

Interplay of Food, Family, and Technology in *Ustad Hotel*: An Analysis on Food Culture's Evolution in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Literature is life. Life is precious and unique for every human. To lead a longer and healthy life food plays a major role. Food is one of the most needed basic necessities. After having food, Science plays a crucial role by converting food into energy. Food available in one place is unique from other places. It differ from state to state, country to country, Continent to Continent. People love and hate cuisine available in other countries. People did not always need to travel to taste the lovely food of other lands. In the Digital Era, with the help of technology and Social media, people are interlinked and well aware about the special and specific foods available in each and every state. By seeing the food and cuisine available online, people can prepare the same cuisine and enjoy it. The intersection of Digital Humanities as food available on screen, Health Humanities as a benefit of having healthy food, Cultural Studies as food transfers from one state to other states, even Continents . So food helps to blend three various disciplines.

Keywords: Technology, Social Media, Human Intelligence, Cuisine, Cultural Capital, etc.

Objectives

- To explore the portrayal of food in Literature and cinema "Ustad Hotel"
- To analyze the influence of technology, social media, and artificial intelligence in shaping modern food narratives and cultural dissemination

Methodology

Literature and film analysis, Comparative analysis.

Literature Review



Film Analysis ("Ustad Hotel")



Content Analysis

→ Themes
→ Symbols
→ Narratives



Interpretation & Discussion

Food literature has become one of the inevitable interdisciplinary branches of literature. The person who writes about food not only enjoys the taste of the food alone, apart from that he explores the culture of the people through food, he could examine the landscape of the state or district. Food literature has its deep connection with travelogue, both the fields are interconnected mutually. Food literature is a genre of writing that focuses on food and its cultural, historical, social, and personal significance. It encompasses a wide range of literary forms, including novels, memoirs, essays, and poetry, all centered around the theme of food. Food literature often explores the relationship between food and identity, memory, community, and the human experience. Here are a few notable examples of food literature: 1. “Like Water for Chocolate” by Laura Esquivel: This novel tells the story of Tita, a young woman who expresses her emotions and experiences through cooking. Each chapter is accompanied by a recipe, and the book explores themes of love, passion, and family traditions through the lens of food.

“Kitchen Confidential” by Anthony Bourdain: In this memoir, renowned chef Anthony Bourdain takes readers behind the scenes of the restaurant industry. He provides candid and often humorous insights into the culinary world, sharing stories of his experiences, adventures, and the passion that drives him. “The Omnivore’s Dilemma” by Michael Pollan: This non-fiction work investigates the origins of our food and the impact of our food choices on the environment, our health, and society. Pollan explores different food production systems and offers thought-provoking insights into our modern food culture.

Cultural Capital is an unique and intangible asset that every human possess. Under culture capital Knowledge, skills, values, behavior will make a man different. Preparing a Cuisine is a cultural capital. It is available until humans are available in the world. Cultural Capital varies from place to place as food is different from place to place.

A person can travel to a lot of places to explore and enjoy the famous food which is available in that place, likewise the mouth watering food of the particular place can make a person to travel. The prosperity of the state or country cannot be decided only with the economic growth and development, it could also be justified through the poverty rate of the country. According to the survey, Bihar stays high in the table with the percentage of 51.9 and in fact Kerala is low in the table with the percentage of 0.7.

Through dining, we can know the culture of places. Food has its impact on cinema. Food has been considered as one of the major themes in certain films. Movies express the political inequalities in the state through food. The directors are portraying the love between hero and heroine through songs by connecting the lyrics with sweet or spicy dishes. Tamil movies related to food are “Anniyan”(2005),”Matran”(2012), “pizza”(2012), “kukka Muttai” (2014), “size Zero” (2015),”Aruvam”(2019) and “Miss India” (2020),”Theeni” (2021).

This paper elaborates on the importance of Kareem Bhai’s famous Malabar biryani through adaptation of the film “Ustad Hotel” (2012). Anwar Rasheed brought out the importance of food in the medium of Malabar biryani through this film Ustad Hotel. Food gives energy to perform work. Food is not just the substance which is solid or liquid in shape, it is the mere representation of emotion and empathy. The director of this film clearly pictured how humanity still survives in this materialistic world. Abdul Razaq is the son of Kareem. He ignores his father. The film revolves around father and son with the battle of whether to continue in the cooking profession

and also between grandfather and grandson who encourages his ambition of becoming a chef and in fact he also trains him how to be soulful in his profession. Faizal apart from his father's wish, he graduated in the Hotel management course. Which triggered his father's anger towards Faizal. Now Faizal is disappointed with his father's opinion.

The climax of the film starts when Faizal is in search of his grandfather Kareem and also he is his guru for his profession. When Faizal reached Kozhikode to meet grandfather, he still had the vision of moving to Switzerland to seek a job. Kareem changed his grandson's aim of moving to Switzerland with his casual and humanistic behavior towards his fellow co-workers. In this movie I was able to see two sorts of people, one who led the hotel for the money making process. Beach Bay restaurant is selling Ustad Hotel biryani by fixing the rate which is ten times higher. On the other hand, Kareem bhai who is running the Hotel to help his workers. Kareem has the mentality to help his servants when they are in need of money. He scheduled his one part of daily profit to the worker who had asked earlier. Kareem usually does not save the money, rather he secretly sends it to a person which will be revealed in the later part of the story. He used the money to fulfill the dreams of others.

Faizal's grandfather used to say this often to his grandson that "anyone can fill the stomach but one should be satisfied mentally too". Faizal started using his grandfather's manthra in his cuisine. Later, through Ustad Hotel's customers Faizal came to know that his grandfather's Malabar biryani used to starve everybody who lived around there. Ustad Hotel's biryani is similar and familiar biryani which is cooked at home. It was serving as a real emotion to the foodies for more than thirty five years. Faizal started to help his grandfather. He soon learns his trick which he used to prepare the tasty Malabar biryani. Food as love and life is the core of this film. Faizal comes forward to connect with his grandfather's manthra "love should be added with food to feel tastier". After the cardiac arrest, Kareem was unable to run his hotel successfully. Now he sends his grandson Faizal with a letter, to Madurai where he is going to meet Narayan Krishnan.

Kareem used to send his profit to Narayan Krishnan, whose mission was to provide food to the orphan and starving people around the Madurai district. Narayan wants to show why they are cooking and what are the motifs of cooking, according to the letter which he got from Kareem Bhai. To define the words of Kareem, Narayan tells his own story to Faizal. Once he was a senior chef in Taj hotel, Mumbai. When he came back to his native he saw an old man, who was starving for food and living without a single drop of water. The hunger made him eat his own faeces. That incident triggered Narayan Krishnan not to serve his foreign guests but to serve his own native people who are living without any identity. He also says that "One will not say enough whatever others may give but food is the only thing which tends to say enough, I'm full".

That became the turning point in Narayan Krishnan's life. Faizal, inspired by his word. He put down his ambition of moving to Switzerland and started to cook and serve for hungry people. At once, while he cooked Malabar chicken biriyani for an orphanage, he came to understand his grandfather's words that "one can fill the stomach but one should be satisfied mentally too". The orphan children loved and ate Faizal Biryani, because he not only added the quality materials for preparing biryani but followed the mantra of his grandfather. They kissed Faizal and blessed him through their sign language. The smile on their faces which cannot be gained by money. Movie ends with a happy message that "Ustad Hotel" is owned by Faizal and his family members. He still continues in the path of Kareem by providing food to the needy and offering the profit for the well-being of the workers.

Humanity is still surviving in this world. For that Kareem became one significant reason. Ultimate aim of gaining money is not only buying properties but to give to those who are in need of money. Food which is made with love gives you heartfelt satisfaction. In the modern era everything

seems to be digitized. In social media food plays its major role. There are so many food delivering applications like swiggy, zomato etc.. Food is a simple thing for those who have money. It is a complex thing for someone who doesn't have money. One should have the helping tendency to help the people who are living below the poverty line. For instance, let us think about pandemic. Survey says that yearly 3.1 million children die due to poor nutrition and hunger. So if you see any people who are unable to move or work, provide food to them. Ensure that everyone's stomachs are full. That will be the major findings.

Findings

- Food as a Cultural Expression and emission of human emotion with references to the film Ustad Hotel.
- Interconnectedness of Food and Culture identified with the theory cultural Capital.
- Food as a Symbol of Identity, Love through the signs of Faizal and Kareem Bhai's cooking capabilities.
- Social Responsibility and Compassion as a celebration of both grandfather and grandson.

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