Reclaiming the Margins: Food Memoirs as Historiographical Interventions of Fractured Histories and Changing Landscapes

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Abstract. This paper discusses the ways that food memoirs, written frequently at the margins of official historical narrative, provide a powerful site of narrative resistance. By recalling through meal memory, kitchens, and family routines, these works subtly evoke lives characterized by subordination, conflict, displacement due to numerous factors, and metropolitan transformation. Whereas such memoirs can seem to recount domestic or culinary traditions, they tend to express wider histories of dislocation in unfolding narratives of war, migration, social isolation, and the transience of belonging. This research sets out to learn about how these memoirs function as alternative archives. They are political and personal, fragmented in their presentation but powerful in their impact, particularly in situations where official documents refuse to maintain the entire human cost of historical change. Informed by postcolonial theory, life-writing scholarship, and cultural memory theory, drawing on some memoirs that have been structured by experiences of social marginalization, forced displacement, and cultural erasure, this paper pursues a close and comparative reading approach. Instead of banking on sensational statements, such as recipes handed down, kitchens recalled, or ingredients substituting for one another, these accounts rely on intimate gestures to invoke cultural loss and survival. The kitchen in these paintings is not just domestic space but is a place of survival, remembrance, and subtle resistance. Cooking becomes a historiographical act where experience is inscribed as a rich chronicle of what official history tends to ignore. They imply that food memoirs not only keep alive individual recollections but also communal histories at risk. These accounts reconstruct fragmented identities, follow silences wrought by war, and testify to the stress induced in contemporary urban settings on traditional practices. Through this, they push the limits of what is considered historical knowledge. This paper is arguing for the wider scholarly acceptance of such works, not as supporting cultural texts but as essential to the rebuilding of lost or

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silenced lives. In a world more shaped by movement, loss, and fragmentation, such memoirs provide both memory and method for reconceiving history.

Keywords: Food memoirs, memory and migration, narrative resistance, subjugation and identity, urban transformation, cultural historiography

1 Introduction

The practice of writing about food has become much more than mere recipe gathering or nostalgic remembering of flavours. In the past few decades, culinary memoirs have presented themselves as powerful historiographical discourses, particularly those written from the peripheries of caste, class, gender, and nation. These texts do not merely record culinary traditions; they write memory, embodiment, and resistance into the archive, countering dominant narratives that have systematically eliminated subaltern experiences. As Krishnendu Ray reflects, "the kitchen has always been a contested terrain where questions of purity, pollution, gender, and identity are negotiated" [39]. The kitchen, thus, becomes a physical and symbolic location where personal memory explodes against public history, making domestic space a place of political and epistemological contest. This paper claims that food memoirs, especially those that interweave personal narrative with culinary documentation, are acts of historiographical resistance. Based on three recent publications from marginalized positions Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada by Shahu Patole [36], Slow Noodle: A Cambodian Memoir of Love, Loss, and Family Recipes by Chantha Nguon with Kim Green [35] and Sindh: Sindhi Recipes and Stories from a Forgotten Land by Sapna Ajwani [2], this research seeks to analyse how food, memory, and culinary practice function as epistemic tools for the recovery of identity, resistance to erasure, and the inscription of subjugated subjectivities.

The importance of this question manifests in multiple dimensions. It locates food writing as a postcolonial and feminist mode of historiography, which privileges the sensory, affective, and embodied aspects of historical knowledge. It also traverses the boundaries of the archive and confirms the argument that history is not only a matter of superior memory (or official registers), but also of the tastes, smells, and tactile experiences of the commonplace. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, history is a product of power, and its creation frequently involves the silencing of other voices [50]. In this way, food memoirs fill these silenced spaces by constructing what can be called counter-archives alternative repositories of memory that question hegemonic historical knowledge.

Methodologically, the paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from Postcolonial Studies, Cultural Memory Theory, Food Studies, and Feminist Epistemology. Layered together, these frameworks allow the research to portray culinary memoirs as performing a twofold work of remembering and resisting, embedded in habitual practices rather than solely archived in written form. This aligns with Paul Connerton's understanding of habit-memory, or memory practiced through the body rather than

inscribed textually [15]. In doing so, these books emerge as somatic, feminist archives, embodied and resistant databases of knowledge.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Postcolonial Historiography: Subaltern Archives and Epistemic Violence

Underpinning the study of culinary memoirs as counter archives is postcolonial theorists' critique of historiographical erasure. Ranajit Guha's Subaltern Studies project reveals how colonial and nationalist histories have suppressed peasant and working-class consciousness, demanding "a history from below" that retrieves subjugated knowledges [20]. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak continues this critique in her theory of "epistemic violence," contending that the subaltern "cannot speak" in hegemonic epistemologies, not due to literal silence but because her idioms tend to be oral, culinary, and embodied and hence unintelligible to power [48]. Welsh elaborate further how household and cooking practices become "alternative archives" that document experiences of caste, gender, and diaspora lacking in the official record [52].

Here, the three memoirs in question perform what Spivak describes as "alternative ways of speaking" [48], employing culinary narrative to reclaim histories of oppression through the caste system (Dalit Kitchens,2024), hunger and survival among refugees (Slow Noodle,2024), and diasporic loss (Sindh,2024). These texts refigure the kitchen from a location of domestic containment to one of historiographical agency, writing marginalized subjectivities into the historical record through embodied, gustatory practice.

2.2 Postmemory and Cultural Memory: Recipes as Memory Aids

Cultural Memory Studies provides critical frameworks for analysis of the ways in which culinary practice conserves and conveys communal identity through ruptures of time and space. Jan Assmann differentiates between communicative memory, informal, embodied, and passed on by everyday practice and cultural memory, institutionalized by ritual and textualization [7]. Recipes, food rituals, and narrative operate across both categories, as mnemonic devices that move ephemeral acts of cooking into stable repositories of identity.

Marianne Hirsch's concept of "'postmemory' deepens this analysis by explaining how descendants of trauma survivors 'remember' inherited experience as part of their own self" [23]. In Sindh: Sindhi Recipes and Stories from a Forgotten Land [2] for example, Ajwani's recipes operate as vehicles of postmemory, allowing the Sindhi diaspora to relive and reconstruct the lost homeland through taste and habit. In the same vein, Nguon's Slow Noodle sets the kitchen as a field of post memorial transmission, where the sensory process of cooking leads to reliving trauma caused by genocide and displacement [35]. Fiona McHugh and David E. Sutton are further convinced that food is particularly poised to overcome generational and spatial divides, given that its embodied character enables the somatic transmission of memory [32, 49].

2.3 Food Studies and Culinary Semiotics: Taste, Identity, and the Edible Archive

Food Studies offers a lexicon of methodology for reading food as a condensed social fact and an arena of identity formation. Arjun Appadurai argues that "food is a highly condensed social fact, and that cookbooks and culinary stories are central to the project of national and cultural identity construction" [6]. Deborah Lupton defines food as "social knowledge," carrying moral, political, and affective meaning [30]. Krishnendu Ray's idea of "gustatory belonging" invokes the manner in which taste negotiates issues of migration, authenticity, and class [40] Alison, Alkon, Alice Julier, and Uma Narayan build upon this framework to think through how foodways inscribe histories of exclusion and resistance, especially for marginalized people [3, 26, 34].

The memoirs taken up for study, food is an "edible archive" in which history becomes sensorily and materially legible. One example of this is that Patole records on Dalit foodways, such as reclaiming millet bread and other meals as a location of pride and protest, against the erasure of Brahminism. The Sindhi dishes that Ajwani makes act as memory keys to a lost group of people, and the description of cooking in refugee camps by Nguon is turning the culinary practice into a form of re-creation and identification. Through these stories, it now becomes clear that food is not merely a signifier of identity, but one which acts to produce and reproduce the identity.

2.4 Kitchen as Epistemic Space: Feminist Knowledge and Home Resistance

The epistemic turn of the kitchen is an intellectual as well as an affective turn of labour and is occasioned by the revalorization of domesticity by the feminist theory. Bell Hooks and Chandra Talpade Mohanty argue that it is not a nonpolitical menial job, and domestic work is also the place where political consciousness and opposition are nurtured [24, 33]. Sara Ahmed carries this argument further into the world of affect, where emotions like love, shame, and nostalgia "cling" to domestic space and objects, thus politicizing them [1]. Elleke Boehmer and other feminist thinkers assume that the kitchen is a place where theory is made out of sensory practice, and where cooking is a kind of knowledge production [10].

In Dalit Kitchens, women regain control of the intersecting oppressions of caste and patriarchy through the authorship of food. Among Sindh's elder women, family recipes provide vessels of cultural continuity against both historical disjunction and displacement's forgetfulness. Among Slow Noodle's characters, slow cooking is a form of resistance to the temporal violence of industrial modernity, enabling the recuperation of self and community in the wake of devastation. These memoirs therefore illustrate the kitchen as an epistemic location, where somatic, affective, and intellectual work meet to create alternative histories.

2.5 Synthesis: Culinary Memoirs as Somatic, Feminist Archives

Synthesizing these theoretical frameworks, this work argues that culinary memoirs operate as somatic, feminist archives repositories of knowledge that are simultaneously embodied, affective, and insurgent. By placing the sensory and material aspects of memory in the foreground, these texts challenge the epistemological order that favours written, official, and elite histories over the lived, the oral, and the mundane. They show that history does not merely exist in state records or monumental history, but is also found in the texture of millet bread, the pungency of Sindhi kadhi, or the scent of Cambodian noodles.

Through their reclaiming of subaltern kitchens as memory sites and sites of historiographical production, Patole, Nguon, and Ajwani respond to the subaltern question not through speech, but through the very process of cooking [2, 35, 36]. Food writing thereby becomes a radical historiography, a sensory, somatic archive that resists oblivion and insists upon the permanent presence of subaltern histories.

3 Culinary Historiography: Food, Memory, and Resistance

Culinary historiography develops as an interdisciplinary practice in which food writing moves beyond domestic sphere to become an act of remembrance with politics. In the memoirs “Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada” [36], “Sindh: Sindhi Recipes and Stories from a Forgotten Land” [2] and “Slow Noodle: A Cambodian Memoir of Love, Loss, and Family Recipes” [35], the cook is turned into historian, inscribing history below, from out of exile, and out of survival. Such texts show how recipes work as experience archives, inscribing political, caste, and diasporic trauma into the lexicon of taste and texture. Researchers like Alison Hope Alkon and Joshua Sbicca (2020) have highlighted that modern food narratives allow marginalized groups to challenge "culinary capitalism" by reclaiming ownership of their own foodways [4]. Each of these memoirs thus constructs a distinct epistemology of the kitchen: Patole’s Dalit kitchen resists caste erasure; Ajwani’s Sindhi kitchen reconstructs a homeland lost to Partition; and Nguon’s Cambodian kitchen transforms trauma into care. Across these texts, food is both sustenance and testimony, a “sensorial historiography” [39] that foregrounds the body as the first site of historical knowledge.

3.1 Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada (Patole): The **Caste Counter-Archive**

Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada provides an unparalleled ethnography of survival, caste, and taste. Patole's memory of food items like dry fish, sorghum bhakri, or wild greens reworks cuisine as a living record of deprivation and dignity. "The poor's food is not nostalgic; it is testimonial," he states, noting that the process of cooking is a subaltern chronicle of oppression [36]. Here, Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada re-stages Ranajit Guha's suggestion for writing "history from below," situating agency in elite-silenced

individuals [20]. The book converts what would be the "epistemic violence" of dominant-caste accountings into a counter-discourse of bodily knowledge [48].

3.1.1. Postcolonial Historiography: Recording the "Caste Text"

Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada introduces Dalit food culture as ethnography and revolt. Dishes constructed from leftovers or "wasted" ingredients subvert Brahmanical hierarchies of purity. Patole comments, "We were never ashamed of what we cooked. It is the others who taught us to feel shame. But the smell of our food is also the smell of our truth" [36]. Hunger here becomes historiography. Every preparation, from millet soup to dried fish curry to the simple bhakri, is a "caste text," documenting hunger, humiliation, and survival in food form. Recent work in caste-food studies [17, 37] places Patole's writing within a larger "gustatory subalternity," marking taste as a space where the politics of exclusion is written on the body. Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada reimagines cuisine as protest, reversing the hegemonic ideology of vegetarian nationalism, a discourse once in tandem with Brahmanical morality and today increasingly re-mobilized in the name of Hindutva politics [45].

The story in Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada also intersects with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of taste as cultural capital [11]. If "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier," then Dalit food turns into a counter-capital. Its beauty is exactly in its rejection of refinement. As Patole points out, "Food habits and caste cannot be divorced in Indian society. Just as caste is solidified at birth, so too is diet" [36]. By transforming the shame of impurity into a testament of survival, Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada creates a counter-moral order of taste in which lack is a work of art and poverty a creative ethos.

3.1.2. Cultural Memory and Postmemory: Embodied Scarcity Heritage.

Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada also serves as intergenerational memory labour. Patole's identification of mothers who "cooked by imagination, not with food" [36] fits with Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory, the passing down of trauma through affective and sensory registers [23]. To Dalit communities, recipes that have been transmitted orally turn the necessary into heritage, and every meal contains what Jan Assmann terms "cultural memory," shared knowledge stored in ritual [7]. The bhakri or dry fish curry thus become mnemonics burdened with the weight of history, connecting generations through smell, texture, and repetition. The ethnography of Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada, approached through Veena Das's "descent into the ordinary" [16] places everyday cookery as a performative memory of survival. The practice of making chutney-bhakar or kordya-bhakar in open spaces, where "The wind was our wall and the sky our roof" [36], makes scarcity an aesthetic of survival, resonating with James C. Scott's "weapons of the weak" [46]. The women protagonists of Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada practice this epistemic resistance: their recipes, quantified neither in cups nor in measurements but in intuition, build what Siobhan McHugh terms an oral archive of taste [32]. This orality subverts textual exclusion, re-centering the Dalit woman's body as both medium and message of cultural continuity.

3.1.3. The Kitchen as a Place of Dalit Epistemology and Agency.

The feminist undertone in Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada cannot be separated from its caste politics. bell hooks' contention that "the homeplace is a site of resistance" [24] and Sara Ahmed's understanding that emotions "produce the very surfaces and boundaries of social worlds" [1] make sense of Patole's reimagining of the Dalit kitchen as epistemic. Where orthodox ideology has rendered something polluted, it is a space of creativity and sustenance. Within the Dalit kitchen, women enact a performative epistemology wherein acts of cooking and feeding transcend domesticity to become forms of counter-hegemonic praxis. In nurturing their families within systems of caste-based exclusion, they transform care into a mode of intellectual resistance, converting the everyday labour of sustenance into a feminist archive of survival and self-authorship. Thus, the kitchen of Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada accords with cutting-edge feminist historiography wherein domestic work is read as intellectual production [8]. Patole states, "The aroma of sorghum bhakri and the fumes of our hearth are icons of our identity, not pollution" [36]. The sensory details of smoke, heat, and spice thus serve as a counter-narrative to archives of casteism. Recent critiques [38; 47] take the intervention of Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada into "caste and sustainability" debates, observing how Dalit food cultures exemplify ecological ethics that anticipate present "zero-waste" discourses. Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada is therefore not just a testimonial but also an environmental, pedagogical, and feminist discourse: a counter-archive which recodes survival into knowledge.

3.2 Sindh (Ajwani): The Diasporic Mnemonic

Sindh and Sindhi history are synonymous with Partition trauma, statelessness, and linguistic erasure. Yet, in the midst of such ruptures, Sindhi identity persists, not just in terms of language or territory but in affective, lived modality of daily practices, most essentially, food. In Sindh: Sindhi Recipes and Stories from a Forgotten Land [2], Ajwani reconstitutes the effaced geography of pre-Partition Sindh using an "ethnography of taste" that makes food practice a transportable homeland. This individual, frequently matrilineal, path of culinary expertise is at the heart of this survival. As Ajwani narrates, "My mother is a self-taught cook. She was 9 years old when she got married. Little did she know that by marrying my father, the eldest son, being chief cook was her lot. my mum became one of the finest cooks in [the] finicky Ajwani family. To be awarded that role was a bit like receiving an Oscar. I am still working hard for that title" [2]. This intergenerational pursuit underscores how Ajwani's work functions as a diasporic mnemonic, performing what Krishnendu Ray describes as "gustatory belonging," and enacts a feminist, postcolonial historiography of Sindh's lost nationhood. Drawing on the theoretical praxis of postcolonial historiography, cultural memory, and counter-archiving, the subsequent sections examine how Sindhi foodways turn into acts of resistance, reclamation, and survival for a people made invisible by the nation-state politics.

3.2.1. Postcolonial Historiography: Sensory Cartography of a Lost Home.

Ajwani's Sindh undertakes the task of reconstructing Sindh's foodways as a form of sensory cartography: a mapping of lost political geography onto taste. Dishes like seyal

roti or lotus-root curry are not simply dishes but "acts of return" which redefine the edges of home through the senses. As Ajwani's informant so nostalgically puts it, "We do not have a state. We also have largely lost our language. However, we possess a people with food" [2]. In these, the notion of food is what Ray refers to as gustatory belonging, identity ritual performance, which is imbued with community and affective memory in the ritual performance of eating.

The politics of rendering the Sindhi foodways visible is also essentially a reaction to the politics of invisibility that have constituted post-Partition South Asia. Marginalization of the Sindhi people in India and Pakistan is summed up by the memory that "we do not count Sindhs something significant; you do not have your own state" [2]. Ajwani achieves this by oral testimony and writing it down so the state-based narratives that already exclude Sindhis from history is subverted, "a democratic historiography that transcends national borders" [6]. Cooking pot is, thus, not just a domestic device, but a resistance vessel that is clinging onto the fragments of an invisible nation and is fighting against extinction in political cartography.

This food historiography resonates with the new literature on South Asian food nationalism which points out that populations in exile have been known to make food a strategy of opposition and rewriting the official discourses [40, 44]. Writing the Sindhi kitchen into being, Sindh by Ajwani makes a claim of culinary sovereignty that was withdrawn by Partition politics. The process of making seyal roti is an edible metaphor of recovering wholeness, a sensual seal between the histories of exile and migration, which have been fragmented by the process of homeland dispossession. According to the authors of the article Design and development of the Graphical User Interface of Sindhi Language Sindhi diaspora is both linguistically displaced and stateless, but one, the authors note, with a substantial community across the globe, that is, the concepts of food and language are essential to life and to survival (Ismaili et al., n.d., p. 663).

3.2.2. Cultural Memory and Postmemory: Playing the Lost Homeland.

The work written by Ajwani is a convergence of the ideas of cultural memory presented by Jan Assmann and postmemory presented by Marianne Hirsch which anticipates the contribution that ritual and performance make to the development of the diasporic identity [7]. Memories are not just recapped in the kitchens of the Sindhi diaspora but acted out. According to Hirsch, "cooking in diaspora is not recurrence, rather, it is ritual, an enacted aspect of postmemory" [23]. The way Ajwani remembers rolling papad with her aunts, being told that "the oil will sing to you" [2] narrates the sense pedagogy that even goes beyond the written word. Recipe transmission is therefore mnemonic and inter-generational, a feminist pedagogy transmitted in smell, sound and gesture. According to Ajwani, 'Tamatey mein Macchi/ Gangat was the favorite recipe of my mother to prepare whenever there were some uninvited guests who invariably went away with their fingers coated with the delicious food' [2].

This practice resides in the concept of what Paul Connerton termed as habit-memory, in which embodied gestures and recurrent rituals are the elements of continuity over time between generations [15]. In this respect, diasporic cuisine can be considered as a performative return in which, under these circumstances, displaced individuals were able to perform and recreate a lost home through their body when they cook a meal. This is supported by the recent feminist diaspora studies, which suggest cooking may

be used to transmit knowledge, memory, and affect across various time studies and different geographies [14,18]. The making of Sindhi kadhi in London is not nostalgia but a process of reclaiming, to Ajwani: a postcolonial ritual, re-membrance of a deconstructed home.

Performative acts of such actions render the diasporic kitchen as a “Third Space” as introduced by Homi Bhabha, the meeting place of a hybrid site of belonging, where almost the same, however not quite is a survival tactic [2, 9]. Such a hybridization is also applied in technological accommodations, such as the development of Unicode-based Sindhi language-based graphical user interfaces, which, to Ismaili et al., are the platforms of continuity and innovativeness in communities of diaspora (Ismaili et al., 2024, pp. 663–664). Such interfaces have an architecture that accommodates right-to-left scripts and multilingual systems of writing in order to reflect the overall diasporic need to preserve and remake cultural practices in new contexts.

3.2.3. Food as Counter-Archive of the so-called Unofficial Nation.

The Sindh by Ajwani is also a kind of counter-archive which disputes the official histories and state-official histories which make stateless peoples invisible. The text, in terms of documenting Sindhi culinary practices in palla fish to kuneh and bakro, is an enactment of what Appadurai terms a “subaltern cookbook, as it opposes the exclusionary logic of nation-building” [6]. These cooking stories recapture the so-called unofficial nation of Sindh who have been displaced but maintained through taste and embodied memory.

The deliberate decision of Ajwani to choose a butcher of the south Asian origin instead of Western counterparts which are easily available is defined “as an act of culinary decolonization” [2]. Every replacement: goat instead of lamb, palla instead of salmon, turns into a kind of mnemonic rebellion, transformation of adaptation into resistance. This experience demonstrates the idea of the diasporic ethics of taste developed by Ray, according to which any food choice has a political and emotional meaning [40]. When reformulating these replacements, Ajwani does what Spivak terms as epistemic insurgency writing back to the languages and regimes that previously sublated the Sindhi culture [48]. The counter-archival work of Sindh is inherently feminist, transforming domestic labour into a historiography of endurance. As Bell Hooks famously writes, “the homeplace remains a site of resistance, and Ajwani’s domestic archive embodies this resilience” [24]. “Sindhi recipes speak a diasporic feminist historiography, where the memory of food serves as a stand-in for the lost nation-state and transmission of affect replaces the written record” [19]. Such practices counter colonial ethnographies that previously disqualified Sindhi practices as "savage" [2] reframing them instead as "ecologies of care and continuity."

The creation of technology aids for Sindhi language, explained by Ismaili et al., can similarly be regarded as parallel to such a cuisine counter-archive. The work of developing a Unicode-based Sindhi graphical user interface, which supports the cursive nature of the script and right-to-left writing direction, is in itself a resistance to the exclusion of Sindhi culture from the digital space (Ismaili et al., pp. 665–668). By providing a platform for Sindhi speakers to write, compose, and communicate in their own

language, such initiatives preserve and extend the counter-archival impulse that animates Ajwani's work.

3.3 Slow Noodle (Nguon): The Gastric Witness to Genocide

Slow Noodle: A Cambodian Memoir of Love, Loss, and Family Recipes places food at the nexus of trauma, testimony, and survival. Writing from the ashes of the Khmer Rouge genocide, Nguon maps Cambodia in her mother's recipes. When archives are burned, "the only history that remains is the one simmering in memory" [35]. The memoir is a corrective to erasure, turning culinary remembrance into a form of witnessing, a sensuous historiography of atrocity. In Slow Noodle's world, ingredients are more than mere foodstuffs but memory shards. "Even now I can taste my own history, in simmering sense-memories of my mother's homemade fish sauce, the soup noodles she rolled out in her hands" [35]. Slow Noodle's remembering recapitulates Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma as an event "too soon, too sudden, to be known, and thus returns belatedly in shards" [13]. In Slow Noodle, the shards manifest in smells, textures, and lack, from absent salt and limited rice to the boil of broth. These tiny sensory facts, as Fiona McHugh (2007) points out, form "oral history's emotional acoustics," where affect and memory blend together to create counter-histories that cannot be erased [32].

3.3.1. Postcolonial Historiography: Food as a Witness to Repressed History.

Slow Noodle's kitchen is a living memorial to a nation that attempted to erase itself. Nguon remembers, "They converted the national library and archives into a kitchen, and its walled garden into a pigsty. he records and books had been incinerated; our written past fuel for the fire" [35]. Following this devastation, food remains the last lingering document. Every recipe in Slow Noodle serves as a witness testimony against amnesia in history. "My family had vanished. My nation had drowned in its own blood. The only thing I had left was memory: the scent of a charcoal fire in my mother's kitchen. Only smoke remained" [35]. That smoke, such as Benjamin's "aura of the ruins," is a symbol both of loss and survival. Nguon's approach aligns with Dominick LaCapra's theory of "writing trauma" in which the process of retelling is repetition and a rewriting [27]. By telling the genocide in and through meals, through food consumed and that which was denied, Slow Noodle produces what Alison Landsberg (2004) refers to as "prosthetic memory": a corporeal record that renders historical trauma contagious to others [28]. The kitchen, therefore, becomes a chamber of testimony. "When we found a few grains of salt or a drop of fish sauce, it felt like winning the lottery of survival" [35]. These food memories carry a consciousness of history that cannot be disconnected from the senses. The story of Slow Noodle also turns around the postcolonial divide between official and domestic knowledge. Through writing a memoir framed in the format of recipes, Nguon democratizes the telling of history. Slow Noodle illustrates what Elleke Boehmer calls "postcolonial life-writing as ethical repair" [10], reconstructing self and community through narrative pieces. In Slow Noodle, flavour is the grammar of memory; recipe, a stubborn historiographic form.

3.3.2. Cultural Memory and Postmemory: Imaginative Reconstruction with Food.

In Slow Noodle Nguon performs what Marianne Hirsch calls “imaginative reconstruction,” wherein heirs or survivors reconstruct traumatic histories through mediated, sensory acts [23]. In cooking and telling, for Nguon, precisely this restorative role is served. She writes, “I stirred, I chopped, I wept. Sometimes all three simultaneously. In cooking, I discovered time once more, time that Pol Pot had attempted to appropriate” [35]. This claim captures Hirsch’s performative aspect of postmemory, recapturing temporal and emotional continuity through cyclical ritual [23]. Cathy Caruth’s theory of trauma as “belated knowing” can be felt in the texture of the memoir [13]. The hiss of rice steaming, the bubble of broth, and the aroma of roasted peanuts “send me spiralling back to the camps, to hunger and fear” [35]. The sensorial reminders make the past feel present, creating what David Sutton (2001) refers to as “embodied memory transmission,” where gestures and tastes are carriers of cultural continuity [49]. The replication of inherited gestures in Slow Noodle is also consistent with Paul Connerton’s concept of “habit-memory” [15]; learning history with the body instead of through text. Nguon re-learns her mother’s recipes decades after: “I never measured anything; I cooked the way my mother taught me, by taste, by feel, by smell” [35]. This pedagogy of the body is precisely that which feminist epistemologists such as Sara Ahmed and Audre Lorde position as knowledge in care and in intimacy. Cooking is therapy and pedagogy, a reclaiming of epistemic agency in a world that had excluded her from subjecthood. Slow Noodle, in doing so, reworks culinary tradition in terms of survival narrative. Researchers like Rachel (2008) have pointed out how smell memory is the “most resilient form of autobiographical recall,” and Nguon’s repeated mentions of charcoal smoke and broth are a good example of this. As a food memoir Slow Noodles therefore combines affect theory, postmemory, and ethnography to convert eating into remembering.

3.3.3. Kitchen as Memorial and Place of Nurturance.

The home turns memorial in Slow Noodle. "For me, the rice that was cooked on a charcoal fire is more delicious than the rice cooked in a rice cooker, and the smell of a charcoal fire is home and family smell” [35] This sensory insistence on slowness, from rolling every noodle by hand to peeling garlic "as slowly as humanly possible" [35], is feminist temporal resistance. Judith Butler's subversive theory of repetition [12] sheds light on this ritual of slow-down intentionality: the "slow" in Slow Noodle is a moral aesthetic, a counter to the militarized time of genocide. Sara Ahmed's understanding that emotions are "practices that shape the world" [1] is directly applicable to Slow Noodle's kitchen, where care is acts of activism. Cooking, in this context, is not domestic servitude but "an aesthetic of care," a bodily resistance that retrieves agency through care [24]. Whenever Nguon cooks for others, she rebuilds sociality devastated by the Khmer Rouge; every meal shared is a microcosm of collective healing. This convergence of memory, emotion, and feminist praxis in Slow Noodle is in agreement with the most recent work in trauma cuisine and culinary memory [25, 29], which indicates the way food writing allows survivors to articulate grief through sensorial narrative. "Sometimes I dream about Cambodia, and it smells like soup," Nguon writes. "I wake up hungry, not for food, but for the world we lost" [35]. She is hungry for justice and recognition, an ethical hunger. Slow Noodle's kitchen is more than a repository of

recipes but a political shrine of survival. "I survived by cooking, by remembering, by feeding others. That is my revolution" [35].

3.4 Synthesis: The Unified Method of Culinary Historiography

The three culinary memoirs, Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada, Sindh, and Slow Noodle, serve the same purpose: they write history by the senses. Across caste, diaspora, and genocide, food turns into historiographical method and matter. Each writer transforms the process of cooking into an archive, redefining the domestic not as private but epistemic, political, and redemptive. Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada builds a counter-caste archive, recording the politics of purity and pollution in quotidian hunger. Sindh develops a diasporic memory, translating recipes into transportable homelands that resist the erasures of Partition. Slow Noodle, with its "slow" practice, produces a culinary memorial that witnesses collective trauma. Together, they produce a transnational feminist historiography based on affect, memory, and the body.

3.4.1. Reclaiming the Senses as Archive.

Arjun Appadurai's assertion that "the archive is never neutral terrain" [6] finds sensorial elaboration in these memoirs. In the smoke-filled kitchens of Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada, the fragrant kadhi of Sindh, and the simmering broth of Slow Noodle, taste and smell assume archival function. Deborah Lupton's observation that "food is embodied social knowledge" [30] manifests across all three works. The body is the record, smoke the witness, and spice the script. Krishnendu Ray (2016) calls this "gustatory evidence," a bodily form of documentation as opposed to textual documentation [40]. More recent studies by Alice [26] and Uma Narayan (2017) confirm this, recognizing the kitchen as a "material archive of care" that retains unwritten histories [34]. These writers thus make part of a wider epistemological transformation: from text-based historiography to embodied, affective, and culinary ways of knowing. The recipes in each of the three memoirs thus "write" what formal history does not, the registers of the senses of oppression and endurance that survive empires, borders, and caste.

3.4.2. The Embodied Historiography.

If the senses make up the archive, then the body is both its medium and manuscript. Throughout these food memoirs, historical information flows through gesture, taste, and touch. Across these texts, history is traced through embodied practice: in The Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada, mothers labour amid scarcity, kneading dough; in Sindh, aunts instruct through sound, declaring that "the oil will sing to you" [2] and in Slow Noodle, hands that remember the texture of dough testify that history resides not in monuments, but in the lived, tactile acts of daily life. The body bears what the text erases, inscribing the labour of manual memory into a state of cultural authorship. Bell Hooks's feminist maxim that "healing is an act of resistance" [24] brings these culinary epistemologies together, wherein food becomes resistance and survival a political aesthetic. All the memoirs build an ethics of sustenance that resists structural violence, whether in the form of caste exclusion in Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada, colonial displacement in Sindh, or genocidal trauma in Slow Noodle. Sara Ahmed's understanding

of a “politics of emotion” supports this embodied historiography by demonstrating that care practices, from feeding and cleaning to tending, are themselves world-making acts [1] In bringing together Guha’s subaltern historiography [20], Hirsch’s postmemory theory [23] and Hooks’s feminist resistance [24], these authors develop a cohesive approach to culinary historiography wherein cooking is the subaltern’s voice, eating performs diasporic belonging, and feeding reclaims post-traumatic humanity. All of these practices refigure survival into narrative and the sensory into epistemology. The kitchen, having been feminized and marginalized, thus returns as a place of historic authorship in which memory is not kept in libraries but stewed in pots. In Slow Noodle, Nguon movingly writes, “Those memories became recipes for building a future” [35], a reminder that history does not just have to be written but can also be cooked, eaten, and shared.

4 Comparative Synthesis: Food, Memory, and Resistance in Marginalized Histories

4.1 The Therapeutic Potential of Food Writing

With disjointed histories and cultural displacement, order of the day, there emerges a new cuisine genre that speaks to food as a critical historical text. This essay examines three works, Shahu Patole’s Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada, Chantha Nguon’s Slow Noodle: A Cambodian Memoir of Love, Loss, and Family Recipes, and Sapna Ajwani’s Sindh: Sindhi Recipes and Stories from a Forgotten Land [2] as complementary projects in what can be termed a restorative culinary historiography. Every writer address food not only as food but as archival, personal testimony, and political practice. Collectively, the books unveil the ways in which institutions like caste, war, and diaspora actually shape foodways. More importantly, they reveal the ways in which recipes, kitchens, and the bodily practice of taste become powerful tools of cultural survival and resistance to forgetting.

4.1.1. Points of Intersection: Caste, War, and Diaspora.

Caste oppression, war, and diaspora, while distinct from one another, are the intersecting tools of erasure. They methodically determine what appears in official records and what is erased by dominant history. In the Indian case, for instance, food taboos and dietary prohibitions have long served as tools for imposing social hierarchies and keeping marginalized groups out of public resources. As ethnographic studies confirm, purity is sustained by upper-caste perceptions, and everyday exclusions based on sharing and eating food are sustained in rural parts of the country and urban parts [41]. Here, Shahu Patole's documentation of Mahar and Mang kitchens is a political act by itself. Shahu Patole shows how caste regulates access to water. He observes that "untouchables were not permitted to come near any of these wells," [36] and water was filled from a distance by the self-proclaimed "merciful" ones [36]. This ritual identifies a fundamental right as charity, perpetuating untouchability. The ensuing scarcity

compelled Dalits to go on water rationing, applying it for "cooking and drinking first" and postponing hygiene [36] and relating material shortage to stigma. Patole lays bare caste's conditional logic in which purity regulations are waived in the case of work but restored when a well has been finished. "Untouchability was not practiced while the digging. was ongoing," but "once they struck water, untouchability came into effect" [36]. Purificatory rituals subsequently make the well "sacred" for the higher castes and "forbidden" to Dalits, making a shared resource a device of discrimination. It is one step in a longer process of counter-documentation, which works actively to document what mainstream historical records have actively suppressed. As written "The word 'Dalit' is a Sanskrit term describing scattered in locations or bifurcated. Does it also describe crushed, subdued, suppressed and exploited?" [36].

Similarly, war and partition displace more than just people; they dislocate embodied culinary knowledge. Sapna Ajwani's collection of Sindhi recipes demonstrates how the trauma of Partition fragmented ritual food practices as she states "In pre-Partitioned Sindh, people who ate a lot of fish were called 'macchi mani wara maroon' or fish and bread eating people.' [2]. Yet, it also drove determined practices of preservation among refugee families who worked to recreate a lost regional pantry thousands of miles from its homeland. The refugee Sindhis discovered that their food, which they prepared and "their lovely Sindhi language" were the "two things which kept them attached to their spiritual homeland" [2]. Their dishes, which blended "savoury, sour, spicy, and bitter" flavours [2] undermine colonial and patriarchal hierarchies that promote restraint and purity. This gastronomic rebellion stems from an Ayurvedic philosophy that appreciates balance, a philosophy further developed by "a Sindh born scholar, Vagbhata" [2]. Additionally, their cuisine directly combats the distrust they experienced in new lands, where their own eating habits led others to cry out, They are meat eaters. they are definitely disguised Muslims [2] And likewise the cooking of Sindhi women holds down their culture, as an art of the senses, as a feminist History of culture itself, all imprinted in turmeric and tamarind,

This is the same direction that Chantha Nguon follows in her memoir, the inconspicuous, corporeal act of relaying across a blanketing silence. Her recipes act as feebly sealed containers of cross-generational memory machismo that transcends violence of the Khmer Rouge years in its immediate. This is reflected in the title 'Slow Noodles' a dish that, to Nguon, gave her a physical link to a dead world. This process, which she recalls, was the most time-consuming when she was still small because she associates it with her mother cooking and the reassurance of love, a strong contrast to the careless instant noodles and what was yet to come, [35]. This food memory was an opposition to a government that was keen on clearing all personal and cultural memory.

When these narratives of caste-based exclusion, Partition displacement and diasporic reinvention are presented next to each other, these books disclose that although marginality is highly specific to the location, its erasure of the common cultural practice is structurally comparable.

4.1.2. Food as Reparative Historiography.

Sustenance plays a very significant role in these writings to repossess suppressed pasts that were either swept away by the official history or purged. Food writing is not

simply a description of ingredients, but it cross tabulates thick social relations, systems of work, and obscured political economies. Dalit Kitchens of the Marathwada have recipes that are placed within the context of household labour, ritual existence, and scarcity of goods caused by caste. Through a meticulously documented material culture of the kitchen: the specific objects of the kitchen to the means of cooking, Patole re-centres the ordinary as a useful space of historical knowledge and a political locale of making claims. Carrying of utensils to cook during wedding, scarce water source, meat that were not used by the high society. Their vegetarian dishes are higher than the non-vegetarian dishes that are prepared by women. He constructs this piece just as he defines the philosophy of 'live and let live' also to the word of food, in order to establish people with respect food options without blinding them. This article documents in detail the lentils, meats and seasonings that were permitted to them.

Domestic recipes in the work on Sindhi cuisine by Sapna Ajwani are an epistemological heritage of both pre and post-partition life, both of flavour and migration, settlement and diasporic hospitality. As an example, families replaced the indigenous lotus stem with potatoes which is a more available ingredient in India. These cuisines are a wilful cultural preservation whereby as Ajwani assures that, "We eat nose to tail, and we do not waste anything," [2] repeating the comment of Thomas Postan's in his Personal Observations on Sindh that "The entrails of animals and disgusting offal are choice morceaux," [2]. This philosophy is also used in the exact cooking techniques: meat is never cooked off the bone, it is de-fatted with utmost care, and certain parts of the meat, such as the shank or the shoulder, are to be used in the stew. These are precise directions not of a technical nature but of the continuation of the very existence of a people. Nguon from Slow Noodle discusses "Cambodian cuisine has its own unique character irreplaceable flavours that we crave when we're away from home" [35]. She declares that this food is warped because it was never documented "And as with any national cuisine, so with ours, a migratory mix of influences, from various ethnic communities (we are not all Khmers) to the sojourners, merchants, neighbours, and erstwhile occupiers/subjection of ancient empires, all who've shared ingredients" [35]. This comparative approach helps us to realize how the banal activity of documenting a family recipe in these instances can be a profoundly significant act of cultural recovery.

4.1.3. Narrative Style: Fragmentation, Recipes, and an Oral Tone.

Methodologically, these authors use narrative forms that depict self-consciously fragmented and non-linear memory. Techniques including non-linear ordering, recipes placed within personal narrative, episodic vignettes of family life, and a conversational, oral register reproduce the ways in which displaced or stigmatized peoples actually retell and recall their pasts. This method supports philosopher Paul Ricoeur's theory of memory and history which reads fragmentation as not the failure to record, but the medium in which memory that is traumatic or repressed will come to speak. Here, fragmentation in such works is productive, not defective [42].

Recipes as such are significant mnemonic devices [49]. Their procedural rhetoric writes not just ingredients, but embodied know-how, material constraint, and social relationships. Moreover, the oral style of much of the text foregrounds speech and performance, thereby authorizing oral transmission as a suitable form of historiography [50]. This is supported by sensory-history scholarship, which claims that the senses:

taste, smell, and touch are valid and necessary avenues to historical knowledge. Historians taking these sensory experiences into account vastly expand the archival record beyond the written document [5]. For comparison the name of Nguon' Slow Noodle itself tells us about the time taken to cook noodles, just like in Sindh Ajwani discusses the strong impact of Ayurveda on Sindhi food; The Sindhi cuisine is a little bit of everything from vegetables and pulses, to meat and fish, and it all goes together with the six inherent tastes. But we prefer some over the others - particularly salty, sour, hot, and bitter (Ajwani) [2]. While Dalit food is survival-oriented and about availability of "permitted" ingredient, sanctioned to them "There was, however, no research-based in-depth writing on the food practices and food culture of the Dalits mentioned in Dalit literature. One can understand why the elite or non-Dalits never undertook such a study but even Dalit writers have not written about their food culture in any noteworthy detail." [36].

4.1.4. The Emotional and Political Archive of Taste and Intimacy.

Where old-fashioned archives value dispassionate, objective "evidence," these food memoirs unashamedly give primacy to emotion, proximity, and the body. The sensory vividness of a recipe the recollection of a particular meal, carries a particular testimonial weight. One flavour can testify to broken kinship ties, ritual continuity, or the sensuous experience of exclusion. Cooking together is here represented as a gesture of care, a resistance ritual, and a political claim to belonging repeatedly.

In Patole's work, the quoted Dalit practices of cooking simply challenge caste stigma by claiming the dignity, resourcefulness, and richness of these foodways. "Food is not merely sustenance it is memory, it is humiliation, it is pride" [36] food exclusion along caste lines and the emotional burden of taste. "The kitchen in a Dalit home is a battlefield where dignity is cooked and served" [36], observing how domestic cooking becomes a gesture of resistance and cultural reassertion.

Nguon's interlacing of recipe with family memory makes deeper mourning both readable and liveable through the habit of embodied practice. “For me, rice simmered over a charcoal fire taste better than rice from a rice cooker, and the smell of a charcoal fire is the smell of home and family” [35]. According to Ajwani, her favourite kitchen memories are steeped in that aroma, reconstituted Sindhi dishes are acts of loving memorialization that transform personal nostalgia into sustained collective cultural work. As she recounts her recent visit to Pakistan, it was the first time she went to Sindh after the displacement faced by her great grandfather Tolaram “Sarla Malani recollects eating a lot of crabs since seafood was so bountiful in Karachi, especially in the company of her Parsi friends. She used to call them khekho khao (crab eating people), and in turn they called her papad khao (papad eating person). I’m partial to using Crab claws when cooking Dang me jhinga” [2]. Sindh being more of a coastal place, Seafood was fairly common in their cooking practices, “Chicken was not widespread in pre-Partition Sindh, hence the few unique chicken recipes in the book. Even as a child, I have hardly any memories of chicken been cooked at home. And rarely, it was typically reorienting meat dishes as chicken” [2]. As has been contended by food historians, attending to such intimate archives reveals the intense social role of taste and smell in identity making and cultural remembrance [21].

5 Comparative Contributions and Future Research Directions

When envisioned comparatively, these three volumes offer a critical agenda for future research on marginal food histories. First, they argue for how one may read cookbooks and recipe-memos as non-canonical records comprised of embedded evidence about labour, ritual, and material contexts. Second, they argue for sensory approaches for rebuilding the embodied histories that textual records always exclude. Third, they invite scholars to make seriously the politics of transmission, recognizing that the preservation tactics undertaken by communities and families themselves represent principal sources of social critique and agency. Empirically, this kind of work in the future could fruitfully combine oral-history collection with material analysis of kitchen technology, market networks, and food cultures to map with more precision how marginality is lived through alimentary economies. Theoretically, there is fertile ground in building models that synthesize Ricoeurian theory of memory and the emerging methodological tools of sensory historiography and food ethnography [5, 42].

6 Conclusion

Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada, Slow Noodle: A Cambodian Memoir of Love, Loss, and Family Recipes, and Sindh: Sindhi Recipes and Stories from a Forgotten Land [2, 35, 36] together illustrate how food writing can be a rigorous and rich form of historiography. Each text reworks recipes into evocative assertions of belonging, and each retrieves excluded bodies and kitchens from the margins of social forgetfulness. Methodologically, they enact a historical method that values fragmentation, embodiment, and sensorial testimony over linear, impersonal narratives. Politically, they insist that the ordinary practices of food eating, cooking, and sharing are deeper practices that cannot be excluded. They show, without doubt, that record-making has the potential to travel through the taste and the senses and create an archive as rich and credible as any repository of official documents.

6.1 Rewriting History Through Cooking Memoirs

Food memoirs are at the centre of cultural remembered writings to make palatable and smellable and tasting their past. Other authors such as Shahu Patole, Chantha Nguon and Sapna Ajwani invoke cuisine narratives to invite into the limelight marginalized pasts that were not reflected in conventional archives. The Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada by Patole places the food taboos under the caste politics and hunger politics to reconstruct Dalit identity. The project of memoirs of the memory of the diaspora turned the Cambodian recipes into a testimony to the Cambodian loss diaspora [35, 36] as the Sindh Embu's food recipes to revisit their homeland [2] according to Nguon, is

anchored by recipes that reproduce the lost lands [35]. Such writings break down the understanding of food writing as apolitical as it is seen as a place of resistance and cultural continuation. Food memoirs upset the epistemological hierarchies of historiography by focusing on memory and emotion rather than on documentation. The kitchen is a godsent place that marginalized voices regain their cultural agency as Michael W. Twitty declares "The kitchen is a laboratory of identity" [51]. The recipes of Patole serve as investments in caste oppression, the cooking of Nguon recreates lost histories and narratives Ajwani keep in their diasporic belonging. Bell Hooks believes that the kitchen is also a place of resistance, and through the simple process of cooking identity is maintained against system forgetfulness [24].

Circumstantially, in caste, displacement, and migration, contexts, cultural memory has been recorded through such memoirs wherein the institutional history disintegrates. Hooks refers to the kitchen by her term of homeplace and says that it is both affective refuge and a political territory to reclaim oneself [24]. To Patole it reinvents the Dalit self-respect, to Nguon restores a sense of belonging in an exile, and to Ajwani, it is a survival of diasporic identity after the Partition [2, 36]. Cooking recipes and rituals can, therefore, be described as embodied archives, which promote continuance against disruption. These authors revive the past in reclaiming their kitchens. Cooking serves as counter-historiography, a practice of venue membrane on the body by the means of affective experience. Their histories substitute linear history with cyclical intergenerational memory founded on the mundane. With the digital media democratization in the form of blogs and podcasts to narrate data, food memoirs receive an extension past print into participative archives. This digitalization will carry on the culinary memory as a retrievable, legitimate historical knowledge that can be saved. With such identification of these writings as living archives, the subaltern voices, which have been burbling on the periphery of history as it is told, are reasserted.

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