Introduction

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The practice of eating is one of the most important biological acts performed by human beings It is a natural action that people must perform to have the energy to sustain themselves. However, to classify eating as only a biological process would be erroneous. Food reveals social and economic systems while communicating historical, local and global narratives. Explorations into patterns of food preparation and consumption, meal formats, eating fellowships, nutritional notions, recipes and delicacies, symbolic associations and national habits yield information about all aspects of human civilization (Baumel Joseph 2002: 7). In recent years, the study of food has flourished – including in the Indian context. Production and consumption of food are very much social processes, as reflected in the activities and relations involved in them. In this context, we use the term 'food, culture and society' to mean the interactive, relational, cooperative and communitarian nature of food, which creates relationships between people. It also indicates an intersection of the political, economic, cultural and ideological spheres.

Food is not just what we eat, but also a system of communication, a body of images and a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour (Kirkby and Luckins 2007; Barthes *in* Counihan and Van Esterik 2013: 24). It is also a mark of identity (Khare 1992; Scholliers 2001; Counihan 2004) and is economically determined (Bourdieu 1979; Huskins 1996). Therefore, along with its biological importance, the social nature of food cannot be underestimated. Food is evident in everyday urban life, in the media and the host of new eating places, offering diverse kinds of cuisines in India's growing cities. However, this is not to argue that rural India remains untouched. Significantly, many of the multinational firms pay particular attention to rural markets. In a profoundly unequal and diverse society like India, food has had deep associations with questions

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of identity, whether those involving religion, caste, class, gender, ethnicity or tribe.

This book explores the relationship between food, culture and society in India. It is organized into four broad sections: Food, Culture and Identity; Food, Memory and Migration; Food, Livelihood and Nutrition; and Food, Consumption and Media. This Introduction presents an overview of each section and summarizes each chapter briefly.

Part I: Food, Culture and Identity

The study of food offers us a window into understanding the larger social and the relationship of food to the economy, polity, identity, culture, moral codes and family. The objective of this edited volume is to unravel these connections. Food is a stimulating site to understand any society, as reflected in this famous quote by Brillat-Savarin, 'Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are'. From communal celebrations to personal preferences, our dietary habits reveal much about who we are and how we live (Baumel Joseph 2002: 7). In times like ours, where the boundaries between the 'traditional' and the 'modern', the 'local' and the 'global', the 'urban' and the 'rural' are becoming blurred, a study of food can reveal the changes and continuities in socio-cultural practices in society.

India is a diverse country with an amalgamation of various castes, tribes, religions, communities and ethnicities. Hence, it would be fallacious to look at India from a common gastronomic cultural perspective as there are many regional and other identity-based variations. While bodily practices serve as an important means of asserting the distinctiveness of religious bodies, food accomplishes this task with particular ease and elegance, for it moves from one person's hand to another's plate and then into the body. Food passes through the boundaries of the body and becomes part of one. It is intimate and at the core of one's identity (Counihan 2004). In situations where distinctive diets mark social and religious groups, one becomes part of a community by eating or not eating certain food items (Ulrich 2007: 229).

In his ethnography of France, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu looks at taste as an indicator of identity. He argues that cultural practices like taste are determined by the social origins of individuals (Bourdieu 1979), and hence, the taste of food is also a vital sign of distinctiveness. Thus, what different classes eat is determined by their societal position in the hierarchy. Even their eating habits are determined by their class positions. Bourdieu explains in detail the differences in the eating habits of the bourgeoisie and the working class. In his ethnography, set in French,

he argues that plenty and freedom characterize the working-class meal. 'Elastic' and 'abundant' dishes are brought to the table – soups or sauces, pasta or potatoes and served with a ladle or spoon, to avoid too much measuring and counting. It is in contrast to everything that has to be cut and divided, such as roasts in bourgeoisie meals (Bourdieu 1979: 194). His argument finds resonance in the American context as well. The popularity of bread among the working class had a lot to do with the fact that it was easy to eat and did not require much preparation; in a sense, it was 'elastic' (Turner 2014: 61). Food thus encodes social meanings and is a significant display of one's identity, served and eaten differently in varying contexts by diverse groups.

However, identity cannot be seen only as ideological. It is also connected to one's material conditions. Emphasis on the material relationship between individuals shows how connections with food are different for different people. One of the fundamental contributions that Marxist thinkers have proposed is the link between ecology, material reality and food.Ecological factors like climate affect food habits too. For instance, Marvin Harris highlights how Islam has failed to attract believers in regions that are mostly dependent on pig farming as there is a taboo on pork meat in Islam (Harris *in* Counihan and Van Esterik 2013). He sets out to demonstrate that such ideas, and the nutritional practices derived from them, may well have a strong practical logic behind them, a logic which springs out of society's attempts to adapt to its physical environment and exploit available resources efficiently (Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 66). In the Indian context, Joshi et al. have tried to understand why Garhwalis consume meat despite living near other vegetarian communities who disapprove of it. While the other castes living in plain areas can substitute protein and other nutrients from vegetables, the hill-based Garhwalis are dependent on meat as their source of protein (Joshi et al. 1994: 43). The kind of climate and geographical location one is located in affect dietary habits. Thus, material reality is also an integral part of one's food habits.

The six chapters in Part I highlight the interconnections between food, culture and identity in the Indian context. Aniket Nandan's essay 'You Are What You Eat': An Assessment of Evolving Identity of Caste and Changing Food Preferences' locates Bhumihars in Bihar as a case to elucidate the processes of caste-based identity assertion and their relationship with food preferences. In most societies, the process of defining oneself is embedded in communitarian designs of asserting self-imagined socio-cultural positions. Food preferences have been integral to these processes of defining the self to formulate identity and manifest difference. In the Indian context, caste as a framework for mechanisms of

identity formulation and recognition can also be assessed by evaluating food preferences. Therefore, Nandan argues for paying closer attention to conceptions of food for understanding the modalities of identity formulation by specific caste groups. While he argues that food practices play a significant role in assessing the distinctive social habitus of a caste group, he also stresses the insistence upon 'authenticity' and 'centrality' of food items in everyday life, festivals and interpersonal relationships.

Neha Arora's chapter 'Cast(e)ing Curries: Creating the Culinary "Other"' explores Dalit food from a cultural perspective. It reads into the various new alternatives the Dalit activists are adopting to resist the exclusion of Dalit food from mainstream ideas. References are made to several Dalit food festivals and some entrepreneurial attempts to revive Dalit cuisine.

Kashyapi Ghosh and Sayan Dey's co-authored chapter 'Littoral Gastronomies and Border Eating: Dismantling the Eurocentric Narratives of "Disgusting Culinary" through the Food Habits of Fishing Communities in West Bengal, India' unfolds the diverse patterns of littoral gastronomies and border eating as socio-historically practised by the fishing communities in West Bengal. A prominent pattern of European colonization in India was to dehumanize and marginalize the food habits and the culinary practices of the native indigenous communities. It also argues how littoral gastronomies and border eating function as counter-narratives to the caste-based, class-based and colonial-based narratives of 'disgusting food habits'. This chapter initiates a counter-narrative of littoral gastronomies to dismantle the class, caste and colonial hierarchical structures that derogate the indigenous culinary practices.

Using post-nationalism as a critical tool, Md Asif Uzzaman's essay 'Eating Away (from) the National Consciousness: The Post-National Prospect of Street-Food in Muslim Localities of Bihar' analyses certain street-food prevalent in the Muslim-dominated urban locations of Bihar. Primarily dealing with two food items, Bihari kabab and beef samosa, the chapter pits them against national and regional cuisines to come up with the 'post-national' categorization, since they not only differ from the national and regional categories but also stand in contradiction to them.

Barsha Nayak's chaper, 'Indian Masalas in Kosher Kitchens: Mapping Cultural History through Cookbooks of Jewish-Indian Women' explores the food cultures of Jewish-Indian communities. The cookbooks and food memoirs they write archive their unique cuisine, one that has emerged out of a rich cultural amalgamation. They use their kitchens as libraries and the palatable Jewish-Indian recipes as texts documenting cultural anecdotes for posterity. These writings cover the food of three major Jewish-Indian communities: the Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta, the Bene

Israel of Bombay, and the Cochini Jews of Kerala. Cookbooks have also helped Jewish women survive the torments of the Holocaust. Heavily influenced by local food cultures, Indian Jews craved their food identity in Western settings and these women have written cookbooks to satisfy those cravings while preserving the community's culinary memory.

The last chapter in Part I, 'Changing Patterns of Modern Food Habits in Nagaland: A Cake Narrative' Videkhono Yhokha highlights the impact of globalization on food around the world. Cake as a food item is no longer a luxury but has become a necessity in celebrations in Nagaland, India. The chapter identifies the sources of influence and analyses the meaning and impact of such consumption on the general Naga population. The source of cake as a food item in Nagaland can be traced back to the impact of the colonial period which influenced Naga elites.

Part II: Food, Memory and Migration

Migrating individuals or communities hold on to their traditional food habits even more firmly, fearing a loss of identity. Food becomes an instrument for such persons to maintain and display their ethnic and national identities and engage in a kind of 'gastro-nostalgia' (Srinivas 2006; Saunders 2007). Food consumption is seen as a 'narrative of affiliative desire', which recreates caste, micro-regional and other social identity groupings (Srinivas 2006: 193). Food becomes closely associated with 'memory' and 'nostalgia' amongst diasporic groups that try to hold on to their 'local' habits in a global setting.

For many 'upper' caste Hindus from North India residing abroad, like the Guptas, a vegetarian diet becomes a primary tool for distinguishing themselves from others. These Hindu trans-migrants use discourse about diet as a way to maintain their connections with India, as well as to construct Indian, Hindu and caste-based identities (Saunders 2007: 204). In a largely non-vegetarian world, by non-consumption of meat, these people create distinctions between the 'self' and the 'other'. It becomes a way to proclaim that they have not lost their 'Indianness' and Indian identity despite living abroad. The opposition between the 'self' and the 'other' is firmly upheld: local food is labelled as 'authentic', 'national' or 'regional', in distinction from 'their', 'artificial' or 'international' (Scholliers and Geyzen 2010: 54). Identity is not an accomplished fact, but a 'production', which is never complete and always in process (Hall 1994: 222). Identity is a 'sense of becoming' (Hall 1994), and a vegetarian diet helps in being an 'Indian'.

Saunders' case study of Guptas living in the US illustrates this point well. The Guptas, a high-caste Hindu group, organize religious functions in their colony, prohibit Indian children from eating beef, and they too refrain from eating meat, especially in their homes (Saunders 2007). Identity is something that needs to be constantly claimed and demonstrated by these people since they are living outside of India. Eating Indian food is like ingesting 'Indianness', being nourished by it, having it flow in one's veins. Eating Indian food makes the Indian person feel that he or she is still part of the homeland or Indian culture (Mukhi 2000: 83), a part of an 'imagined community' of Indians. The diasporic Hindu community's consumption of food is closely linked to the Hindu perception of food mediating body and mind and hence must be carefully chosen and eaten (Khare and Rao 1986; Khare 1992).

The relationship between food and national identity, however, is not unique to the Indian context. For example, amongst the Florentines in Italy, certain types of food symbolize a relationship with their past. Certain foods can become emblematic 'objects of memory', symbols of the past that are no longer regularly consumed because they are too difficult to prepare or no longer palatable or customary (Counihan 2004: 25). For example, over time, young Florentines stopped cooking tripe in their homes as the process is very time-consuming. Hence, they eat tripe only when they visit their parents on holidays, and it thus becomes an 'object of memory'. With the shift to capitalism, the viable replacement for their foods with more processed and convenient ones signified a transformation of their connection to their history, their traditional social life, and their memories (ibid.: 26). Thus, food and ethnic identity are intricately connected. To cite another example, food festivals that are held in Belgium have the function of reviving interest in local Belgian cuisine and promoting it (Scholliers and Geyzen 2010: 54). For Indians living abroad, and for Florentines and Belgians, food becomes a way to hold on to their past and their origin.

The introduction of packaged foods complicates this relationship between food and identity. While many working women prefer canned and processed foods for their time-saving nature, men complain that these foods do not have the same taste that home-cooked food has (Counihan 2004). According to many Florentine men, due to packaged foods, the real taste of many dishes has lost its original touch. Thus, for them, food has lost the connection to their Florentine identities that it had before.

However, for many Indians living abroad, as well as working women residing in India, these very packaged foods become ways to hold on to their Indian past and identities. By eating 'home-made' Indian processed foods, these people maintain their connections with 'authentic'

Indian food. The role of 'home-made' food is of particular importance for women. For many women, packaged Indian food becomes a way to conform to notions of domesticity and ideal motherhood as it offers an opportunity to connect to the kind of food that their mothers used to prepare (Srinivas 2006). The 'good' mother is the one who feeds the child on demand with wholesome homemade foods (snacks, pickles, spice powders, lentils, and so on) (ibid.: 198). The yearning is for food that is just like the way 'mother or grandmother' made it. There is no longer a need to carry one's food items back from India, as the proliferation of Indian grocery stores across the US has helped make these items readily available (Saunders 2007). Packaged Indian food, then, offers these women an opportunity to stay connected to their Indian identity and also fulfil the role of a good mother. Food and foodways become crucial ways of negotiating national identities in an increasingly globalized and cosmopolitan context. The five chapters in Part II explore various facets of the relationship between food, memory and migration.

Rituparna Roy's chapter 'Eating *Shutki* in Postcolonial Bengal' explores the sociodynamics of consuming *shutki*. One of the most common reactions to *shutki*, a speciality item of sun-dried fish relished by Bengalis, especially those who migrated from East Bengal (modern-day Bangladesh), is that it 'stinks'. Roy examines the ties between food and migration through the lens of Partition, the bangal-ghoti dichotomy, and how certain culinary practices, in this case, *shutki*, generate a sense of belonging through the sensory memory of taste and smell. A pertinent argument in this context is how a micro understanding of the cuisine drives the larger conversation, and that it is imperative to go beyond Calcutta food and embrace the food of various districts of the state to truly appreciate the culinary culture of Bengal.

The next chapter in this section is 'Food, Memory, and Materiality in East African Asian Women's Narratives: A Reading of Parita Mukta's *Shards of Memory*' by Sruthi Ranjani Vinjamuri. It pierces the veil of the dominant journalistic narrative of male economic adventurism and success, and peers into the quotidian, domestic and gastronomic space of the East African Asian diaspora. The chapter explores the gustatory East African Asian realm from the point of view of migrant women who found themselves caught in the domestic folds of the community's generational peregrinations and carried with them their cuisines and ways of being.

Sehar Iqbal, Farah Qayoom and Fayaz Ahmad Bhat's co-authored chapter, 'Kashmiri Cuisine as Collective Memory: How Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits Bond over Food', explores why and how Kashmiri food is a form of indivisible collective memory. Kashmiri food has influences from Persia, Central Asia, Russia and China due to the region's place on

the Silk Road. This, combined with a profusion of natural ingredients and a long local history of foraging, has led to a vibrant, complex cuisine that forms an important part of identity and collective memory for both Kashmiri Pandit and Muslim communities. Lamb curries and foraged foods like *haakh* (greens) and *nadru* (lotus stems), all eaten with rice, are the definition of comfort food for both communities. The preservation of traditional authentic food has become a living link to home, identity and cultural continuity.

'In Search of a Recipe: 'When I Cook our Food, I Belong – My Food Centres Me' by Preetha Thomas explores the relationship between migration, identity and cultural continuities through food. The chapter is based on a conversation between the Thomas' own experiences as a migrant to the UK first and then to Australia and the experiences of a group of largely first-generation South Indian migrants from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, India who are now based in Brisbane. Migration, whether within a country or across international borders, entails the movement of people. India has a long history of internal migration, with people moving interstate for a range of intersecting reasons, largely based on employment and marriage. The food practices of these distinct migrant communities reflect their particular socio-demographic environments such as family structure, life stage of family members, gender, employment and relative affluence. Given their comparative privilege, this group of migrants had few barriers to obtaining the kinds of foods they wanted to eat in terms of accessibility, affordability or availability.

Shirin Mehrotra's chapter, 'More Than Just Kababs: Food Memories and Identities in Delhi's Afghan Refugee Areas', explores the importance of food in the production of immigrant identity and placemaking in New Delhi. Several Afghan restaurants and bakeries located in South Delhi's Lajpat Nagar, Bhogal Market and Khirki Extension serve the needs of Afghan asylum seekers and refugees. Through ethnographic research of these food outlets, the chapter aims to dive into the ways immigrants look back at the past and adapt to a new world while they recreate the ideas of home in the host country. Mehrotra also looks at the ways refugee/diaspora communities enrich the food culture of their host city.

Part III: Food, Livelihood and Nutrition

Food work is not merely physical but involves relentless mental and caring labour – planning meals, worrying about nutrition, and arranging and serving meals (DeVault 1991). Women must know the food likes and dislikes of their family members, plan the timing and location of meals

and keep up with difficult and ever-changing news on nutrition and food safety. For instance, in their study of Britain, Charles and Kerr argued how women spent time arranging the perfect meal for their families. While the inclusion of meat, like joint, steak or chop is considered desirable, sausages or fish fingers were not preferred. Hence, women had to prepare family meals after a lot of budgeting and planning (Charles and Kerr 1986: 416).

Not only is the provisioning of food gendered, but consumption of food, too, is seen as gendered in nature. While eating is a biological necessity for all human beings, the way men and women consume food is seen as very different. Eating is never only understood as a purely biological activity by people. It is a social activity encoded with meanings and thus the way men and women eat reflects social relationships. These social relationships are frequently unequal. Women are more often conscious of food's impact on their bodies (Cairns et al. 2010).

Feminine food consumption is associated with 'eating lightly' and 'dieting' rather than engaging in any indulgence (Sobal 2005: 140). Thus, the female body is socialized to think about the kind of food it is consuming, how it is consuming, and how much it is consuming. Dominant representations of women's bodies in films, novels and other forms of media have worked to distance women's food practices further from the pursuit of food pleasures, idealizing a femininity based upon diet restriction, rather than indulgence (Cairns et al. 2010). It can also be seen that in many low-income families, it is mostly women who starve most of the time to feed the men and children (Adams 2010: 49). Women are perceived as the ones who can go hungry while men need to eat. Women were socialized into accepting the idea that they should consume only meagre portions of the dishes they prepared, and into accepting that they had a duty to provide the best food for others (Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 78).

Turner has argued that the same applies to American working-class families. Poor Southerners who consumed most of their calories in cornmeal and ate few fresh vegetables, meat, fish or eggs developed chronic cases of illnesses, which grew worse in winter; women and children, who got a smaller share of the supply of meat, were hit the hardest (Turner 2014: 15). Meat is often made selectively available to males and, more specifically, preferred cuts of meat (e.g. muscle as opposed to viscera) are reserved for men in some cultures. It is also commonly understood that physical strength, an attribute more characteristic of males, requires optimal nutrition, and meat is often seen as the most nutritive and strength (i.e. muscle) inducing of foods (Rozin et al. 2012: 631). Thus, while masculinity is displayed by what men eat, femininity is represented

by what women do not eat. Nutrition is not just biologically determined, it is also socially and materially regulated, as argued by the two chapters in this section.

The first chapter in Part III by Shreeja Banerjee, 'Sprinkling Fortification: Gendering Food, Nutrition and Knowledge in Mid-Day Meals', introduces the relationship between children and food with a particular focus on the mid-day meal in India. The relationship that children have with food has been a recurrent conversation across interacting domains of the market, concerns of deficiencies and obesity, mental health, food securities, advertising and social media. Policy interventions across nation-states articulate these concerns primarily as those of hunger, malnutrition and affordability, often without considering the affective ties which children have to and around food. Cultures do not just offer a variety of ingredients that are locally specific to work with but also offer a multitude of methods of cooking. The mid-day meal programme can offer a continuum between different medicinal knowledge, which informs health and well-being rather than being in conflict.

Sampurna Das' chapter, 'A Note on High-Yielding Variety Rice and Inequality in the Floodplains of Assam, India' warns us about a technocratic understanding of flood management where humans and nature are segregated, which is at odds with the local perceptions of the landscape being relational. It underlines how the materiality of HYV (high yielding variety) rice became a mirror of the widening inequalities. The other thing that happened with the introduction of HYV rice was that, given it was a fertilizer-intensive rice variety, the land was depleted of its natural fertile qualities. There seems to be a process of misrecognition in place, which concerns the idea that char landscapes are to be understood in terms of their human interaction with water. It does not take into consideration the history of the landscape, which tells stories of how humans interacted with other material elements – the silt, sand, soil, mud and so on. Such complex narratives around HYV rice capture how the state's disaster mitigation policies are tacitly contributing to an unsustainable agricultural and food practice that damages local ecology and weakens people's livelihood capacities.

Part IV: Food, Consumption and Media

Food has attained a new visibility in recent years with a consumeristic aspect dominating its recent portrayals in the media. Young people have been sensitized to diverse culinary habits through media, education,

availability of a greater range of choices and wider social contacts. This makes them more adventurous in their tastes. Initially, cookbooks helped in developing this consumerist ethos. The growth and popularity of cookbooks are closely associated with the development of class and hierarchy. The fame and spread of cookbooks have been fuelled by print media and mostly appeal to the 'middle class' as cooking is seen as a communicable variety of expert knowledge (Appadurai 1988).

This dominant culture also manifests itself in advertising, fashion and the media. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a definitive push towards increasing the digitalization of our societies. This push is particularly visible in food. There is an upsurge in the visibility of food in the public sphere in terms of food delivery services, advertisements, photographs, videos and blogs. Media and technology, especially digital ones, have changed the way food is both produced and consumed (Patgiri 2022). The voyeuristic characteristic of social media has meant that food has become a critical site for visual capturing. Food is a particularly 'generative space' to understand the impact of the digital on human lives. The growing intersection between food habits and digital technology has larger implications on ideas of caste, class, gender and labour. The five chapters in this section explore different dimensions of the relationship between food, consumption and media.

Moureen Kalita and Aashirwad Chakravarty's chapter, 'Consuming Nippon: Food, Anime and Japanese Soft-Power in Northeast India', aims to understand how anime and manga induce culinary experiences in terms of a network of exchanges surrounding the consumption of Japanese cuisines in Northeast India. Consumption of food pushes one into a system of culinary practices wherein it acquires a centrality in the sense of collective belongingness. It becomes a marker of membership, ergo, a cultural identity. Japan's essence reverberates in its armour of cuisines. It is worth mentioning how this essence has been further dispersed through popular culture mediums, including Japanese animated books (manga) and movies (anime). These mediums, simultaneously and equally (if not more than traditional forms of media), have played a significant role in its cultural diffusion.

Amrita Basu Roy Chowdhury's chapter, 'Are Food Advertisements Gendered? A Content Analysis of Post-Pandemic Bengali Print Advertisements on Food', concentrates on food advertisements published between March 2020 and May 2022 in *Anandabazar Patrika*, *Ei Samay* and *Sangbad Pratidin* – three leading Bengali dailies in terms of circulation. This chapter aims to trace how food is continuously being presented as a gendered category in Bengali print advertisements, even during the

COVID-19 pandemic. These advertisements influence food choices and preferences resulting in gendered consumption of food.

Disha Bisht and Priyakshi Pandey's chapter, 'The Digitalization of Uttarakhand's Cuisine: A Case Study of eUttaranchal', aims to explore how eUttaranchal has channelled the digital space into advocating cultural aspects of Uttarakhand, especially food. The local cuisine in the state offers a variety of foods that are usually divided into Kumaoni and Garhwali recipes (these two regions are the administrative divisions within the state). The ubiquitous power of the internet and the digital landscape has gradually transformed the outreach of the state's cuisine to a relatively wider range of people. One such digital platform that has made this change is eUttaranchal, a 2003 start-up that began with the goal of promoting the culture of Uttarakhand through digital means. Since 2003, eUttaranchal has had a strong digital presence in promoting various aspects of the state.

Sohini Bhattacharjee's chapter, 'Virtually Mediated Farms: Social Media, Digitalization and Organic Farms in India', explores the potential benefits of digitalization for organic food producers in India. The chapter delves into how 'knowing' the farm and the farmer, otherwise distant and often invisible, is mediated by social media platforms in the case of alternatives. Digitalization of experiences from the farm to the plate via social media enables sharing them with an interconnected virtual community. For these farmers, documenting the life of the farm, the produce and its people through audio-visual and textual content in social media becomes an important avenue for promotion, marketing and virtually (re)connecting with an audience.

Diganta Bhattacharya's 'Food, Social Media and Representation: An Emergent Syntax of Homogenizing the Indian Heterogeneity' seeks to argue that food vlogging or YouTube channels have been instrumental in manufacturing and reinforcing a discourse of *desi* food, which conflates a multiplicity of local variables and differences to validate a generalizable, horizontal Indian-ness. Twenty-first-century culinary behaviour is characterized by something that is inherently counter-intuitive: it is one in which people are far more invested in the performance of eating than eating itself. Digitized food behaviour, when turned into a spectacle, follows its syntax and tentatively established structure of expectation. The result(s) are intriguing interfaces between traditional modalities of physical engagement with food practices and an emergent digital code of conduct vis-à-vis how to engage with this existent and enduring physicality. The markers that make Indian cuisine satisfactorily 'Indian' have as much to do with the choice of spices and ingredients, as with ethnocultural customs, practices and associations. Consequently, in this age of

packaged representation, which is targeted at specific spectator communities, food vlogs are enjoying increased traction in terms of online traffic or number of viewers/subscribers for reasons that are never limited to food-as-it-is, but for consumption-as-it's-represented.

This book highlights the complexities surrounding food in India, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between food, culture and society. It brings together a rich collection of narratives, which are informed by empirically driven research. The volume will be useful to students of multiple disciplines, cutting across sociology, social anthropology, international development, geography, culture studies and food studies.

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