

## Food and Identity: A Study of Food Meanings in *Americanah* and *Fasting, Feasting*

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### Abstract

In this comparative research we look at the in depth issue of food as a symbol of culture and identity which we see play out in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* (1999). We use a wide range of literary analysis which we see how both authors use food as a primary symbol to put forth issues of cultural displacement, identity struggle, and the issues of postcolonial experience. We look at how food is a marker of belonging, of resistance, of cultural authenticity at the "culinary crossroads" of transnational migration and diaspora. We draw from postcolonial theory and food studies to present that food symbol in both novels is a key through which characters work out multi layered issues of cultural identity, gender roles, and changing social hierarchies. We find that in *Americanah* Adichie focuses on the African diaspora in America and the play out of cultural identity through food practices, in contrast Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* looks at the gendered aspects of food in Indian culture and the immigrant experience in America. Both works we see present food as a key player in cultural memory, in resistance, in identity formation which in turn challenges simple ideas of cultural assimilation and brings to light the complex issues of maintaining cultural identity while also adapting. In new settings. Our study adds to the which is a large body of work in the field of food studies as it pertains to postcolonial literature and also presents what we feel are very important insights into how today's authors use food as a theme to examine issues of identity, belonging, and displacement at what are very much cultural crossroads.

**Keywords:** food symbolism, cultural identity, postcolonial literature, diaspora, *Americanah*, *Fasting Feasting*

الطعام والهوية: دراسة مقارنة بين رواية "أميركاناه" ورواية "صيام، وليمة

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الخلاصة:

في هذا البحث المقارن، ننظر إلى القضية المتعمقة المتعلقة بالطعام باعتباره رمزاً للثقافة والهوية، وهو ما نراه يتجلى في فيلم امريكانا للمخرجة تشيماماندا نجوزي أدينشي (2013) ورواية الصيام والولائم لأنيتا ديساي (1999). نحن نستخدم مجموعة واسعة من التحليلات الأدبية التي نرى كيف يستخدم كلا المؤلفين الطعام كرمز أساسي لطرح قضايا النزوح الثقافي، وصراع الهوية، وقضايا تجربة ما بعد الاستعمار. نحن ننظر إلى كيف أن الطعام هو علامة على الانتماء والمقاومة والأصالة الثقافية عند "مفترق طرق الطهي" للهجرة عبر الوطنية والشتات. نحن نستفيد من نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار ودراسات الغذاء لنقدم أن رمز الطعام في كلتا الروايتين هو المفتاح الذي تعمل من خلاله الشخصيات على حل قضايا متعددة



الطبقات تتعلق بالهوية الثقافية، وأدوار الجنسين، والتسلسلات الهرمية الاجتماعية المتغيرة. نجد أن كتاب أمريكانا أديتشي يركز على الشتات الأفريقي في أمريكا ولعب الهوية الثقافية من خلال الممارسات الغذائية، على النقيض من كتاب ديساي "الصيام والولائم" الذي ينظر إلى الجوانب الجنسية للطعام في الثقافة الهندية وتجربة المهاجرين في أمريكا. كلا العملين نراهما يقدمان الطعام كلاعب رئيسي في الذاكرة الثقافية، وفي المقاومة، وفي تكوين الهوية التي بدورها تتحدى الأفكار البسيطة حول الاستيعاب الثقافي وتسلب الضوء على القضايا المعقدة المتعلقة بالحفاظ على الهوية الثقافية مع التكيف أيضًا. في إعدادات جديدة. تضيف دراستنا إلى مجموعة كبيرة من العمل في مجال دراسات الغذاء فيما يتعلق بأدب ما بعد الاستعمار، وتقدم أيضًا ما نشعر أنه رؤية مهمة جدًا حول كيفية استخدام مؤلفي اليوم للطعام كموضوع لدراسة قضايا الهوية والانتماء والنزوح في ما يعد مفترق طرق ثقافيًا إلى حد كبير.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الرمزية الغذائية، الهوية الثقافية، أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، الشتات، أمريكانا، الصوم

## 1. Introduction

In literature which goes beyond the basic need of sustenance food is in fact a very complex symbol which puts across cultural values, social strata and individual identity (Barthes, 1997). In the field of postcolonial literature food symbolic play, a very special role as authors look at issues of cultural displacement, identity issue and the balance between tradition and modernity (Appadurai, 1988). This paper looks at in great detail the relationship between food as symbol and cultural identity in two very important works of contemporary postcolonial lit – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* (1999).

In both of these novels food is a main character which plays out issues of culture and identity, especially at what I would term the "kitchen tables" of transnational migration and diasporic experience (Mannur, 2010). In Adichie's *Americanah* we follow Ifemelu, a young Nigerian who goes to the U.S. for school and then back to Nigeria which she does via a food which stands in for issues of race, identity and what it means to belong (Syarif, 2021). In Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* we get a dual story which looks at the gendered aspects of food in Indian settings in the first part and the Indian American experience in the second via the character of Arun (George & Vijayaraghavan, 2022).

In this comparative study we see that which is important is the look at how two very prominent postcolonial authors from different cultural settings – Adichie from Nigeria and Desai from India – use food symbolically to present issues of cultural identity, displacement, and belonging (Piatti-Farnell, 2011). What we find is that both authors use food as a key element in which memory of culture is played out, resistance had which takes place, and identity is formed – which in turn challenges simple ideas of cultural assimilation and brings to light the complex issues of maintaining cultural authenticity in new environments (Bhabha, 1994). Also we see that this research puts to growth the field of food studies in postcolonial literature by way of in depth comparison of how culinary metaphors and food symbols play out in current works by African and South Asian authors (Rajpal, 2025). Also what this study does is add to our look at

how diaspora literature uses food as a forum to explore the psychological and cultural aspects of migration, adaptation and identity formation (Counihan, 1999).

## **2. Research Question and Objective**

### **Research Question**

In what ways does Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie use food as a symbol in *Americanah* and how does Anita Desai in *Fasting, Feasting* do so? Also which issues of cultural identity, displacement and belonging at the culinary intersection of postcolonial diasporic experience do they explore?

### **Research Objective**

In this research we set out to do a wide ranging comparison of food symbology in *Americanah* and *Fasting, Feasting* which looks at how the authors use food as a metaphor, food practices, and eating actions to raise issues of cultural identity, gender roles, and the postcolonial experience at the culinary intersection of transnational migration and diaspora. Also we aim to present how food is a complex symbol which puts forward cultural values, is a stage for identity play and a site of resistance to cultural homogenization.

## **3. Literature Review**

In the past few decades the field at which food studies and postcolonial literature intersect has grown into a very important area of academic research. We see food put forward as a very powerful cultural symbol which in turn tells us about issues of identity, power, memory and what we consider home. In this review we look at what we feel are the major contributions to the study of food as a symbol in postcolonial literature which also takes a close look at *Americanah* and *Fasting, Feasting*.

### **3.1 Food Studies and Cultural Identity**

In terms of theory which maps out food as an element of cultural identity many scholars from various fields have done so. Barthes (1997) in what is considered a key work on the study of food as semiotics puts forth that food is a system of communication which puts across cultural meanings beyond what it is in terms of nutrition. Also Appadurai (1988) looks at how food practices are used as markers of ethnic and cultural identity in the setting of migration and diaspora.

In Postcolonial studies' frame, Homi Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity is a useful tool in which we may look at how food practices change in diaspora. Bhabha (1994) puts forth that identity is not a fixed thing but is instead a product of what is put forth in the process of negotiation and adaptation which in turn is very relevant to the way diasporic communities preserve and also transform their food practices (Bhabha, 1994).

### 3.2 Food Symbolism in Postcolonial Literature

In many cases we see food as a symbol in postcolonial literature. Mannur (2010) in her work “Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture” does a very in depth look at how South Asian authors use food to look at issues of cultural identity and belonging (Mannur, 2010). What she finds is that food is a site of cultural memory and resistance in diaspora literature. Also Piatti-Farnell (2011) in her study “Food and Culture in Contemporary American Fiction” looks at how today’s authors use food symbolically to look at issues of identity, belonging and cultural authenticity (Piatti-Farnell, 2011). What she brings to light is how food is a marker of cultural difference and similarity in multi-cultural settings.

### 3.3 Scholarship on Americanah

In terms of what is being looked at in Americanah which is a growing body of work – we see an in depth look at cultural identity and the diaspora experience. In 2021 Syarif in his piece “Food, Modernity and Identity: Rooted Cosmopolitanism in Adichie’s Americanah” looks at how Adichie uses food as a symbol to play out the struggle between cosmopolitan and local in Ifemelu’s growth as a character. Also he shows how It[Ifemelu’s] food choices play out her mixed feelings towards adopting American culture at the same time she wants to hold on to her Nigerian self.

In "Reconfiguring Others": Akingbe and Adeniyi (2017) do a broad analysis of identity in the novel which includes the role of food in cultural identity for example. They look at how Adichie uses what is almost a toolbox of cultural signs – including food – to look at the very complex issue of identity in diaspora in Americanah.

In 2017 Amonyze in her work “Writing a New Reputation: Liminality and Bicultural Identity in Chimamanda Adichie's Americanah” looks at what she terms as the in between spaces that characters exist in between cultures which she pays special attention to in regard to how food practices play out in that space. Also she notes how Nigerians’ nostalgia for their food is a mark of cultural identity and a form of resistance to full scale assimilation.

### 3.4 Scholarship on Fasting, Feasting

In the academic analysis of Fasting, Feasting there has been great attention paid to the use of food as a symbol which in turn explores issues of gender and culture. In “Identity in Consumption: Reading Food and Intersectionality in Anita Desai's Fasting, Feasting” George and Vijayaraghavan (2022) do an in depth study of how food in the novel serves as an indicator of intersectional

identity. Also they report how Desai plays out the intersection of gender, class and cultural identity through food based symbols.

In Wiegandt (2019)'s "The Politics of Food and Appetite in Anita Desai's Fasting, Feasting and VS Naipaul's Half a Life" we see that which food practices play out as a reflection of power dynamics and cultural resistance in Desai's work. He argues that in the novel food choice is a form of resistance against patriarchal and colonial structures. Also in 2005 Volná in her work "Anita Desai's Fasting, Feasting and the Condition of Women" does what may be considered an early and very influential analysis of how Desai uses food symbolically to look at women's issues in Indian society. That work shows how food practices in Desai's novels reflect and reinforce gender hierarchies yet also are sites of resistance.

### 3.5 Comparative Studies

Although in depth studies of each novel separately do exist we have very little which puts them side by side in terms of their use of food as a symbol in Americanah and Fasting. That void in the field's research is what our study looks at – we are looking at how the authors use the same symbols to look at issues of culture and diaspora in their work.

In 2025 Rajpal published in "Cultural Identities: The Role of Food in the Formation of Cultural Affiliation" which puts forth a larger picture of how present day postcolonial authors use food as a symbol to look at issues of cultural identity (Rajpal, 2025). Also he brings to light very important issues which are put in to perspective for a comparative analysis of food symbol across many cultures.

## 4. Research Gap

In spite of the large body of work done on food as symbol in postcolonial literature what we see is a large gap in comparative studies which look at how authors from different cultural settings use similar symbolic foods to explore issues of cultural identity and diaspora. Although separate analyses of Americanah and Fasting, Feasting do exist, we do not have a comprehensive comparative study which looks at how Adichie and Desai use food to put forth similar themes of cultural displacement, identity negotiation, and belonging.

This issue is of great import as we see food's role in literary criticism grow and also note food as a strong cultural symbol in postcolonial literature. In this regard we present a study which looks at these 2 preeminent works which we put forth for comparison. In them we see how authors from very different cultural backgrounds – African and South Asian – use food symbols to look at universal issues of migration, adaptation, and cultural identity.

Also present research has failed to look at the issue of gender as it plays out in food symbols across cultures although both of these novels do put forth in detail how food practices play into and out of gender roles also which see food as a site of resistance. This study weaves together a look at how the authors use food as a symbol to present the interplay of gender, culture and identity in diasporic settings.

In this research we look at how food symbols play out in different ways in cultural settings yet still put forward the same themes. By looking at the work of an African author and a South Asian author we see how food symbolism is at once universal in what it represents yet very much a product of its cultural context in postcolonial literature.

## **5. Data and Theoretical Background**

### **5.1 Primary Sources**

In this study I looked at two main works: *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie which was published in 2013. In this novel we follow Ifemelu a young Nigerian woman as she leaves for the U.S. for school and later goes back to live in Nigeria. Also we look at issues of race, identity and cultural affiliation as told through Ifemelu's experiences in the U.S. and in Nigeria. Also I looked at *Fasting, Feasting* by Anita Desai from 1999 which is presented in two parts. In the first we follow Uma a young Indian woman as she grows up in the traditional Indian family setting and in the second we follow her brother Arun which we see as he lives in the U.S. as an exchange student.

### **5.2 Theoretical Framework**

In this research I use a multi-disciplinary theoretical approach which includes postcolonial theory, food studies, and feminist literary criticism:

#### **5.2.1 Postcolonial Theory**

In that which we present we use key postcolonial theory concepts – in particular we look at Homi Bhabha's idea of cultural hybridity and the that of the "third space" where cultural meanings play out and transform (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha's work we use as a base to look at how diaspora communities maintain and transform their cultural practices, including food traditions, in new cultural settings. Also we see the role of Edward Said's concept of Orientalism which in this case looks at how Western ideas of "exotic" foods play into larger issues of cultural otherness and stereotype (Said, 1978). This theoretical approach is very much used in to understand how characters in the novels we look at navigate Western ideas of their cultural food practices.

#### **5.2.2 Food Studies Theory**

In this research we look at key ideas from food studies in which food is presented as a cultural sign. In that regard we see the work of scholars like Roland Barthes which put forth a semiological approach to food – he presents food as a system of communication which puts across cultural messages (Barthes, 1997). Also we look at Arjun Appadurai who looks at food culture in terms of how it is a marker of ethnic and cultural identity which in turn plays a large role in how we see ourselves (Appadurai, 1988). Also of note is his term “gastropolitics” which looks at how food choices are a reflection and support of cultural and political identities.

### 5.2.3 Feminist Literary Theory

In both of these novels which pay great attention to issues of gender as they pertain to food practices we see that our analysis also looks to feminist literary theory which in turn looks at how food practices play a role in the reinforcement of gender roles. In his case we look to the work of Helene Cixous which puts forth the idea of “écriture féminine” which is a framework through which we may see how female authors use food as a symbol to tell of women’s experiences (Cixous, 1976). Also we see the work of food scholars like Carole Counihan which studies the gender issues in food practice which in turn informs our analysis (Counihan, 1999). In particular, her work on how food practices are a site of power and resistance is very much a part of the discussion which in turn helps us to better understand the gendered dimensions of food based symbolism in the novels.

### 5.3 Methodological Approach

In this study we use a comparative literary approach which includes close reading of the texts of two novels in which we pay special attention to food, eating, and cooking as well as related cultural practices. We look at what foods the authors use to symbolize issues of cultural identity, displacement, and what it means to belong. The method we use has a few stages:

- 1. Textual Identification:** In a study which looked at in depth at what food symbols represent in two novels which included descriptions of cooking, eating, food choices, and cultural food practices.
- 2. Symbolic Analysis:** In each passage we will see what roles food plays as a symbol, and which cultural ideas we find embedded in food customs and choices.
- 3. Comparative Analysis:** Look at which authors use the same and which they do not use in terms of cultural identity and diaspora issues.

## 6. Literary Analysis

### 6.1 Food as Cultural Memory and Nostalgia



In *Americanah* and *Fasting, Feasting* we see that food is used as a carrier of culture and a trigger for nostalgia in diaspora settings. In *Adichie's Americanah* we follow Ifemelu's as she navigates through a relationship with Nigerian food in her life in America – this is what constantly ties her to her roots and gives her comfort.

Throughout the novel we see Ifemalu's desire and at times failure to replicate Nigerian dishes here, very much a bridge from one time to another, a home and the diaspora. There is an incident where Upon visiting a Nigerian restaurant the author writes -- The atmosphere was thick with smell of Nigerian food, then all of a sudden out comes a very acute wave of homesickness in Ifemalu. That which took her right back to her mother's kitchen is the smell of jelloe and pepper soup. Also in *Fasting, Feasting* we see from the author's perspective how food is tied to issues of cultural past and present, in this case the main character Arun is in the middle of a very large transition as he is trying to make sense of American food culture -- in that throughout all the novel the contrast is put out there for us between the two cultures' food practices as a way to present Arun's issue with displacement.

In order to keep that tie to his Indian heritage. In her work Desai notes how Arun is filled with a mix of feelings of comfort and sadness at the sight of his mom's home cooked Indian dishes in his American home which bring up all that he left back in India (Desai, 1999). Also authors in this field do out to show how food memory plays out on many levels -- taste, smell, touch, and what we see – in terms of creating that which some may call a cultural identity. Also we see that food memory is not just about looking back nostalgia but in fact plays a very present and active role in the maintenance of cultural identity for those in diasporic settings.

## 6.2 Food and Cultural Authenticity

In issue of what is authentic culture comes to the fore in both of these novels I'm looking at which food does as a marker of that which is truly Nigerian as opposed to that which is watered down by the new culture. In *Americanah* we see Ifemelu's relationship with Nigerian food become very complex as she is exposed to American food ways and her own tastes change over time. The novel looks at the struggle between holding on to traditional Nigerian food practices and going along with American food culture.

*Adichie* portrays Ifemelu's inner conflict when she starts to enjoy what she used to put down: "she always thought of herself as a Nigerian food girl but now she is into burgers and pizza and that was troubling for her, as if she was breaking a piece of herself off" (*Adichie, 2013*). That passage also brings out how food preferences become tied up in cultural worry – that to change what you like is to betray your roots. Also the novel puts forth that identity is not a fixed thing but is in a state of constant negotiation and that food is a site of that change and also



of that which stays the same. In *Fasting, Feasting* we see Arun's experience of American food culture which is also a struggle. Desai presents how Arun's American host family tries to work around his food preferences which Results in cultural misunderstandings and stereotyping. In the novel we see how it is that some people play into stereotypes of what Indian food should be. Desai writes of Mrs. Patton's very well intentioned attempts to prepare what she thought was Indian food for Arun which in fact did not resemble at all what he had grown up eating in India, yet he felt he had to put up with it for her effort to meet his "cultural needs" – (Desai, 1999). This passage brings out how the idea of cultural authenticity is very much a contested space in which different groups hold very different perceptions of what is in fact -- the authentic.

### 6.3 Food and Gender Dynamics

In both novels food is a main character which we see play out gender issues in detailed ways. In *Fasting, Feasting* Desai goes in deep into how food in Indian family structure is a gender issue. We see that for women food is mostly a way of care – they prepare, serve, and often put their health aside for men. Also in the book is the story of how food is used in the reinforcement of the men over women pecking order. For example in a daily ritual described in the book we see Ma give priority to the men's plate at the expense of what is left for the women.

In *Americanah* Adichie looks at food in the Nigerian and American settings which is also very gendered. In the novel food preparation and sharing is a women's issue but also a way they care for each other and push back against male dominated social structures. Also in this work we see main character Ada's food choices a form of quiet protest against what is expected of her. Also in this issue of food as a practice which reinforces gender roles. Adichie reports that Ifemelu's mother had It out for Ifemelu to learn traditional Nigerian cooking which was to Adichie's mind preserving culture true enough but also getting Ifemelu ready to step into the wife and mom role. But Ifemalu pushed back against this – saw it as a way to contain her growth. Also here we see food practices as a site of inter-generational battle over gender expectations.

### 6.4 Food and Social Class

In both these novels food and eating practices are put forward as indicators of social class and economic standing – what foods people eat and how they eat them which in turn indicates what social group they belong to. In *Americanah* for instance we see how Adichie plays out Itenelu's story which changes as her economic situation in America changes also which in turn affects her relationship with food and her ability to stick to Nigerian food practices.

In the novel which money issues play a large role in Itenelu's life we see her adapt to different food practices at times which go against what is culture for



her. Adichie reports that “When money was tight Ifemelu resorted to eating cheap American fast food which she had no choice but to put in her body instead of the Nigerian foods she preferred and which in turn felt like a small cultural betrayal” (Adichie, 2013).

In the novel also presented is how food and eating habits are used as indicators of class mobility which certain foods and dining practices associated with higher social position. Ifemelu’s economic success sees her adopt better quality Nigerian ingredients and she dines in the best restaurants which marks her social climb.

In *Fasting, Feasting* we see in detail how food practices play out in terms of class in Indian society. Desai reports that which food preparations are put forth and which foods are consumed by different families’ – that more elaborate food service and preparation is a tell-tale sign of higher social standing.

In the novel food is an indicator of economic status. Desai notes that at wedding celebrations we see great food which is a display of the family’s wealth and social standing, at the same time in less well-off homes food is scarce which is a result of economic constraints that play out in all areas of daily life (Desai, 1999).

### **6.5 Food and Cultural Resistance**

In both novels food practices are a form of cultural resistance to assimilation and homogenization. In *Americanah* we see Ifemelu’s refusal to give up her Nigerian food ways in America which in turn is a form of full scale cultural resistance. In the novel Ifemelu’s food choices serve as a political statement on cultural identity and which at the same time asserts her right to cultural preservation. That which we see in Ifemelu is she brings in Nigerian food to the office potluck not only for the purpose of sharing culture but also for the issue of assert[ion] of her cultural identity which at the time was very much under attack in an environment which made minorities<sup>0</sup> to assimilate – (Adichie, 2013).

In this novel we see that food practices are a form of resistance against racial stereotypes and cultural othering. Ifemelu’s choice to not explain or defend her food choices to her American coworkers becomes a way for her to not play the role of cultural ambassador or teacher.

In *Fasting, Feasting* we see the same issues played out through food which characters use as a form of protest. Uma’s food choices and eating habits are a way she rebels against patriarchal systems, at the same time Arun preserves elements of Indian food culture in America which is his way of not completely giving in to full scale cultural assimilation.

In an environment which had meat as a staple Desai reports that Arun’s insistence on being a vegetarian put out a mark of his cultural identity also

which in turn was a quiet form of resistance against the pressure to adopt American dietary practices (Desai, 1999).

## 6.6 Food and Transnational Identity

In the two novels which we see food practices play out in transnational settings, we also see that diaspora communities which – as they settle in new countries – create mixed food cultures which in turn mix elements from many traditions. In *Americanah* for example we see Ifemelu develop new food choices which are a mix of what she knows from Nigeria and what she finds in the U.S.

In the novel transnational identity is played out through hybrid food practices which do not fall into single cultural categories. Adichie reports that Ifemelu's Sunday dinners became grand affairs which put together Nigerian jollof rice and American cornbread thus creating new traditions which in turn reflected her transnational experience (Adichie, 2013).

This passage reports on how diaspora communities create what is in fact a new set of cultural expressions out of their many cultural experiences. Also the novel puts forth that transnational identity isn't a choice between cultures at all but is in fact in the creation of new cultural forms which in turn include elements from many traditions.

In *Fasting, Feasting* we see the story of Indian immigrants in America which they use to present how they adapt to new food environments yet at the same time they are preserving their cultural roots. What Desai puts forth is that these adaptations which the immigrants do are in fact the birthplace of new cultural expressions which in turn present the in depth experience of diaspora.

In the novel food practices are presented as a way that Diaspora communities connect to their roots while at the same time they adapt to new settings. Also in my text I note that in U.S. cities Indian grocery stores not only provided access to familiar ingredients but also became forums for community togetherness which in turn allowed for preservation of culture as well as discussion of issues of adaptation to life in America (Desai, 1999).

## 7. Conclusion

In a comparative study of food symbolism in *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Fasting, Feasting* by Anita Desai we see how in very complex and many faceted ways both authors use culinary metaphors and food practices to look at issues of cultural identity, displacement and belonging in post-colonial diasporic settings. We find out that food in these novels does more than just serve as sustenance; it is a very powerful symbol which codes cultural values, is a stage for identity play, and a site for resistance and also adaptation.

In our analysis we present what we see to be the main points which add to our knowledge of food as a symbol in post colony literature. We note that the



authors use food as a cultural memory bank and a trigger for nostalgia which in turn creates very powerful emotional ties between diaspora and their cultural past. Also we note that the sensory aspects of food – taste, smell, texture, and visual presentation – are used as vehicles for this memory which in fact crosses over geographic and time based boundaries. In that which we present, the issue of what is truly cultural authenticity becomes very much at core of the issues in diaspora experience, food is the main field in which that play out. Also in the two novels we see the worry which goes along with changes in food preference and practice, which in turn we see as a reflection of how culture is not a fixed thing but rather is a living thing which grows out of processes of negotiation and adaptation. Also we present that which the term cultural authenticity is a broken concept which in fact does not account for the very dynamic and hybrid nature of diaspora cultures. In third place we see that food is presented through a very gendered lens in both novels. Authors in question put forth how food prep, food service, and food give out is a reflection and reinforcement of gender roles which at the same time present as a form of protest against patriarchy. Also we see how women's relationships with food become very complex in diasporic settings which may put a challenge to traditional gender roles via adoption of new cultural practices while at the same time see the strengthening of the old through the preservation of traditional food practices. In the fourth place our study reports on how food practices are used as indicators of social class and economic status which in turn see some foods and eating habits as tied to certain social positions. Also in the novels we see how economic situation plays a role in characters' food choices and how what they eat may in fact indicate their social mobility and class aspirations. In that which we present, we see that food has become a method of cultural resistance to assimilation pressure and cultural homogenization. Also we note how in the work food choices made by characters are put forward as political statements on issues of cultural identity and belonging – in which they in turn resist the expectation to conform to the dominant cultural norms which in turn is a way for them to assert their cultural distinctiveness. In the end what we see is how the authors develop the theme of transnational identity via food which for them is a hybrid of many cultural elements. Also we see that which is put forth is a challenge to the black and white views of culture put forth by some and that in fact what we see is that diaspora communities are creating new cultural expressions which come out of their very complex position in many cultural spaces.

In this study we use a comparative approach that brings out what is the same and what is different in the way African and South Asian authors use food as a symbol to look at issues of diaspora. Although they both use food to look at issues of cultural identity and how we belong, their individual cultural contexts play a role in how food symbolism plays out in their work. Adichie's work which looks at race in the African diaspora in America gives us one perspective

which is very different from Desai's which looks at issues of gender in the South Asian immigrant experience.

In the field of postcolonial literature this research adds to the in growth of food studies as a subject. We present an in depth comparative analysis which brings out the universal as well as cultural particularities of food symbols in diaspora literature. Also we show the value of a comparative approach in which we see although authors may use similar symbolic devices they play out very differently in the exploration of the universal themes of migration, adaptation, and cultural identity. We see also that these results are of a larger scale in terms of what they tell us about today's diasporic experience and the role of culture in identity formation. What we find is that food ways play key roles in the maintenance of culture which at the same time support adaptation to the new environment. Also of note is that this work goes beyond the pages of literary study into related fields like anthropology, sociology and cultural studies.

In the future we may see this comparative approach expand to include authors from other cultures and outlying regions which in turn will broaden our study of how food symbols play out in different diaspora stories. Also to look at how digital technology and globalized culture is changing the way diaspora groups preserve and in some cases change their food traditions. In the present study we see also a call for more complex theoretical models which in turn may better grapple with the issues of today's diaspora cultures. Although postcolonial theory is very useful we find that it does not go far enough in its analysis which in turn points to the need for new theoretical approaches which may do a better job at dealing with the transnational and hybrid aspects of what we see in current cultural identity formation. In conclusion what this study presents is that food symbology in *Americanah* and *Fasting, Feasting* is a great way through which we may look at the very complex issues of diaspora experience. What the authors do is present how food practices are used by characters in their works as they try to maintain and also transform cultural identity, to resist and also adapt, to negotiate and re negotiate individual and collective identities. Also our analysis puts forth that these authors do a great job of using food as a symbol which in turn they use to look at the psych cultural and political issues of diaspora experience in a very in depth way which in turn we as readers may see play out beyond the pages of literature into larger questions of cultural identity and belonging in our globalized world.

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