion of Bangladeshi cuisines amidst the dominance of Indian cuisine in their respective diasporic contexts. In addition, the chapter looks at the composition of menus for foods served in the restaurants of two of my respondents: Sheikh Swapan and Mohammad Ali Talukdar. My analysis is developed upon the framework of positionality by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Uma Narayan. To elaborate on the facets of an 'authentic cuisine' I draw frequently from the book edited by Russell Cobb. Since this chapter traces the route of two respondents and their culinary project in the US, to situate their expression of food identity I use Annie Hauck Lawson's concept of New Yorker's food habit and inclination towards ethnicity. I conclude the chapter by realizing that the expression of Bangladeshi cuisine through their work is dependent on a number of major factors, including: immigrants' migration history, innovative ideas for integration, understanding of the particular consumer behavior and

[151] Razia Parveen, "Food to Remember: Culinary Practice and Diasporic Identity," *Oral History* 44, no. 1 (2016): 47.

multigenerational diasporic identities. The last part of the chapter explores how my respondents are distinguishing themselves from Indian diasporic cuisines and constructing their own identities through the lens of Bangladeshi food and food culture.

My interviews typically lasted for just under an hour each, and the respondents tended to share slices of their lives with me – and not always in chronological order. Many of their anecdotes related to their own individual and family migration histories, and how these informed their decision to join with the culinary industry in their respective diasporas. While sharing their life stories, they travel back and forth in their memories and reveal stories related to food, home-cooked meals, and the inspirations behind their enthusiasm for homeland foodways. The chapter threads together six life narratives and their food voices from different parts of the Bangladesh diaspora While putting those narratives side by side, to my surprise, I discovered sometimes those narratives have merged together with one common thread and sometimes the narratives deviate and contradict one other. I have therefore categorized the narratives according to their commonalities, and also as a means of detecting the divergences in their expressions of Bangladeshi cuisine. I remind myself that these are the life narratives and personal experiences that are generously shared, and throughout the process of using their narratives, my aim has been to not lose sight of the private and intimate quality of the narratives as I analyze and write up their words in an academic text.

3.1. Menus, Names and the Quandary between 'Bangladeshi' and 'Indian'

Out of the six case studies I draw upon, three respondents have their own restaurants. Among these three, two respondents are both male and first-generation migrants from Bangladesh: one respondent is living in Budapest, Hungary, and the other respondent is living in London, UK. As I have already mentioned in the methodology section, the restaurant from Budapest is included

in part because of the opportunity to analyze this little known diaspora during my stay in Hungary. However, this particular case study has also become central to my study since it does not reflect the general trends and migrant profiles of the other case studies. The owner of Bangla Bufe, Sheikh Swapan has a long history of migration which started with his coming to Germany to study in 1989. Swapan later moved to Hungary with his Hungarian wife, and after their first child was born in 2017, his wife stopped working and Swapan decided to leave his job in the Embassy of Qatar to open his own restaurant in Budapest. A few years later, he opened another branch of Bangla Bufe named it Bangla Bufe Premium and handed it over to his nephew to manage. While mentioning about his reasons for opening Bangla Bufe, he said:

> I left the job because I was feeling suffocated with rules and protocols and started my own business. I love meeting new people, and therefore I opened a restaurant. I also wanted to represent Bangladesh. I wanted to spread our culture so that people can know about our culture. People still think that we are Indians. We are not Indians. We are Bangladeshi. We grew up in Bangladesh. Before we were part of India, but now Bangladesh is an independent nation. .[152]

This excerpt shows Swapan's intention to open Bangla Bufe in Budapest. He wanted to make his identity different from other South Asian migrants, and establish a distinct way of maintaining the uniqueness from the diaspora. Swapan also wanted in part to raise awareness about Bangladeshi food within Hungary, and so he created a platform to let Hungarian people come in and ask questions through which people could learn about his country, because "[f]ood, [is] the most significant medium of the traffic between the inside and outside of our bodies, organizes, signifies, and legitimates our sense of self in distinction from others who practice different foodways."[153] This Bangladeshi restaurant venture was therefore in part an attempt to disseminate

[152] Interview with author, May 01, 2019, Budapest.
[153] Wenying Xu, *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 2.

his identity and culture, and to distinguish his home cuisine amongst other diasporic and migrants foodscapes in Hungary.

Despite his positioning of the restaurant and his intentions, the menu of Bangla Bufe interestingly does not exhibit any Bangladeshi cuisine except for beef curry and chicken curry which are the most generic meat dishes that can be found throughout South Asia and do not have an association with any specific region. Therefore these two dishes cannot be specifically attributed to Bangladeshi food in any sense. Except for these two dishes, all the items on his menu are dishes that are mostly attributed to being of Indian origin. For example: *palak* chicken, *palak paneer, matar paneer*, and a number of different *biryanis* (fragrant rice and meat mixture). He also has chicken vindaloo on Bangla Bufe's menu which "is a Goan (Goa is a state in the West of India) adaptation of the Portuguese dish *carne de vinho e alhos* or meat cooked in wine vinegar and garlic."[154] The menu is virtually empty of the native language of all Bangladeshis, as the names of the dishes are not represented in Bangla. The only dish name represented in Bangla is spicy *jhal goru*[155] -spicy spicy beef - that is just a spicier version of beef curry. Therefore, though Sheikh Swapan aims to create a Bangladeshi identity among the diaspora in Hungary, his menu is unable to exhibit food that can be identified beyond having a connection to Indian food culture. It is evident that the Bangladesh that Swapan believed should be exhibited within the Hungarian foodscape is a diffuse Indian subcontinent fusion of non-specific dishes.

[154] E. M. Collingham, *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 68.
[155] *Jhal* means spicy in Bangla and *goru* is the Bangla word for beef.

Figure 2: Bangla Bufe Menu (Image taken by author)

While I conducted the interview, I asked him why Indian cuisine was so strongly represented in his restaurant despite calling his place as Bangla Bufe. Swapan seemed a little offended by my pointing out this issue, and he explained, "It's because of the customer's choice. Since the community (Bangladeshi diaspora) is not big here in Budapest, and the Asian community has almost the same food, I chose to have foods from other Asian cultures as well."[156] This statement directly contradicts what he said previously about his mission for opening a Bangladeshi restaurant. Such discrepancy in his responses demonstrates the complex issues of diasporic culinary businesses where even though the migrant wants to create his own identity through foods, eventually they end up relying on the comparatively prestigious cuisines

[156] Interview with author, May 01, 2019, Budapest.

(in this case Indian cuisine is more known and therefore accepted than Bangladeshi cuisine) and the clientele are unable to figure out the differences between these two national cuisines.[157] Swapan does not want to be called an Indian and pointed his finger to the Bangladeshi flag hanging in his restaurant on a tiny wooden stand to prove that his restaurant is Bangladeshi as the name suggests. At the same time, he does not want to be the migrant in the corner selling alien foods either. He realized that there are not many Bangladeshi people around, and therefore he designed a menu that included what people already know and as a result, he does not necessarily provide Bangladeshi cuisine to Hungarian customers, but he does, however, initiate some connection between this small diaspora and the broader host country. But, as Krishnendu Ray points out, the clientele will not recognize the difference unless the customer has specific personal experience with Indian and Bangladeshi foods.

When I interviewed Sheikh Swapan on 1st May 2019, it was his last few months as owner of Bangla Bufe because he and his family were about to move to Germany to settle permanently. This information was significant to note because in Germany he is about to continue his culinary business. By the time of this interview, he was already planning to promote Bangladeshi food in his new home. During our conversation when he was recounting Bangladeshi food-related memories from his youth, he stumbled upon one particular memory of eating *kumra bori* and excitedly spoke about *kumra bori*[158] and the way it can be eaten. Since it is a dish that I consider one of my favorites as well, during our interview, we shared a moment of nostalgia and at the same time a moment of loss in our discussion of this dish. Because our favorite food was not

[157] Krishnendu Ray, *The Ethnic Restaurateur*, 1st ed. (Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 110.
[158] *Kumra* is wax gourd in Bangla. *Kumra bori* is small sundried cones of lentil paste which is mixed with wax gourd, with a tiny hollow core and hard outside, definition taken from Utsa Ray's book, *Culinary Culture in Colonial India: A Cosmopolitan Platter and the Middle Class* (2015), pg.197. This particular item is equally popular in Bangladesh and West Bengal and is cooked with fish and or vegetables.

present at that moment, the mere mention of it created an ambiance of an imagined home that we all missed as dislocated Bangladeshis. I was not prepared for what followed this discussion as Sheikh Swapan enthusiastically asserted that he will be introducing *kumra bori* in his new restaurant which is going to be opened in Germany.

Figure 3: *Kumra Bori*[159]

This incident reminds me of "the remembering of food eaten in pre-migration eras often prompts the one remembering to prepare particular foods, which then promotes the reproduction of those memories through the material act of recreating home in the preparation, cooking, and sharing of the dish. In doing so, food memories also construct identity in the present as well as in the memories of past." [160] For Swapan, engaging in a conversation about home-cooked foods and cuisines prompted a nostalgia in him that informed his decision to include *kumra bori* on the

[159] "Bengali Dal Bori Recipe by Priyadarshini Nandy," NDTV Food, accessed October 11, 2019, https://food.ndtv.com/recipe-bengali-dal-bori-902821.

[160] Marlene Epp, "The Dumpling in My Soup Was Lonely Just like Me': Food in the Memories of Mennonite Women Refugees," *Women's History Review* 25, no. 3 (May 3, 2016): 5, https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1071575.

menu in a diasporic environment in Germany. Not only was he convinced that this was a profitable move, he also expressed hope that the menu of his new restaurant would act as a platform to reinforming Bangladeshi identity in the community. Such hope directs us to the possibilities of negotiating identities against other diasporic groups in the culinary industry. However, his idea to include Bangladeshi foods in his restaurant in Germany also indicates that the German Bangladeshi diaspora is comparatively bigger to that of Budapest, and therefore it is likely more convenient and cost-effective than producing and trying to make popular this dish in Hungary.

3.2. Ignoring Bangladeshi Food and Choosing Indian Instead

Mohammad Ali Talukdar is another restaurant owner that I interviewed for the research. Unlike Sheikh Swapan, Mohammad Ali Talukdar does not feel that promoting Indian food in his restaurants based in the UK is in contradiction to the idea of Bangladeshi food and food culture. Mohammad Ali Talukdar's migration journey started in 1977 when he came to England to study chemical engineering. Failing to graduate, he got a job as a clerical audit officer in a government office where his wages were around 7500 pounds per year at that time. The poor wages made him resolute to find a way to be an independent business owner. At the end of 1979, he invested in one of his friends' restaurants and became a business partner of that Maharaj restaurant, near Birmingham University. Eventually he became owner of around seven to nine restaurants in the areas of Gloucestershire, Bristol and Swindon. Currently, he has two restaurants at Swindon: The Burj Indian Restaurant and Abbey Mead Indian Restaurant. As is evident from the names of the restaurants, unlike Sheikh Swapan, Mohammad Ali Talukdar does not have any problem designating his restaurants as 'Indian'. During our interview, I asked him why, despite being involved in the diasporic culinary business for forty years, he is not promoting Bangladeshi food.

I found his response to be quite an anomaly among my five respondents. While the rest of my respondents are advocating for Bangladeshi cuisine and trying to make their mark in the diaspora with Bangladeshi cuisine, Talukdar seems absolutely indifferent to promoting Bangladeshi cuisine. To name a few of his restaurants' popular dishes, he mentioned chicken madras, king prawn madras, chicken vindaloo, prawn *jalfrezi*[161] and chicken *jhalfrezi*. Similar to Sheikh Swapan's menu, Mohammad Ali Talukdar's focuses the style of the dishes on Indian cuisine and the kind of expected dishes that customers from outside of South Asia expect to find. When asked about the possibility of including Bangladeshi food on the menu in the future, he vehemently negates the possibility:

> No, no! We don't serve those (Bangladeshi) dishes. You can find them only in very tiny restaurants inside London, where they serve *mach* (fish). Ours are more standard restaurants and where we only have high-class customers and who are mostly English people. They are not habituated in these foods, like *macher jhol,*[162] chutney and *bhorta.*[163] But there is a number of restaurants, where they have all these dishes that are favored by only Bangladeshi people. And they only have Bangladeshi customers.[164]

A condescending attitude towards Bangladeshi food is reflected here in his belief that he has elevated the position of his restaurants which is visited by "higher class customers" and "English people". Due to the classed nature of his arguments, in his mind it is important that the restaurant's cuisine does not have an association with Bangladesh. He also mentions about other restaurants in London that serve such dishes which are "tiny" and are favored only by Bangladeshi people. His attitude towards his own restaurant in comparison the few who serve Bangladeshi dishes implies a hierarchical and class-based approach to the conception and marketing of his cuisine. His view of the clientele and the means of pleasing mainstream 'English' tastes also

[161] *Jalfrezi* is a curry with fresh chilies and tomatoes.
[162] Fish curry where the curry is thin with light spices and oil.
[163] Mushed vegetables that are usually baked or roasted before mushing and are mixed with green chilies, onions, oil and salt during the process of mashing.
[164] Online interview with author, May 17, 2019, Budapest

compliments Krishnendu Ray's claim of restaurant owners' preference of serving Indian cuisine instead of Bangladeshi cuisine in the restaurants because India has a more elevated status in the diaspora as compared to the relatively poorer, working-class migrants from Bangladesh.[165] Talukdar's attitude also reflects Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital" [166] where he viewed the social status of his restaurants as higher than that of other restaurants which serve Bangladeshi cuisine. My respondent's approach contradicts some of the recent scholars like Stephen Mennell, who thinks that modern days' eating habits have become more democratized with "consumer access and increased food varieties."[167]

Nonetheless, there are two common threads that connect Talukdar's attitude towards Bangladeshi cuisine and Swapan's inclination towards Indian cuisine. The first is that they are both first-generation migrant among my case studies. First-generation migrants face more difficult situations than those born in the diaspora simply because they have to deal with all the adversities of survival in a foreign land without having prior experiences, language skills, family support, or the ability to work legally. As a result, these first-generation migrants carefully consider and aim to market to the dominant culture of the host community. When they started their businesses – and still today in the case of the UK – Indian cuisine is the dominant South Asian cuisine which was a familiar feature of almost all British communities following their 200 years' of colonialism in the region. The second common thread that connects these two business owners is their restaurants' location and the demand of the consumers. Neither Budapest nor Swindon has a huge number of Bangladeshi migrants, and therefore the consumers they are marketing to, are typically from

[165] Ray, *The Ethnic Restaurateur*, 110.
[166] David W. O'Shea and John G. Richardson, "Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education.," *Contemporary Sociology* 16, no. 4 (July 1987): 243, https://doi.org/10.2307/2069964.
[167] Cobb, *Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World*, 41. This is quoted by Stephen Fielding in his essay "Currying Flavor: Authenticity, Cultural Capital, and the Rise of
Indian Food in the United Kingdom."

outside of Bangladeshi diaspora in comparison to cosmopolitan cities like London and New York that both have larger populations of Bangladeshi migrants. My findings indicate that due to the lack of diversity in the host societies, Swapan could not bring in Bangladeshi cuisine on his menu even though he has named his restaurant as Bangla Bufe. And on the other hand, Talukdar does not even preserve the idea of initiating Bangladeshi cuisine by replacing Indian cuisine in his restaurants. As curry houses became more popular after WWII, they have a long history and have made a substantial mark on what is now considered 'British Cuisine.[168] It is easy to imagine why business owners in smaller towns and cities might want to carefully cater to a 'known' type of ethnic cuisine. 'Indian' food is itself a complex hybrid of multiple foods fused into one in the imaginary of the former colonial connections.

Talukdar's condescending attitude towards Bangladeshi food and its promotion is layered with stigma which might have deep roots in the post-colonial racism that Bangladeshis faced during the period of 1970's and 1980's. In the foreword of her book, Caroline Adams mentions that Bangladeshis were "the worst victim of British racism."[169] It was during this period of intense scrutiny of poor and working-class Bangladeshi migrants that Mohammad Ali Talukdar started his business in the UK. Hence, the apprehension about facing racism or being labelled as a misfit in his diasporic culinary context has roots in the reality of the history of Bangladeshi settlement and integration into the UK. Also, if I take into consideration that chicken tikka masala was announced as the national dish of Britain, it indicates that Indian food has already made its space, and has been acknowledged there.[170] It has gained stable status and dominant visibility in the culinary

[168] Robin Cook, "Robin Cook's Chicken Tikka Masala Speech," *The Guardian*, April 19, 2001, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/apr/19/race.britishidentity.
[169] Caroline Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers: Life Stories of Pioneer Sylhetti Settlers in Britain* (London: THAP Books, 1987), Foreword,xi.
[170] Cook, "Robin Cook's Chicken Tikka Masala Speech."

landscape of the UK. Therefore, it is much safer to go within the established boundaries and Talukdar remains within that safe boundary. His self-reinforced silence for Bangladeshi cuisine reflects the long history of British colonial regime and his notion of rejecting Bangladeshi food as palatable for a higher-class customer base exhibits the latent hierarchy of 'cultural capital' he has in mind.[171] It also indicates his desire to perpetuate the dominance of Indian food even though the present situation of 'ethnic' foods are rapidly changing and becoming diversified almost every day. His unwillingness to adapt to changes in the culinary industry specifically in the arena of curry houses of England, which corresponds to one of the claims of an article published in The Telegraph where the chairman of the Asian Catering Federation (ACF) reproached the Bangladeshi restaurateurs for having "[an] insular and inward-looking"[172] mentality along with an indifferent attitude towards the changing demands of their consumers.

Mohammad Ali Talukdar's condescending attitude towards Bangladeshi food and its promotion requires a layer of post-colonial theorizing for my analysis. It indicates to the "many subject positions which one inhabits; [because] one is not just one thing."[173]Therefore, when Talukdar is speaking about Indian cuisine, it is not only a cuisine but a complex set of identities that he is endorsing. To conceptualize the position of Bangladeshi cuisine in this respect I will use Spivak's theory to make sense of the position of Bangladeshi food within the realm of Indian foods. From the twentieth century onwards, because of the long history of British colonization in the Indian Subcontinent, Indian food is being elevated to the ethnic, spotlight and eventually

[171] Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Severed or Sustained Attachments? Language, Identity, and Imagined Communities in the Post-Immigrant Generation," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2002), https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1886649.
[172] Telegraph Reporters, "Britain's Curry Houses Disappearing - 50 per Cent to Close within 10 Years," *The Telegraph*, February 22, 2017, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/22/britains-curry-houses-feeling-heat-owners-arent-innovative-enough/.
[173] Spivak and Harasym, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, 60.

becomes a homogenizing category within which all the foods of the Indian subcontinent can be subsumed. As a result of the dominance of Indian food, regional foods are removed from view, and a hierarchy is established among the foods from the region where Bangladeshi food identities become peripheral and are rarely recognized within the diaspora.[174] Such homogenization marks the "white ignorance of ethnic minority cultures" [175] and eventually creates a 'white gaze' effect of those cultures. The contributing factors were when the settlers from different regions of South Asia started their culinary business and promoted everything they sold under the label of 'Indian' food. The rise of the Indian curry houses in Britain was therefore promoted by the Bangladeshi settlers. What came to be considered as 'Indian' food (which is again a complex set of identities conveniently made by the host communities and the migrant communities) is visible and has a stable stature in the ethnic background of the UK and the stigma of "not being Indian" food has shunned other regional foods from the culinary landscape .As a result, self-reinforced silencing occur where "the other" foods are concerned because they are thought to be not mainstream enough and therefore not profitable for a commercial enterprise where the goal is to make a profit in an already competitive food industry, echoing once again the attitude of Mohammad Ali Talukdar.

3.3. Constructing the Identity of Bangladeshi Cuisine without Restaurants

Aside from Mohammad Ali Talukdar, the rest of my respondents from the UK expressed similar views regarding the place of Bangladeshi foodways in the UK. In this section, I return to Dina Begum and Saira Hamilton's diasporic food journeys within the framework of identity formation to trace their food voices through the complexity of migrant attitudes and the broader

[174] Ibid.
[175] Elizabeth Buettner, "'Going for an Indian': South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain," *The Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 4 (December 2008): 868, https://doi.org/10.1086/591113.

historical context of Empire and migrations. In order to get a sense of how their philosophy towards creating a Bangladeshi foodways converge and diverge, I analyze their case studies side by side in this section.

Identifying herself as a cook and food writer, Saira Hamilton is currently working full time in the civil service in England. Her culinary journey in diaspora began when she was selected as one of the finalists for the popular cooking television show MasterChef UK in 2013. From 2013, she worked as a professional chef for five years but later went back to the civil service. She currently actively offers private catering, cookery classes, and participates in different events like food festivals and food talks where her focus is predominantly Bangladeshi foods and cooking. Saira Hamilton has also published a cookbook, *My Bangladeshi Kitchen,* and as the name suggests, this book is centered on Bangladeshi cuisine. In the following chapter I will return to discuss the creation of diasporic identity and memory through these books, whereas in this chapter, I trace how their interpretation of transnational food creates a comparative study by situating their opinion alongside my other case studies.

Saira Hamilton portrays her culinary journey in the following way:

> When I started cooking, I started with Indian dishes, that are much more Anglicized, like what people are used to eat, because I thought I would get more exposure, and also I think I was intimated to introduce something entirely new because I was not an expert. But even at that time as well, I used to add some very Bengali dishes like *chotpoti*, and *shingaras,*[176] that people might like it. So, 20% of the menu would be very Bengali, and the rest of 80% was Indian. But then now, I think I have been more confident to speak about Bangladeshi food. People are now ready for the nuanced food. They want to try something different from Indian food. So, I think it's a good thing for Bangladeshi cuisine, and I am promoting Bangladeshi dishes in different events.[177]

[176] *Chotpoti* is a snack popular in both parts of the Bengal. It is boiled yellow peas, mixed with fresh ground cumin, pepper, black salt, cilantro, mint, green chilies, boiled eggs and potatoes with a dash of squeezed lemon. *Shingara* is another savory snack that is samosa like pastry filled with

[177] Online interview with author May 27, 2019, Budapest.

Her gradual steps introducing Bangladeshi food within the diaspora reflects what Mary Douglas has called a 'theory of food as a code' where the food is treated as a code where "the message it encodes [is] found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries, and transactions across the boundaries."[178] In the beginning, when Saira Hamilton entered the diasporic culinary sphere, she used "anglicized" Indian dishes which revealed the outline of the social relations between her diasporic identity and her consumers' identity. Her feeling of intimidation can be translated according to the overwhelming presence of Indian food in the diaspora. And therefore, the decision to initiate with "anglicized" Indian dishes also reveals Hamilton's awareness about the various stages of hierarchy within the diasporic food voices in the UK. It also reflects her cognizance about consumers' demand, as well as the boundaries of their taste palate. Her second step was the inclusion of Bangladeshi dishes and introducing those dishes within the context of the dominant Indian cuisine consumers are more accustomed to helps us understand how the encoding process for food works gradually.[179] Hamilton's mention of percentages to represent the proportion between Bangladeshi and Indian dishes in her menu demonstrates her mediation between the boundaries of transnational dishes where food is assessed within the context of the identities that are simultaneously being made and remade in the diaspora. It also shows the eventual inclusion of Bangladeshi cuisines into the diasporic culinary industry of the UK and the doing and undoing of Bangladeshi food in the host community by means of different events like private dining, food festivals and food talks. .[180]

[178] Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedalus* 101, no. 1, (1972): 61.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Online interview with author May 27, 2019, Budapest.

Dina Begum.is also working towards creating Bangladeshi identity in the diasporic culinary industry of the UK. Like Saira Hamilton, she also works as an individual food expert in the diaspora and does not have any physical space to showcase her expertise. Rather she does pop-ups, attends different food festival to disseminate about Bangladeshi food through her cooking, food talk and her cookbook *Brick Lane Cookbook*. She also offers virtual cookery classes on platforms like Yodomo,[181] as I will discuss in detail in the next chapter. As a promoter of Bangladeshi cuisine and food writer, Dina Begum mentions the steps through which Bangladeshi-run restaurants can trace the legacy of their own food instead of promoting Indian food:

> I think the initial step would be changing the names of their restaurants and menus. Calling something Bombay or Indian is not going to attract people to Bangladeshi food. Bangladeshi women are running cookery classes, calling their classes- Indian cookery classes where they are teaching Bangladeshi cuisine too. So, when I started with my online cooking course, I thought to myself, why not call it only Bangladeshi cooking class. The people who are still holding on to the Indian cuisine in their restaurant I think it has become a kind of a security blanket where people are afraid to let go of their old business because it's been there for so long. It's hard to let go off. [182]

In the above quote, Begum is explicitly pointing out the issue with the restaurants' names and the menus, which are run by Bangladeshi migrants but represent Indian cuisine because, with the names, the sense of place is also attached and the name of any restaurant conveys the identity of that specific place to the consumers. These authors point out, "[t]he traditional thinking of food as creating a sense of place and tradition has become more complicated in the modern world, where place becomes fluid and transient, and tradition is invented and reshaped with every generation."[183]Therefore, naming something that is connected to Bangladesh or naming a restaurant in Bangla language formulates part of diasporic and layered connection to their homeland. Such connections to the home country are, however imaginary and fluid but is crucial

[181] A website for learning creative skills like arts, design, cooking, wood carving through online classes.
[182] Online interview with author, May 17, 2019, Budapest.
[183] Raviv, *Falafel Nation*, 3.

to establish the identity in the diaspora because that sense of place will make them distinct from other diasporic communities. While initiating a restaurant's name related to Bangladesh, the restaurateur has to keep in mind that the menu needs to be corresponded with the name; otherwise like Bangla Bufe, the place will fail to promote Bangladeshi identity and rather reinforce the palatal taste of other communities instead of its own.

3.4. Promoting 'Authentic' Bangladeshi Food Voices

This next section explores how some of my respondents are working towards the creation of Bangladeshi identity in diaspora through their involvement in the culinary industry. Between these two cases, , Korai Kitchen, a restaurant run by a mother-daughter duo, and Jhal NYC, both endeavors are focused on promoting Bangladeshi food and at the same time providing ways to empower stay at home migrant mothers. Jhal NYC is run by two young male second-generation migrants from Bangladesh. My aim is to show how these two case studies contribute to constructing Bangladeshi identity within the diasporic and immigrant foodways of the U.S.

Jhal NYC was founded by Mahfuzul Islam and Alvi Zaman in 2016. I interviewed Mahfuzul Islam and asked him to tell me where about the journey to establishing his restaurant, Jhal NYC. Mahfuzul Islam is currently working as an Adjunct Faculty at Fordham University, Queens, and at the same time working with Jhal NYC. The idea of it first came to their mind when Islam and Zaman realized that there was no representation of Bangladeshi food in the 'Queens International Night' market (a yearly event to promote local foods in the area). During this event vendors set food stalls from different ethnic backgrounds as well as American fast foods in Queens, New York. They started their pop-up by selling the two most popular street foods from

Bangladesh, which are *jhal muri, and phuchka.* [184] The venture gained a hugely positive responses from the consumers who he notes ranged from the diaspora as well as other migrants and Americans interested to try these foods for the first time. At first, their idea was to promote Bangladeshi street food, but later they started to use Jhal NYC as a platform to employ stay-at-home mothers and new immigrants in order to showcase their cooking expertise and create a niche for Bangladeshi food in the diaspora. The word *Jhal* is the Bangla word for spicy, which is also relevant to their signature dishes: *jhal muri and phuchka.* From their launch, Jhal NYC introduced regular pop-ups, and their stall is also present at other food festivals and events. They also have catering services where the foods are made by mothers and new immigrant women, and delivered throughout Queens. Jhal NYC has been getting public attention in the culinary landscape of New York from the beginning which shows that "within a commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white's society" [185] and for Jhal NYC, the street food from Bangladesh becomes part of the identity they seek to demonstrate against the backdrop of the US culture. It has been said of New York's culinary landscape that, "every New Yorker has a food voice, and together these voices create a chorale — sometimes cacophonous and always interesting." [186] This indicates the cosmopolitan and multicultural aspect of New York where people are always exploring and looking for something new and different, and Jhal NYC is yet another example of an identity that becomes a part of a complex and evolving culinary landscape. It is also worth noting that both Mahfuzul Islam and Alvi Zaman belong to the second generation of their community where they are born in the States but have a close connection to

[184] *Jhalmuri* is puffed rice seasoned with fresh onion, cilantro, chopped tomatoes, fresh chilies, salt and a dash of mustard oil. *Phuchka is* small crunchy hollow shells made out of semolina and plain flour dough filled with yellow peas, and fresh chilies, more on *phuchka* is narrated in the previous chapter.
[185] Johan Pottier, "Savoring 'The Authentic': The Emergence of a Bangladeshi Cuisine in East London," *Food, Culture & Society* 17, no. 1 (March 2014): 11, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174413X13758634982173.
[186] Hauck-Lawson and Deutsch, *Gastropolis*, 2009, 91.

their homeland because of their parents. Therefore, the identity they are constructing through the host country and homeland is complex and layered.

Korai Kitchen, also introduced above, is a restaurant in Jersey City. Like New York, it also has a wide range of Asian diasporic communities, though the percentage is still lower than in New York. Korai Kitchen is run by a first-generation migrant mother, Nur-E Gulshan Rahman and her daughter, Nur-E-Farhana Rahman. Similar to the name of Jhal NYC, the name Korai Kitchen uses a distinctive Bangla word - *korai* - which is a Bangla modified use of *kadai , indicating* a cast iron pan used predominantly for frying fish and vegetables. This restaurant offers home-cooked Bangladeshi meal since the cooking is solely done by mother Rahman while her daughter maintains and organizes the restaurant clientele. Founded in February 2018, Korai Kitchen is the most recent among all of my case studies. However, like Jhal NYC, this restaurant has been marking their places in the US by promoting Bangladeshi food in the diasporic landscape. One of the interesting feature of Korai Kitchen is how they distinguish themselves in the diaspora and also from the culinary industry of Indian cuisine by using hashtags and making statements on their websites. One particular good example is from their webpage:

> We always say Korai Kitchen is a Bangladeshi restaurant, as opposed to a Bengali restaurant, simply because there are a lot of dishes from West Bengal. We, unfortunately, don't make (i.e., shukto, posto, etc.). This is because chef and owner Nur-E Gulshan Rahman, who prepares all of the food at Korai Kitchen herself, was born and raised in Bangladesh. To keep her food authentic to her life experiences in Dhaka and Bogra, Mama Rahman's food is prepared differently from some styles of cooking popular in West Bengal.[187]

Statements like the one above works on multiple levels of identity creation both on the part of the migrants and on the part of the cuisine. The first layer is making Bangladeshi cuisine distinct from that of the neighboring West Bengal (State of India), and to be eloquent in their assertion they are

[187] "Koraikitchen," Koraikitchen, FAQ, accessed September 10, 2019, https://www.koraikitchen.com.

pronouncing the food items (*shukto,*[188] *posto*[189]*)* that are always associated with West Bengal. The second layer is making the homeland identity of the chef and culinary journey prominent. Such prominence again works on two layers; it reinforces the chef's ethnic identity, and it implies the authenticity of the dishes that will be coming from her kitchen and thus reinforces the claim to an "authentic" Bangladeshi identity. All these traits gesture to the fact that "food is located within culture, and across cultural boundaries, and the ways in which food is linked to issues of identity, prestige, social place and symbolic meanings. Thinking about food has much to reveal about how we understand our personal and collective identities"[190] By mentioning the food dishes of West Bengal and Nur-E Gulshan Rahman's origin, Korai Kitchen is revealing the ways food creates "personal and collective identities" in the diaspora. It also connotes the affiliation of both mother and 'daughter to their homeland which is significant for their culinary platform since it evokes a sense of reliability towards the authenticity of the foods that are served in the Bangladeshi restaurant.

From its launch, Korai Kitchen has been applying different promotional activities to make the distinction between Indian food and Bangladeshi food. For example, their Instagram account's tag is 'hashtag no chicken tikka masala' (#NoChickenTikkaMasala), which implies that they don't have Chicken Tikka Masala on their menu because much like the UK,[191] chicken tikka masala is equally popular in the US as a generically South Asian dish. By using a hashtag that says "no" chicken tikka masala is immediately creating a space for the further question of why. On their website, Korai Kitchen explicitly says the reason why they do not sell Chicken Tikka Masala

[188] *Shukto* is a pungent dish of mixed vegetables and bitter gourds cooked in a mushy curry, usually regarded as a regular dish in West Bengal.
[189] *Posto* is poppy seeds. Poppy seed is an essential condiment for West Bengal's cuisine.
[190] Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures*, 161.
[191] Savannah Wardle, "England's National Dish: Chicken Tikka Masala," *Study Abroad: Our Stories* (blog), February 10, 2018, https://medium.com/study-abroad-our-stories/englands-national-dish-chicken-tikka-masala-23d9986c736f.

because this is not a Bangladeshi dish and since they only offer native dishes, they do not have this popular dish. Moreover, they jokingly indicate there are plenty of places where the dish is available. [192]They have distinguished themselves from the host community and situated their food offerings within the broader spectrum of South Asian diasporic community with another hashtag that is posted on the website, 'eat with your hands': #eatwithyourhands. Eating with hands instead of spoon and fork is a tradition not commonly accepted in public spaces within western cultures. There is an implied notion of uncivility associated with eating without utensils which has been perpetuated in particular throughout the histories of colonialism in the Indian subcontinent.[193] Korai Kitchen is reversing the expected dynamic by encouraging their customers, especially those who are not used to eating in this way, to eat with their hands as part of the Bangladeshi eating experience. And for the diaspora, by using this hashtag they are creating a safe space for the migrants so that they can have the same feelings like home while eating at the restaurant, and Farhana Rahman pointed out that eating with hand evokes a sense of intimacy with the food and her restaurant is encouraging that intimacy among the clientele.[194]

Such traits of diasporic or ethnic eating places give the restaurant a performative quality and the distinct arrangements like encouraging eating with hand becomes a performative activity[195] and through the performance they are creating their own identities, disseminating about their homeland's culture and promoting Bangladeshi food. The same use of performativity is also applicable for Jhal NYC's pop-ups and events where they set the table with the ingredients of *phuchka* and *jhalmuri* and put together each ingredients to create a plate full with *phuchka.* In the

[192] Online interview with author, May 22, 2019, Budapest.
[193] Mareile Flitsch, "Hesitant Hands on Changing Tables: Negotiating Dining Patterns in Diaspora Food Culture Transfer," 2011, 976, https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-56036.
[194] Online interview with author, May 22, 2019, Budapest.
[195] Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 156.

case of *jhalmuri,* they serve it like the *jhalmuriwalas* (vendor who sells *jhalmuri* on the streets) in newspaper cones. Such arrangements create an aura of authenticity as well as exoticism that attract the clientele who are unaware of such foods and the diaspora who are well aware of these foods.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been on the construction of 'Bangladeshi' cuisine among six case studies which reveal the prevailing tension between 'Bangladeshi' and 'Indian' cuisine. By exploring the history of the restaurant name, the design of the menu and culinary experience, and the advancement of their projects through the use of social media, it is evident that there are distinct differences between first and second-generation Bangladeshi restaurants. What is also notable is how Bangladeshi migrants distinguish themselves from their fellow Indian migrants within the culinary industry, and as a result they are in a constant process of constructing and reconstructing their identities in the diasporic community.

Second-generation restaurant owners are actively reinventing Bangladeshi cuisine as separate to that of the generic 'Indian' category, and are extensively using social media tools to disseminate their food projects and their Bangladeshi identities. I show here how the new generation of migrants is handling the change in the culinary industry and their perspectives which are contributing to change the entire situation in the diaspora. The eagerness to represent their food identities distinct from the Indian food also reflects their socio-economic strength in the diaspora. This trait is also noted by Johan Pottier: "the rise of an urban, educated, middle class population who are the youngest generation of British born Bangladeshis. This generation wants to convey the sentiment that Bangladeshis are different — they are not Indian: they are not West

Bengalis." [196] Since they are already established as second-generation migrants, the respondents from my case-studies have a safe financial background that are created by their first-generation migrant parents. As a result, none of my second-generation respondents are facing the questions of economic survival solely on the basis of their food projects. Rather, all of them are professionally established and have other source of financial sustenance. Even in the case of the owner of Korai Kitchen, Nur-E- Gulshan Rahman's restaurant is not the only source of her income as she owns a Bangladeshi grocery store (New Hilsa Grocery Store) in the Jersey City.

The second-generation respondents of my dissertation, also acknowledge the fact of the survival of Bangladeshi migrants who were engaged in culinary industry and promoted Indian food rather than Bangladeshi. Interestingly, each of my interviewees also think that rather than Indian cuisine, promoting Bangladeshi food will be profitable for them because it has the potential to create a separate space in the diasporic context. The popularity and the success of their food projects bear the evidence of their claims to reinventing and reimagining Bangladeshi diasporic foodways.

[196] Pottier, "Savoring 'The Authentic,'" March 2014, 11.

Chapter 4- Authentic Migrant Food Voices from 'In-Between' Spaces and their Representation on Social Media

"Food is mobile, multivocal, and polysemic; it moves from one group to another, it expresses different voices, and it can take on different meanings depending on the intention of the consumers."[197]

Food and foodways recreate as they negotiate identity within the migrant communities, and provides a link to migrant homelands and to the host community, shaping as it does a narrative of hybrid identity. What is notable about the study of food and its relationship to shaping identity and negotiating national belonging in the diaspora, is the many forms of food voices and integrating forces that participate in the process. The final chapter opens up junctures of identities of my case studies and how they connect to family and collective identities through food. My six case studies show how expressions of identities are shaped by a number of different factors including their socio-economic background, their target audience, their migrant history, and their host countries. The chapter begins by establishing parts of the food profile of these case studies within the context of theories advanced by Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Mareile Flitsch, and Donna Gabaccia that engage migrant hybridity and the negotiation of identity in diaspora. Drawing upon Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" and Hall's idea of reproducible diasporic identity to highlight the multifaceted and fluid identities of my respondents, I establish how 'authentic' cuisines are established through migrant 'food adventures' and exotic experiences. The work of Lisa Heldke's provides a framework through which I 'read between the lines' of my respondents' responses about the authenticity of their cuisine and their representation. Ultimately, the chapter reflects on the extensive use of social media by my respondents' to promote authenticity and Bangladeshi cuisine and exhibit their hybrid identity in the host community. As Fabio Parasecoli,

[197] Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli, ""Eat the World": Postcolonial Encounters in Quebec City's Ethnic Restaurants," *Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 456 (2002): 250, https://doi.org/10.1353/jaf.2002.0023.

and Signe Rousseau propose, social media is used as a tool by women to create a niche within a male-dominated industry. Even there are culinary projects that are run by men, and women are getting the spotlight on social media, like Jhal NYC, because though this social entrepreneurship is run by men, they highlight the women who are working there. Moreover, their aim is to empower the unemployed migrant women and create a platform for their exposure. The chapter concludes with a reflection on how four of my respondents are in a continuous process of exhibiting and also revisiting their hybridity, and making their ethnicity as a selling point through endorsing Bangladeshi food in their respective host countries through the use of various popular social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, blogs, YouTube Channel and vlogs (video blogs).

4.1. Identity Formation in the 'In-Between' Spaces through Foods

This section explores the continuous momentum of the identities of my respondents and their families and their struggle to negotiate between their host country and their homeland. While researching Jhal NYC, I came across the fact that both Mahfuzul Islam and Alvi Zaman's parents were not happy with the idea when they initiated their startup, and both of them faced protests from their parents and family members. This particular information made me curious about the reasons behind their parents' opposition, because from its conception, one of the goals of Jhal NYC has been to empower stay at home migrant mothers where their own mothers are also involved in the making of the dishes. Therefore, during my interview with Jhal NYC's co-founder, Mahfuzul Islam, I asked him why their parents were resisting the idea of their startup when they started the journey, and how the transition from protesting to supporting happened in last three years. Islam's response revealed a complex layer of identities and opened up scope for further analysis of migrant identities and aspects of multi-generational projects:

> I wouldn't say that the transition has happened completely. There is always this question from our parents: "Why are you doing this (Jhal NYC)?" "What would be the result of this?" They don't

> understand our aims fully, so it's hard to explain. It's also hard for them to accept that their son will be a *jhalmuriwala*.[198] They don't necessarily understand what we are trying to do. But, when they see that people are applauding, then they appreciate our achievements and they become happy. But, they are also worried about our future as there is no certainty in our projects.[199]

The extract underlines the continuous tension and oscillation between the two generations in a migrant community. Both Islam and Zaman's parents are first-generation migrants in the US who are still upholding the cultural orientation of having a secure and stable profession, and therefore the idea of startup does not seem sustainable to their parents.

Figure 4: *Jhalmuri* at an event of Jhal NYC[200]

More intriguingly, their parents' prejudices against the profession of a '*jhalmuriwala'* reveals their anxiety about the future of their sons. It also reflects on their traditional concept of

[198] *Jhalmuriwala* is the street vendor who sells *jhalmuri* on the streets. *Jhalmuri* is puffed rice seasoned with fresh onion, cilantro, chopped tomatoes, fresh chilies, salt, and a dash of mustard oil.
[199] Online interview with author, May 1, 2019, Budapest.
[200] "Jhal NYC (@jhalnyc) • Instagram Photos and Videos," accessed October 11, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bt7B5ekF9Gy/.

professions. They are not viewing Islam's and Zaman's project as a promotion of Bangladeshi street food, e.g., *jhalmuri* and *phuchka*, rather they are viewing it with the lens of social prestige which is stemmed from their Bangladeshi origin. The profession of '*jhalmuriwala'* is looked down upon in the context of Bangladesh since it is a profession of street vendor where one does not even have a permanent place to sell *jhalmuri*. The job necessitated carrying all the arrangements (a wicker stand, sack of puffed rice, and a number of containers for condiments and fresh salad items) on his back and walks on different roads and lanes in order to sell. Such approaches from their parents exhibit that even though Mahfuzul Islam is a second-generation migrant, his career choices are somewhat dependent on his parents' cultural values that are deeply connected to their expectations of social prestige in their homeland of Bangladesh. It also demonstrates the constant tension within the multigenerational projects such as these, where. Jhal NYC is a multigenerational project since their mothers are directly involved in the making of the dishes that are being sold through their website. And, even though the parents are involved in Jhal NYC, they expect more sustainable future endeavors for the next generation.

4.2. Shaping Migrant Identity through Food Sharing and Memories of Food

Homi K. Bhabha explores the "in-between" where migrants do not belong in one place or another, and are rather hybridized. Migrants – especially those who can be considered transnational migrant - are situated in both places: in their homelands and in their host countries. "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity."[201] Therefore, the first-generation parents' stronghold with the homeland has the potential to influence the next generations' identity, initiate negotiations between the identities of the host community and their homeland. Such an 'in-between' state is reflected

[201] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1.

among most of my respondents' interviews where they reinstate the connection to their homeland, sometimes through the memories of their parents, and sometimes through their own memories with Bangladesh. While reminiscing about memories of the small Bangladeshi community during her childhood Saira Hamilton said:

> There weren't many Bangladeshi people living around when I was growing up in the UK, so sharing a meal together was special. For example, if someone got a *kathal* (jackfruit, the national fruit of Bangladesh) from home, everyone would go to that person's house to share the *kathal* and enjoy it together. Likewise, if you have got some *shutki* (dry or fermented fish) or some other food from home, enjoying it together with everyone in the community became a culture. I suppose we were a minority within a minority. When you are abroad, you don't have that support network, so your friends become your family. Wherever you are in trouble, you go to your friends, and I think I understand it now completely why my parents maintained a close community because we couldn't go home every year. Nowadays, people can travel pretty easily, but in the 70's and 80's, it was difficult. And also, when you're working hard in a foreign land, building homes for your children, you can't necessarily spend money on traveling. [202]

This excerpt reveals a series of layered identities, the in-betweenness of migrant families, and the role of food in their diasporic life. One of the main aspects of this quotation is the notion of "sharing the food" among the members of the diaspora. As Hamilton mentions, whenever there was any food that is native to their homeland Bangladesh, were brought in the diasporic community and invited the community to share in the foods, which eventually became a ritual. Practices like sharing foods from native country among the diaspora recreate the sense of home in the faraway land and therefore reinstate their identity as Bangladeshi in the host community of the UK. In a migrant settings, sharing food connects the migrants with their past in a new atmosphere of their host country. [203] Furthermore, as Parasecoli tells us, "it confirms the eaters' identities as individuals or as part of a collective."[204] Also, sharing food helps "establish settings

[202] Online interview with author, May 27, 2019, Budapest.
[203] Nancy Pollock, "Food and Transnationalism: Reassertions of Pacific Identity," in *Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific Perspectives*, ed. Helen Lee and Steve Tupai Francis, 1st ed. (ANU Press, 2009), 103, https://doi.org/10.22459/MT.08.2009.06.
[204] Parasecoli, "Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities," 425.

for a collective belonging. It shapes how the migrants share and how they negotiate identity" [205] in the diaspora. Therefore, sharing a piece of *kathal* or *shutki* reinforces the collective identity of Bangladeshi migrants. Saira Hamilton's quotation also exposes how the Bangladeshi community of her childhood, was still establishing during the 1970's and 1980's when the number of Bangladeshi migrants moving to the UK started to increase rapidly. At the same time, this community suffered greatly from the ingrained racism in the UK, even being referred to as the "worst victim" [206] of British racism. Hamilton's positioning of the migrant community as a "minority within a minority" reveals the peripheral location of Bangladeshi diaspora within the diasporic context of England. It also evokes a sense of loss, a loss of homeland, and a loss of family members. Sharing food and familiar food practices in such a settings counteracts the distance[207] from their homeland and eventually creates a support system within these migrant communities. Hamilton also reflects here on multigenerational memory, where she realizes why her parents used to "maintain a close community"[208] within the diaspora and supports the claim that "[f]ood recollections in life stories might be factually anecdotal, but they can also function as a metaphorical way, as a means to recount events … that can reveal emotions related to joyful experiences."[209]

Saira Hamilton's excerpt shows how her parents, the first-generation, have maintained the connection with their homeland through food sharing and carrying the cultural values of their home

[205] Flitsch, "Hesitant Hands on Changing Tables," 970. This idea is also reflected in Fabio Parasecoli's article, "Food, Identity and Cultural Production in Immigrants Communities" where Parasecoli mentions about "the sense of belonging among the immigrants that is strengthened through specific ingredients, dishes and practices from the migrant's place of origin.", page-419.
[206] Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, xi.
[207] Parasecoli, "Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities," 432.
[208] Online interview with author, May 27, 2019, Budapest.
[209] Epp, "'The Dumpling in My Soup Was Lonely Just like Me,'" 2.

country. The next section explores the ways second-generation from my case studies have preserved the link to their homeland, again through memories of food. Dina Begum expresses how she has constructed the idea of home through cooking:

> I've got the essence of Bangladesh from my mom and grandmom. They always used to cook traditional Bangladeshi dishes. Rarely would we have any Western kind of cooking in our house. We were always cooking as a family, helping each other with cooking, cooking together with aunts, experimenting with foods. For me, the whole connection to Bangladesh, therefore, has always been with the cooking, the recipes they shared, the stories they had related to those cooking and ingredients.[210]

Her quotation suggests that "immigrants sought to maintain their familiar foodways because food initiated and maintained traditional relationships, expressed the extent of social distance between people, demonstrated status and prestige." [211] Dina Begum's recollection refers to how her family members who were first-generation migrants maintained a close association with Bangladeshi food through ingredients, food memories and recipes to establish relationship with their homeland and connect their second-generation migrants with those recollections. This quotation also reflects the impact of women's oral narratives around food and the recollections about food that intensify the bond with the homeland. Such oral narratives around food helps Dina Begum, a second-generation migrant, to create her own food voices of her homeland in her host country. It is significant to mention here that Dina Begum has visited Bangladesh only once so far. However, that does not stop her from reproducing her identity as a Bangladeshi British writer, since she focuses on Bangladeshi food and disseminate recipes in the different UK based newspapers like The Telegraph, the Metro and the Independent as well as other online portals. Her idea of home and her identity is constructed on the realm of the imaginary idea of home, which is intricately related to food and food memories of her family. Dina Begum's notion of Bangladesh is therefore

[210] Online interview with author, May 17, 2019, Budapest.
[211] Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 51.

"conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" [212] where she feels connected through Bangladeshi cuisine to her imagined homeland. The numerous stories related to food shared by her family members, especially shared by the women in her family, establish the kinship with Bangladeshi identity, which she is helping to spread through her profession as a food writer. And, thus Bangladeshi recipes and ingredients create the imaginary camaraderie in Begum and situates her 'in-betweenness' in the host community.

4.3. Role of Migrant Women and Interior Décor: Tool for Inciting Authentic Identities

"[I]immigrants cope with the dislocation and disorientation they experience in new and unknown spaces by recreating a sense of place around food production, preparation and consumption, both at the personal and at the interpersonal levels."[213] My case study of Korai Kitchen reflects such a proposition of recreating a sense of home in their restaurant by bringing in arrangements that are related to Bangladeshi identity and Bangladeshi culture. In this section of the chapter, I demonstrate how such arrangements eventually work towards the process of integration in their host community, Jersey City. One of the notable aspects of Korai Kitchen is their use of Bangla words through transliteration on their menu. For example, their take out menu is labeled as *Fot-a-Fot*, which has the same meaning of the phrase "chop chop" that refers to the hurried nature of the take out service in a restaurant. On the other hand, Korai Kitchen's in house menu is titled *Aram Ayeshe*, which means "in a relaxed and comfortable mood" and refers to the notion of having meals in a relaxed environment. When asked about the transliterated words for their menu, Farhana Rahman pointed out that clientele who do not have Bengali orientation, always ask about these two words on their walls as they are also painted on the walls of the

[212] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.
[213] Parasecoli, "Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities," 416.

restaurant. Clients' curiosity paved the way for Farhana Rahman to explain the words and the meanings, which consequently has created a platform to inform the public about Bangladesh. Interactions like these work on two levels. Firstly, it works on the personal level where transliteration of Bangla words gives the host of the restaurant a sense of their mother tongue. Since Farhana Rahman is a second-generation migrant, her mother tongue is Bangla, and her mother Nur-E-Gulshan Rahman, who is the chef and owner of Korai Kitchen, is a first-generation migrant. Thus the transliterations of the Bangla words emanates a sense of her homeland.

Figure 5: Transliteration on Korai Kitchen's Menu[214]

Secondly, while explaining the meanings and words to the clients who are unfamiliar with Bangladesh and Bangla language, along with Bangladeshi food, they get to know about the country on an interpersonal level. With these transliterations, the interior of Korai Kitchen also provides a

[214] "MENU," Koraikitchen, accessed October 11, 2019, https://www.koraikitchen.com/menu.

platform for its clientele to know about the homeland of Farhana Rahman and her mother. Farhana Rahman speaks about how she chose the interior of Korai Kitchen:

> While I designed the interior, I wanted to make sure that not only the cooking but the interior of our restaurant also gives out Bangladeshi vibe to our clientele. We have used *haatpakha* (traditional and fan, made with dried plum leaves), rickshaw from Aarong, [215] *polo*, [216] *ektara*, [217] *kolshis*, [218], and all the stuff. I wanted to make our interior more inviting. On our wall, we have also put a series of Bangladeshi maps that are painted by a Bangladeshi artist. And, on our window, along with "welcome," *shwagotom*[219] is written in Bangla. We want to let people know in every possible way that it's a Bangladeshi restaurant. There is also a painting of Dhaka skyline in our restaurant. I wanted to create a place that is inviting and cozy.

As Rahman mentions, the aim of their interior is to evoke a sense of Bangladesh and initiate a narrative about her homeland. Each of the wall decoration has gone through phases of deliberation, making sure to represent Bangladesh in the host community. Such efforts also refer to the aspiration of distinguishing themselves from other ethnic restaurants around them. Overall, the usage of transliterations of Bangla words, interiors equipped with decorations that are related to rural Bangladeshi settings induce Bangladeshi landscape for the "white customers," [220] and thus the "décor exists for a white gaze that are unfamiliar with Bangladesh."[221]

Along with their décor, the arrangement of Korai Kitchen encapsulates what MacCannell terms as "staged authenticity," [222] because in the restaurant the customers do not enter the restaurant and order foods from the menu like other restaurants, rather customers they are taken to

[215] Aarong is a Bangladeshi departmental store, famous for its handicrafts and traditional Bangladeshi attires.
[216] *Polo* is a tool used for fishing in rural areas of Bangladesh, and some other parts of South Asia as well. It is a conical shaped frame made with cane, and is used to catch fish when there is less water in the ponds and wetlands during winter.
[217] *Ektara* is a one-stringed musical instrument, very popular in rural Bangladesh.
[218] *Kolshi* is a water pitcher, usually earthen, and is used to collect water from rivers by the rural women. Because of its extensive mention in Bangla literature, folklore, and songs, *kolshi* has gained a symbolic stature of Bangladeshi villages.
[219] *Shwagotom* is the Bangla word for welcome.
[220] Cobb, *Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World*, 46.
[221] Ibid.
[222] MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity." Also quoted in Michael S. Martin's article of "Authenticity, Tourism and Cajun Cuisine", where he quotes MacCannell on tourists' thirst for authentic experiences all over the world.

the buffet table and explained about the dishes that are served and also get a brief about the chef and owner of the restaurant by Farhana Rahman.[223] Therefore, even before the clients take a bite of the food served in the restaurant, they get to know about the landscape and culture which is related to the foods. Their restaurant thus "represent micro spaces allowing for intercultural contact, de-territorialized places where diners can see and touch, even consume the culture of the other on home ground." [224] Such arrangements signify a sense of detour of the foreign land among the clientele that is being displayed and staged by the diaspora. The same phenomena of "staged authenticity" is created by the team of Jhal NYC as well, even though they do not have a restaurant and only do pop-ups and events. The way they introduce their Bangladeshi street food, the Western customers get attracted to the unexplored aromas and flavors from a land which is distinct from their own.

It is evident that both of these two case studies are multigenerational and are using the ethnicity of the first-generation migrant women to reinforce the authenticity of their food preparations, cooking, and representations. For example, Jhal NYC is bringing in first-generation stay at home mothers and other first-generation women's cooking expertise to showcase Bangladeshi street food and catering services. While interviewing with Jhal NYC's co-founder Mahfuzul Islam, his emphasis was on two aspects of their social entrepreneurship, first: the empowerment of the first generation women of Bangladeshi diaspora and second: the promotion of Bangladeshi foods. In fact, one of the deserts on the catering menu is listed on their website as, "Ma's Special."[225] Menus that have such names instantly invites the customer to a realm of taste which promises an intimate culinary experience of that particular ethnicity and, therefore,

[223] Online interview with author, May 22, 2019, Budapest.
[224] Turgeon and Pastinelli, ""Eat the World"," 251.
[225] "Food," *JhalNYC* (blog), accessed September 25, 2019, http://jhalnyc.com/food/.

consequently becomes a part of "staged authenticity" in the culinary experience. Michael S. Martin pointed out that such authenticity is stemmed from the "ethnicity of the preparer." [226] For Jhal NYC, since their mothers are involved in the cooking, the foods that are represented in their events, also reflect the homeland of their mothers and symbolize the authentic culinary experience of Bangladesh. This aspect is what Goffman suggested as "backstage"[227] of their culinary performance of staged authenticity and is also vibrantly present in the case study of Korai Kitchen where Farhana Rahman's mother Nur-E Gulshan Rahman singlehandedly cooks each and every dish that is served in their restaurant. Though in the case of Jhal NYC, the division Goffman made between the front stage and the backstage is often blurred because of the type of arrangements they offer to their clientele. Since they do pop-ups and events, and their focus remains the Bangladeshi street food in the events, the preparers make the foods mostly in front of the customers where simultaneously the customers become the audience of their performances and consumers of the foods.

4.4. Migrant Foodways Opens up Possibilities for Food Adventures

During the analysis and research of the dissimilar approaches of my case studies, I notice their different opinion on a major item of Bangladeshi cuisine, which is fish. The restaurant owners of my case studies have quite different approaches to including fish in their menu, which gives me the opportunity to dig deep into the diasporic culinary landscape and their customers. When I asked Sheikh Swapan from Bangla Bufe (based in Budapest) why he does not have fish on his menu, in his opinion Europeans wouldn't be able to eat fish with bones and he does not want to include tuna or salmon on his menu either, because these fish do not taste anything like Bangladeshi fish like

[226] Cobb, *Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World,* 17.
[227] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1 edition (New York, NY: Anchor, 1959), 69.

rohu, hilsa etc.[228]Such an attitude reveals his unwillingness to negotiate with the available ingredients and resources in the host country and as a result, completely abstains from serving fish in his restaurant. On the other hand, the scenario with serving fish has a completely different scenario in the case of Korai Kitchen, where rui (rohu fish) *macher jhol*[229] is the most sought-after dish of their restaurant, and their clientele is mostly white. Farhana Rahaman explained it in this way:

> We have rui fish in the buffet every day, no matter what we have in combination, we always have rui *macher jhol.* It's probably the most popular dish, and so far, people have taken it beautifully. And it's the most shocking thing that white people in our restaurant are eating rui mach. People also are willing to try ilish (Hilsa fish), which is apparently the most bony fish! We also have to keep in mind that these are the people who are accustomed to eat only salmon, tuna or tilapia, so it's going to be difficult for them but fortunately the fish of our restaurant has been the most popular dish. Usually, half of our guests are non-Bengali, and they try the fish every day. They always want to try new things.[230]

In direct opposition to what Sheikh Swapan has expressed about introducing fish to his customers. Where he is having a conservative approach towards including fish in his restaurant menu, Farhana Rahman is bringing in different fish into her diasporic culinary journey. The owner of Bangla Bufe was not ready to negotiate the taste of fish with that of his host community. He also feared that his clients would be unable to eat fish since they are not accustomed to eat bony fish. Underneath his unwillingness, there is a combination of reasons which is partly because of the small number of diaspora in his host country Hungary, and partly because of the unavailability of the variety of fish imported to Hungary. But Farhana Rahman has turned the entire situation to her restaurant Korai Kitchen's favor. She is observing the whole experience in the parameter of an adventure, as Lisa Heldke explains:

> Food adventurers are people for whom eating is an expedition into the unknown, a pursuit of the strange. … [f]ood adventurers are often people who believe that [they] have no culture of our own. [They] see their culture or cultures reflected around [them] so frequently and so widely that they

[228] Interview with author, May 01,2019, Budapest
[229] *Macher jhol* is fish stew where the stew is not thick like curry but less liquefied like soup.
[230] Online interview with author, May 22, 2019, Budapest.

> come to think of them as no culture at all, as a kind of default or background against which other cultures can be displayed… [They] often find the foods that they ate growing up or that they eat on a daily basis to be boring: they often long to spice up their diets (literally) with the flavors of exotic cuisines. [231]

The clientele of Korai Kitchen reflects the criteria of Heldke's food adventurers who are looking to explore new culinary experience in different ethnic restaurants and look for ways to "spice up' their lives. Eating boney fish and trying to eat with hands without any utensils, reflects Heldke's quote that indicates clients' urge to go beyond the realm of known cuisines in order to find something exciting and 'exotic. Such tendencies resonate the ubiquitous American approach to ethnic foods: "[f]oreigners have always fed Americans, and Americans have eaten it up … And that transaction in taste is central to the kinds of democratic openings we have in American culture that are tough to match almost anywhere else in the world, with their preference for roots."[232] Through the analysis, it is apparent that American culture and their inclination towards tasting and trying ethnic cuisines is one of the deciding factors of the success of Korai Kitchen's integration to the host community. Owing to their host community's adventurous nature for tasting ethnic foods, exploring new customs, the Rahman mother-daughter team is able to bring in bony fish to their buffet menu and it has gained popularity as well. Korai Kitchen's popularity with bony fish and the soaring admiration of Jhal NYC's street food proves that,

> [e]thnic restaurants hold an allure to clients. They appeal to natives of the homeland represented by offering familiarity and authenticity in foods served. For those who do not share the ethnicity of a dining establishment, the experience allows them to explore the novelty of a different and maybe even unfamiliar culinary adventure.[233]

The interior, the briefing of Farhana Rahman about the dishes, the narratives of street food offered by the people of Jhal NYC while they sell their food at any events and pop-ups, all these contribute

[231] Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (Routledge, 2015), xxii.
[232] Ray, *The Ethnic Restaurateur*, 181.
[233] Gina M Almerico, "Food and Identity: Food Studies, Cultural, and Personal Identity" 8 (2014): 4.

to a structure of identity which is hybrid and reflects the "in-betweenness" of the migrants who are involved with these ventures, as well as inviting customers to explore the unknown. The success of their diasporic projects depends on how dynamically they can use food to represent their migrant identity and reconstruct their connection to the host country and their homeland. In the next section, I explore the ways media has been used to promote Bangladeshi cuisine by my respondents, in what way has the use of social media has been successful to launching their culinary projects in the diasporic community, and how have these restaurant owners created a clientele for Bangladeshi cuisine

4.5. Representing Hybridity through Food Projects on Social Media

In his seminal essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall talks about how identities are fluid within a diaspora: "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference." [234] According to Hall, the diaspora functions through a series of heterogeneity and diversity and by hybridity. Food and cuisine, as mentioned throughout this chapter, give scopes to individuals to exhibit their hybridity and diversity, specifically in the diaspora. In the example of Jhal NYC, founders Mahfuzul Islam and Alvi Zaman weave their Bangladeshi identity and American identity together through one of the posts on their official Facebook page. It is a photoshopped photo of a basketball court where they super-impose figures of Patrick Ewing (the former celebrity basketball player for the New York Knickerbockers[235]) and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (father of the nation of Bangladesh) together. The juxtaposition of these two figures reflects the ingenuity of the founders, where they indicate their hybrid identity and reproduce narratives of an amalgamation of the history of

[234] Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 235.
[235] Professional basketball team, based in New York City.

Bangladesh, and the popular sports of the US. Therefore, like their parents, they are also linked to their homeland, but the tie with their homeland is wrapped up with the culture of their host country

Figure 6: Photoshop of Patrick Ewing and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman[236]

The juncture between these two ideas reflects their fascination towards the basketball legend, Patrick Ewing. It also indicates their cultural integration into the host country. As second-generation migrants, they are continually reinforcing and negotiating their identities and opening up a space for new narratives of their diasporic distinctiveness. Since, Jhal NYC's entire project is based upon the promotion of Bangladeshi street food, such fusion of noteworthy Bangladeshi and American public figures from two absolutely different contexts indicates also to their political consciousness, since the figure of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has an absolute political alignment in the history of Bangladesh as well as the politics of Bangladesh. By exhibiting his figure, Jhal NYC is also positioning themselves at the realm of political and historical backdrop of their Bangladeshi

[236] "Jhal NYC (@jhalnyc) • Instagram Photos and Videos," accessed October 11, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/BATAwI3load/.

origins. At the same time, the instance of this post reveals the influence of the American culture on the construction of their hybrid identity. It also refers to the claim that "[m]igrant's use their intellectual, social, and political resources to construct identities that transcend physical and social boundaries," [237] thus Jhal NYC's post indicates a complex structure of their intellectual and socio-political background that reflects their hybridity and in-betweeness along with their transnational approach to marketing their cuisine.

As Tulasi Srinivas has argued, exoticizing the other is not entirely based upon the creation of self and other on the basis of theoretical nationalism, rather it is the seduction and temptation offered by the media for how the West constructs 'exotic others'.[238] Srinivas points out how mainstream media, and TV channels like National Geographic, Travel Channel, and tourism brochures portray different regions of the world as 'exotic' and adventurous to allure people into the exploration of that exotic lands and culture. Such portrayal invites people to try new things and get new experiences. Srinivas' suggestion is perfectly relatable in the cases of social media and their extensive use by the ethnic restaurants, pop-ups and promotions of ethnic cuisines in a diasporic settings as well. The role of social media in this case can be portrayed as what Pierre Bourdieu termed as the "circular circulation of information." [239] The promotional activities for ethnic cuisines and ethnic restaurants' are rooted in terms like 'traditional' and 'authentic', which works like "an antidote for the threatened identities in the Western countries."[240] In this context, the migrants who are involved in the culinary industry make use of such terms to reconstruct their

[237] Agnew, *Diaspora, Memory and Identity*, 5.
[238] Tulasi Srinivas, "Everyday Exotic: Transnational Space, Identity and Contemporary Foodways in Bangalore City," *Food, Culture & Society* 10, no. 1 (March 2007): 95, https://doi.org/10.2752/155280107780154141.
[239] Parasecoli, *Bite Me*, 138. Here Parasecoli quoted Bourdieu to elaborate on media's role of producing information exponentially.
[240] Parasecoli, 132.

identities through food. Interestingly, except for two respondents, each of my respondents have mentioned about the influence of social media in their promotional activities and approves of the dynamics of the social media in their construction and reconstruction of identities in the foodways around diasporic communities. According to the responses I got from four of my respondents, the media influence of the culinary industry is the major driving force on the way of their project progresses. It was also fascinating to notice that among four of their projects, three of them are entirely run by women and one (Jhal NYC) has first-generation migrant women as the locus of their project.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Dina Begum has her own online cookery class, launched on a website called Yodomo.[241]The classes are designed to demystify Bangladeshi recipes. She also has a free class on spice blends and mixes where she gives out the recipes for a spice mix called *panch phoron,*[242] which is a blend of five spices (black mustard seeds, nigella, cumin, fennel seeds, and fenugreek seeds). Her course in Yodomo is an easy introduction to people who are interested in Bangladeshi cooking and who are learning Bangladeshi cooking. The following is her explanation of the impact of social media on the culinary industry:

> I think social media has a huge influence. Nowadays, you don't have to appear on national tv or a channel. You can have Instagram and Twitter. Twitter is useful for sharing articles, and Instagram is useful for visual text. So both are equally important in their aspects. And whenever I do any event, any pop-ups or any food talk, I give the link on my social media platform. I find them very powerful platform. That's very important in highlighting cuisine and the work. You don't have to be on the TV nowadays to showcase your cooking. You only need to have your phone to record the recipe and can reach out to as many people you want. It has become very easy to manage everything. You can make Instagram stories, and people can follow it. For me, it's kind of invaluable to promote Bangladeshi food and to reach out to people.[243]

[241] "Dina Begum," Yodomo, accessed September 27, 2019, https://yodomo.co/pages/dina-begum.
[242] *Panch phoron* means a combination of five spices.
[243] Online interview with author, May 17, 2019, Budapest.

Dina Begum's detailed account of how media is impacting the culinary industry in diasporic settings is crucial to understanding the promotional activities of the migrants who are involved in advertising Bangladeshi cuisine. Her quotation reveals how extensively social media is being used to promote the recipes and food events. It also refers to the easy access of technologies like smartphones and their wide range of usages to disseminate recipes and food promotions. Dina Begum also appears in one micro-documentary made by a storytelling company based in New York called *Great Big Story*, during the Ramadan month of 2019 where she speaks about one particular Bangladeshi delicacy prepared for the celebration.[244] The documentary is part of their series "Around the World," which aims to exhibit cultural diversity. Dina Begum's appearance in the show tells narratives of migrant culture, along with food and recreate the 'in-between" identity in host countries and consequently unfolding "a new criteria of value." [245]

Like Dina Begum, Saira Hamilton, Jhal NYC, and Korai Kitchen are using social media platforms to promote their work, and at the same time acknowledging its influence in their promotional activities. For example, while speaking about the impact of social media in their restaurant's promotion, Farhana Rahman commented that, "If it wasn't for digital media, I probably don't know what we would do!" [246] She said they only had a few flyers for the launching of their restaurant, Korai Kitchen and used their Instagram account and Facebook page for the promotion of the restaurant. Due to the novelty of the cuisine, their exuberant presence on social media and the enthusiastic participation of the clientele, Korai Kitchen eventually has got the center stage in the culinary industry of New Jersey within a few months of their launching. The

[244] "Instagram @dinasfoodstory User, 2055700418547049023 Media Details Comments and Likes | Instagram Web Viewer," accessed September 27, 2019, http://www.instapuma.com/media/2055700418547049023_557089238.
[245] Mateusz Halawa and Fabio Parasecoli, "Eating and Drinking in Global Brooklyn," *Food, Culture & Society* 22, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 398, https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2019.1620587.
[246] Online interview with author, May 22, 2019, Budapest.

restaurant was ranked number one restaurant of New Jersey by Yelp in 2018.[247] In the same year, Yelp ranked Korai Kitchen as number 22nd in the entire US.[248] (Yelp is a website that publishes crowdsource reviews for local businesses. It is based in California, US[249]) Farhana Rahman says that they take each of their customer's reviews seriously, and "extremely personally."[250] While I was researching and analyzing Korai Kitchen's social media profiles, I realized the significance of Rahman's statement about taking the customers' reviews seriously. On their social profiles, each of their customers' comments has been replied to by the administrator of the pages, Farhana Rahman. The comments and the responses thus create a space for social interactions between the clients and the restaurant, and opening up spaces for future interactions and visits to the restaurant.[251]Another respondent, Saira Hamilton also gives immense importance to social media in order to disseminate information about Bangladeshi culinary projects but she also realizes that consistency plays the key role for the presence on social media since "social media is designed to represent new experiences every day, uploading and posting photos and stories of recipes and foods are crucial to attract the audience."[252]As Parasecoli argues further, this trend is "fueled by the media and the growing presence of various ethnic groups in all large Western cities, curiosity for all things foreign," [253] which increase interest in ethnic cuisines and creates an audience for this kind of food.

Since I am referring to the dynamic presence of my respondents on social media in this part, I think it is also noteworthy to mention that each website, since all four of them have their

[247] "Koraikitchen."
[248] "Post," Koraikitchen, accessed September 27, 2019, https://www.koraikitchen.com/post/design-a-stunning-blog.
[249] "About Us," Yelp, accessed March 18, 2019, https://www.yelp.com/about.
[250] Online interview with author, May 22, 2019, Budapest.
[251] Halawa and Parasecoli, "Eating and Drinking in Global Brooklyn," 393.
[252] Online interview with author, May 27, 2019, Budapest.
[253] Parasecoli, *Bite Me*, 128.

own websites that promote their work on Bangladeshi cuisine. The websites for Jhal NYC and Korai Kitchen are designed in a way that evoke a sense of Bangladeshi cuisine all along. The photographs of the foods and their presentation have an educating mission for the "white gaze" of the viewers because the representations are vivid and designed to bring life to the foods adding snippets to them. Such depictions indicate their idea to create a space that resonates with their imaginary homeland. Korai Kitchen's homepage has a montage of their Instagram photos, featuring Rahman mother-daughter duo, Nur-E Gulshan Rahman holding the babies of their customers, events attended by the mother-daughter duo etc. Collages, as such, create an ambiance of homey and personal space where the audience gets a sense of 'home' and 'family,' the concepts that are appealing to any diasporic contexts and also because "an idealized home environment is the concept behind many restaurants."[254]On the other hand, Jhal NYC's website only has photographs of the street foods and catering foods they offer, with the tagline: "The taste of the Bengali food we were raised on, the aesthetic and sound of the streets of New York."[255] Since "spaces and meals are produced in response to the global circulation of images, values, and ideas, and they are, in turn, photographed, discusses, and disseminated on Instagram,"[256] the Facebook page reflects the "in-betweenness" migrant identities in the diaspora and the construction of their hybridity through food and other sensory memories. While the websites of Jhal NYC and Korai Kitchen emphasize on the narratives of identities and memories through food, the websites of Dina Begum and Saira Hamilton focus on their cookbooks and photographs of different dishes.

[254] Nicklas Neuman and Christina Fjellström, "Gendered and Gendering Practices of Food and Cooking: An Inquiry into Authorisation, Legitimisation and Androcentric Dividends in Three Social Fields," *NORMA* 9, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 276, https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2014.967985.
[255] user, "Home," *JhalNYC* (blog), accessed October 3, 2019, http://jhalnyc.com/.
[256] Halawa and Parasecoli, "Eating and Drinking in Global Brooklyn," 393.

4.6. Migrant Women's Presence on Social Media to Endorse Bangladeshi Food

My findings from this research shows, along with all these scopes for identities and social interactions, social media also offers a significant platform for women who are involved in the culinary industry of diaspora. Some of my respondents have also mentioned the spaces they are getting on social media is a way to reach out to people and let them know about Bangladeshi cuisine, which would otherwise not be possible without social media. Dina Begum specifically mentions such possibilities that are currently happening in the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK. During the interview, Begum mentions that in the UK, a good number of Bangladeshi migrant women are promoting Bangladeshi cuisines and taking orders for their catering services. When I asked her the reasons why these restaurateurs in the UK are not following the trend of promoting Bangladeshi in their restaurant and still selling Indian foods. She responded by saying: "the biggest hurdle for women is that they don't have enough access to run the family businesses. As a result, the restaurants are run chiefly by the sons and nephews, who are not willing to bring change in the business and introduce tailored menus that reflect Bangladeshi foods."[257] Dina Begum's concern and insight reflects upon a number of facts that are ingrained in the culinary industry for a long time. First, it indicates to the prevailing male dominance in the culinary industry and a "deliberate distancing by male chefs of their profession from the everyday domestic cooking of women."[258] Second, it implies the fact of passing on the family business to sons and not to daughters, which again reveals the patriarchal mindset. Third, her quotation also refers to the indifferent attitude of the Bangladeshi restaurateurs' towards the changing need of the present clientele. My respondent,

[257] Online interview with author, May 17, 2019, Budapest.
[258] Swinbank, "The Sexual Politics of Cooking," 469.

Saira Hamilton, who is also based in the UK, echoes Dina Begum's concern and label restaurant business as "a male-dominated industry and difficult for women to survive in that industry. [259]

The analysis of all of my case studies and the research which I have done for this dissertation reveals that amidst such male dominance, women have been able to create a dent in that dominance through the extensive use of social media where they are able to showcase their cooking, share recipes and get involved in constructing narratives regarding food and their identities. Exhibiting their food on social media does not need a material space like a restaurant, as it is mentioned in the earlier section of this chapter, anyone who has an access to a smartphone can contribute to the ever-evolving culinary industry because,

> [o]ne of the defining characteristics of social media in the twenty-first century is 'prosumption' or the conflation of consumption and production, which describes the fact that everyone with access to the internet can potentially contribute to the conversation, and in that way be a producer as well as a consumer of information. [260]

Dina Begum, Saira Hamilton, and Farhana Rahman from my case studies provide examples of this idea of 'prosumption' in that they have entered the culinary industry and have created their own space to establish their footing in the industry. Jhal NYC is also creating the same space in the culinary industry through its pop-ups and food festival appearances. Though Jhal NYC is founded by two young male second-generation migrants, they aim to empower stay-at-home migrant mothers and other migrant women who are not financially independent in the host country. Therefore, in a way, Jhal NYC's usage of social media is also creating a platform for women to enter into the culinary industry even for a brief period intermittently. What I found compelling as I keep analyzing my case studies, is that all of the above-mentioned respondents are using

[259] Online interview with author, May 27, 2019, Budapest.
[260] Rousseau, *Food and Social Media*, 10.

"commodification of [their] ethnicity" [261] on the social media and as a result, shaping and reshaping their own hybrid identities through Bangladeshi foods and represent those narratives on social media to proclaim the spaces in diasporic culinary context.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the continual construction of hybrid identities among the first-generation and second-generation migrants in my case studies. The way they explore their identities, reveals the constant tension between the two generations, even though they are involved in the same entrepreneurial projects that they benefit from. Since my case studies are diverse in terms of their locations, the clientele of the host countries is also different from each other. Because of the varied range of my case studies' function, the expression of their Bangladeshi migrants' food voices are also different from each other.

The chapter demonstrates how my respondents reconstruct their 'hybrid identity' and reflect their 'in-between' position through their culinary endeavors. This chapter also reflects how my case studies are immensely using social media platforms to accentuate their fluid identity. Their active presence on social media results into a social interaction among other migrants from different regions of the world and simultaneously is createing a network of Bangladeshi migrants who are enthusiastically working towards the visibility of Bangladeshi food in a diasporic setting.

[261] Halawa and Parasecoli, "Eating and Drinking in Global Brooklyn," 402.

Conclusion

> South Asian food is like a Venn diagram, where regional circles are overlapping each other; but there are parts of circles which are not overlapped, and reflect individual identity. Bangladeshi cuisine is one of the circles of that Venn diagram.[262]

During her interview this is how Farhana Rahman described her opinion on Bangladeshi cuisine in the trajectory of South Asian food. Her quotation echoes the amorphous nature of the Bangladeshi cuisine which is one of the findings of my dissertation. As mentioned earlier, the aim of this research is by no means claiming ownership of any cuisine. On the contrary, the intention is to highlight the diversity of Bengal cuisine, where Bangladeshi variances and culinary practices have a distinct positioning. The journey of looking for threads that focuses on the existence of the Bangladeshi variances has been challenging due to the lack of research in this particular culinary area. Therefore, throughout the analysis of my case studies the emphasis was on contributing to the existing pool of study of the culinary practices.

In this dissertation, I investigate how my respondents are working for the visibility of Bangladeshi food in their diaspora. While doing so, I situate their representations in the literature of migrant identities and diaspora which eventually lead me to unpack the intricate layers of their 'hybrid identities' and 'in-between' location in the diasporic context. The analysis reflects a constant fluidity in the migrants' identities. My respondents brought such fluidity in their culinary business to create a space for the expression of Bangladeshi identity.

The core of my dissertation has been to examine the layers of Bangladeshi migrant identities that are orchestrated through their culinary expressions in diaspora. Because of the varied background of my case studies, there was an eclectic range in their culinary projects: restaurants, cookbooks, food columns, pop-ups, supper clubs, food talks, and appearance on food festivals.

[262] Online interview with author, May 22, 2019, Budapest.

This research reveals how their culinary projects are coming to terms with a new reality, an expression of their hybrid identity, and at the same time, celebrating the connection with their homelands. Through the excerpts from my respondents' cookbooks and their interviews, I have traced the sense of their connection to homeland, and the expression of their migrant identities, that are represented through their culinary projects.

My dissertation demonstrates a growing pattern of disseminating Bangladeshi culinary practices on the social media platform where the netizens are predominantly women. The analysis illustrates, a rising pool of migrant women are avidly working on the promotion of Bangladeshi cuisine on social media. They are engaged in social interactions with each other on a regular basis despite their different geographical locations. Such camaraderie points to the overreaching influence of sharing recipes, foods, and representing the same migrant identities through social media. Network like this reflects the essence of vintage tradition of food and recipe sharing in diasporic community which used to occur in minuscule setting of a drawing room or kitchen where few migrant women would gather and have a common platform for their domesticated cooking and recipes. The only difference now is that parameter of that network has outgrown into a worldwide network of migrant women who are willingly taking part in the construction and reconstruction of their migrant identity process through food and recipes.

I believe this virtual network of migrant women, engaged in exchanging culinary practices needs more attention from the researchers and can pave the way for further research. From my analysis, a question arises that are these women going to create an alternative culinary platform which will distinguish them from the male dominant culinary industry? I aspire to continue my research with this query in my future projects. Also, these case studies might appear individual but if they are looked closely, one will realize that all these new endeavors are working in a diasporic

web which aims towards the promotion of Bangladeshi cuisine in the diaspora. Whether these endeavors will lead to an eruption of Bangladeshi migrant identities through food after decades of being invisible under the dominance of their fellow South Asian identities is another topic and calls for future research.

Bibliography

"About Chitrita Banerji —." Accessed September 5, 2019. http://www.chitritabanerji.com/about-chitrita-banerji.

"About Us." Yelp. Accessed March 18, 2019. https://www.yelp.com/about.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Writing Against Culture." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited by Richard G. Fox, 137–62. School of American Research Press, 1996.

Adams, Caroline. *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers: Life Stories of Pioneer Sylhetti Settlers in Britain*. London: THAP Books, 1987.

Agnew, Vijay, ed. *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Ali, Monica. *Brick Lane*. New York: Scribner, 2004.

Almerico, Gina M. "Food and Identity: Food Studies, Cultural, and Personal Identity" 8 (2014): 7.

Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London; New York: Verso, 2006.

Appadurai, Arjun. "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (January 1988): 3–24. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015024.

Baird, Rosemary. "Constructing Lives: A New Approach to Understanding Migrants' Oral History Narratives." *Oral History* 40, no. 1, (2012): 57–66.

Bambara, Toni Cade. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua. 2nd edition. New York, NY: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1983.

Banerrji, Chitrita. *Life and Food in Bengal*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991.

Bayor, Ronald H., ed. *Multicultural America: An Encyclopedia of the Newest Americans*. Santa Barbara, Calif: Greenwood, 2011.

Begum, Dina. *Brick Lane Cookbook*. UK: Kitchen Press, 2018.

Behar, Ruth. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*. 1St Edition edition. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.

———. *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. 10 edition. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003.

"Bengali Dal Bori Recipe by Priyadarshini Nandy." NDTV Food. Accessed October 11, 2019. https://food.ndtv.com/recipe-bengali-dal-bori-902821.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 2 edition. London; New York: Routledge, 2004.

Black, Shameem. "Recipes for Cosmopolitanism: Cooking across Borders in the South Asian Diaspora." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 31, no. 1 (2010): 1. https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.31.1.1.

"Boondi Recipe - Crisp and Lightly Salted Indian Snack of Gram Flour." Accessed August 20, 2019. http://foodviva.com/snacks-recipes/boondi-recipe/.

Buettner, Elizabeth. "Chicken Tikka Masala, Flock Wallpaper, and 'Real' Home Cooking: Assessing Britain's 'Indian' Restaurant Traditions." *Food and History* 7, no. 2 (January 2009): 203–29. https://doi.org/10.1484/J.FOOD.1.100656.

———. "'Going for an Indian': South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain." *The Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 4 (December 2008): 865–901. https://doi.org/10.1086/591113.

Cobb, Russell, ed. *Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Collingham, E. M. *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Cook, Robin. "Robin Cook's Chicken Tikka Masala Speech." *The Guardian*, April 19, 2001, sec. World news. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/apr/19/race.britishidentity.

"Dina Begum." Yodomo. Accessed October 2, 2019. https://yodomo.co/pages/dina-begum.

"Does Bangladesh Still Have Six Seasons?" Dhaka Tribune, December 8, 2017. https://www.dhakatribune.com/climate-change/2017/12/08/bangladesh-six-seasons.

Douglas, Mary. "Deciphering a Meal." *Daedalus* 101, no. 1, (1972): 61–81.

"Edible Ecriture | Times Higher Education (THE)." Accessed October 4, 2019. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/edible-ecriture/104281.article.

Epp, Marlene. "'The Dumpling in My Soup Was Lonely Just like Me': Food in the Memories of Mennonite Women Refugees." *Women's History Review* 25, no. 3 (May 3, 2016): 365–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1071575.

Fielding, Stephen A. "Currying Flavor: Authenticity, Cultural Capital, and the Rise of Indian Food in the United Kingdom." In *The Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World*, edited by Russell Cobb, 35–52. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137353832_4.

Flitsch, Mareile. "Hesitant Hands on Changing Tables: Negotiating Dining Patterns in Diaspora Food Culture Transfer," 2011. https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-56036.

"Food." *JhalNYC* (blog). Accessed September 28, 2019. http://jhalnyc.com/food/.

Gabaccia, Donna R. *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. 1 edition. New York, NY: Anchor, 1959.

Halawa, Mateusz, and Fabio Parasecoli. "Eating and Drinking in Global Brooklyn." *Food, Culture & Society* 22, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 387–406. https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2019.1620587.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 1996, 16.

Hamilton, Saira. *My Bangladesh Kitchen*. 1st ed. UK: Lorenz Books, 2018.

Hauck-Lawson, Annie, and Jonathan Deutsch, eds. *Gastropolis: Food and New York City*. Arts and Traditions of the Table. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Heldke, Lisa. *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer*. Routledge, 2015.

"Here's What You Need to Know about the Six Seasons of Bangladesh and Its Food." *Metro* (blog), September 16, 2017. https://metro.co.uk/2017/09/16/heres-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-six-seasons-of-bangladesh-and-its-food-6913967/.

"Immigrants in New Jersey | American Immigration Council." Accessed October 7, 2019. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-new-jersey.

"Instagram @dinasfoodstory User, 2055700418547049023 Media Details Comments and Likes | Instagram Web Viewer." Accessed October 2, 2019. http://www.instapuma.com/media/2055700418547049023_557089238.

Islam, Moinul, Koji Kotani, and Shunsuke Managi. "Climate Perception and Flood Mitigation Cooperation: A Bangladesh Case Study." *Economic Analysis and Policy* 49 (March 1, 2016): 117–33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eap.2016.01.001.

Jaffrey, Madhur. *At Home with Madhur Jaffrey_ Simple, Delectable Dishes from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka*. 1st Edition. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.
"Jhal NYC (@jhalnyc) • Instagram Photos and Videos." Accessed October 11, 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/BsUFUvBl9s2/.
"Jhal NYC (@jhalnyc) • Instagram Photos and Videos." Accessed October 11, 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/Bt7B5ekF9Gy/.
"Jhal NYC (@jhalnyc) • Instagram Photos and Videos." Accessed October 11, 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/BATAwI3load/.
Jones-Gailani, Nadia. "*Qahwa* and *Kleiche*: Drinking Coffee in Oral History Interviews with Iraqi Women in Diaspora." *Global Food History* 3, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 84–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/20549547.2017.1278347.
"Koraikitchen." Koraikitchen. Accessed September 12, 2019. https://www.koraikitchen.com.
Leonardi, Susan J. "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster a La Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie." *PMLA* 104, no. 3 (May 1989): 340. https://doi.org/10.2307/462443.
MacCannell, Dean. "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings." *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (November 1973): 589–603. https://doi.org/10.1086/225585.
"MENU." Koraikitchen. Accessed October 11, 2019. https://www.koraikitchen.com/menu.
Migration Policy Institute. "The Bangladeshi Diaspora in the United States." *Prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD)*, July 2014, 8.
Mintz, Sidney. "Food and Diaspora." *Food, Culture & Society* 11, no. 4 (December 2008): 509–23. https://doi.org/10.2752/175174408X389157.
Narayan, Uma. *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*. Thinking Gender. New York: Routledge, 1997.
———. "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity and Indian Food." *Social Identities* 1, no. 1 (February 1995): 63–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.1995.9959426.
Neuman, Nicklas, and Christina Fjellström. "Gendered and Gendering Practices of Food and Cooking: An Inquiry into Authorisation, Legitimisation and Androcentric Dividends in Three Social Fields." *NORMA* 9, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 269–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2014.967985.
Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993.
O'Shea, David W., and John G. Richardson. "Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education." *Contemporary Sociology* 16, no. 4 (July 1987): 571. https://doi.org/10.2307/2069964.
Palat, Ravi Arvind. "Empire, Food and the Diaspora: Indian Restaurants in Britain." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 171–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2015.1019603.
Panayi, Panikos. *Spicing Up Britain: The Multicultural History of British Food*. Reaktion Books, 2010.
Parasecoli, Fabio. *Bite Me: Food in Popular Culture*. Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2008.
———. "Food, Identity, and Cultural Reproduction in Immigrant Communities," June 2014, 27.
Parmar, Maya. *Reading Cultural Representations of the Double Diaspora: Britain, East Africa, Gujarat*. S.l.: Springer Nature, 2019.
Parveen, Razia. "Food to Remember: Culinary Practice and Diasporic Identity." *Oral History* 44, no. 1 (2016): 47–56.

———. *Recipes and Songs: An Analysis of Cultural Practices from South Asia*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50246-5.

"(PDF) 'Bangladeshi Americans' in Asian American Society: An Encyclopedia." ResearchGate. Accessed October 7, 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259583794_Bangladeshi_Americans_in_Asian_American_Society_An_Encyclopedia.

Peach, Ceri. "Estimating the Growth of the Bangladeshi Population of Great Britain." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 16, no. 4 (July 1990): 481–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1990.9976202.

———. "South Asian Migration and Settlement in Great Britain, 1951–2001." *Contemporary South Asia* 15, no. 2 (June 2006): 133–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930600955234.

Pollock, Nancy. "Food and Transnationalism: Reassertions of Pacific Identity." In *Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific Perspectives*, edited by Helen Lee and Steve Tupai Francis, 1st ed. ANU Press, 2009. https://doi.org/10.22459/MT.08.2009.06.

"Post." Koraikitchen. Accessed October 2, 2019. https://www.koraikitchen.com/post/design-a-stunning-blog.

Pottier, Johan. "Savoring 'The Authentic': The Emergence of a Bangladeshi Cuisine in East London." *Food, Culture & Society* 17, no. 1 (March 2014): 7–26. https://doi.org/10.2752/175174413X13758634982173.

"Profile of New York City's Bangladeshi Americans." Accessed October 7, 2019. http://aafederation.org/cic/briefs/2019bn.pdf.

Raviv, Yael. *Falafel Nation: Cuisine and the Making of National Identity in Israel*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015.

Ray, Krishnendu. *The Ethnic Restaurateur*. 1st ed. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

———. *The Migrant's Table: Meals and Memories in Bengali-American Households*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

Reporters, Telegraph. "Britain's Curry Houses Disappearing - 50 per Cent to Close within 10 Years." *The Telegraph*, February 22, 2017. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/22/britains-curry-houses-feeling-heat-owners-arent-innovative-enough/.

Rousseau, Signe. *Food and Social Media: You Are What You Tweet*. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2012.

Rumbaut, Rubén G. "Severed or Sustained Attachments? Language, Identity, and Imagined Communities in the Post-Immigrant Generation." SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2002. https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1886649.

Said, Edward W. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Sangster, Joan. "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History." *Women's History Review* 3, no. 1 (March 1994): 5–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029400200046.

Schendel, Willem van. *A History of Bangladesh*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, and Sarah Harasym. *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Srinivas, Tulasi. "Everyday Exotic: Transnational Space, Identity and Contemporary Foodways in Bangalore City." *Food, Culture & Society* 10, no. 1 (March 2007): 85–107. https://doi.org/10.2752/155280107780154141.

Stajcic, Nevana. "Understanding Culture: Food as a Means of Communication." *Hemispheres. Studies on Cultures and Societies*, no. 28 (2013): 77–87.

Stoler, Ann Laura, ed. *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006.

Subedi, Binaya. "Theorizing a 'Halfie' Researcher's Identity in Transnational Fieldwork." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 5 (September 2006): 573–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390600886353.

Swinbank, Vicki A. "The Sexual Politics of Cooking: A Feminist Analysis of Culinary Hierarchy in Western Culture." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 15, no. 4 (December 2002): 464–94. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6443.00188.

"TBI Food Secrets: If You Love Pani Puri, You Will Love the Interesting Story Behind Its Origins Too!" The Better India, March 3, 2017. https://www.thebetterindia.com/90031/pani-puri-golgappa-phuchka-history-magadh-mahabharat/.

"There Are More Foreign-Born New Yorkers Than There Are People In Chicago." HuffPost, 58:43 500. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/new-york-city-immigrants_n_4475197.

Thomson, Alistair. *Memory and Remembering in Oral History*. Edited by Donald A. Ritchie. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2012. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195339550.013.0006.

Turgeon, Laurier, and Madeleine Pastinelli. ""Eat the World": Postcolonial Encounters in Quebec City's Ethnic Restaurants." *Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 456 (2002): 247–68. https://doi.org/10.1353/jaf.2002.0023.

User. "Home." *JhalNYC* (blog). Accessed October 3, 2019. http://jhalnyc.com/.

Veeck, Ann. "Encounters with Extreme Foods: Neophilic/Neophobic Tendencies and Novel Foods." *Journal of Food Products Marketing* 16, no. 2 (March 25, 2010): 246–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/10454440903413316.

Wardle, Savannah. "England's National Dish: Chicken Tikka Masala." *Study Abroad: Our Stories* (blog), February 10, 2018. https://medium.com/study-abroad-our-stories/englands-national-dish-chicken-tikka-masala-23d9986c736f.

Xu, Wenying. *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh. *Recording Oral History : A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Second Edition. Altamira Press, 2005.

Zaman, Niaz. *Bosha Bhat to Biryani: The Legacy of Bangladeshi Cuisine*. 1st Edition. The University Press Limited, 2012.

Zukin, Sharon. *The Cultures of Cities*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your migration journey (If the respondents are first-generation).

2. Why are you working with food? Why not something else?

3. How did your enthusiasm begin with food? How did your culinary inspiration start?

4. Is there any particular memory with food which reminds you of Bangladesh?

5. Will you please tell me about your current profession?

6. Why are you promoting 'Bangladeshi' food? How do you define it?

7. Do you think media is playing a role in your promotions? If yes, then how?

8. How do you relate your migrant identity to your project?

9. Is there anything you want to tell me about your project and your future plans?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Information and Purpose: The interview for which you are being asked to participate in, is a part of a research study that is focused on the Bangladeshi culinary representation in diaspora. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of Bangladeshi migrants who are involved in culinary industry.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately one hour. You will be asked a series of questions about your involvement in the culinary industry and your migration history. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study.

Benefits and Risks: The benefit of your participation is to contribute information about Bangladeshi cuisine in diaspora. There are no risks associated with participating in the study.

Confidentiality: The interview will be tape-recorded. Your name will be recorded on the tape and the information will be used solely for the purpose of research.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher Shehreen Ataur Khan by email at: khan_shehreen@student.ceu.edu or her supervisor Nadia Jones-Gailani by email at: jonesn@ceu.edu.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I agree that the information collected by Shehreen Ataur Khan can be used in academic publications resulting from this research. This includes the dissertation and any relevant publications in the academic journals or similar.
I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time.

Signature_____ Date _____

Place_____