
Canned Empire, Curried Resistance: Taste, Reception, and Remonstrance of the Anglo-Indian Fusion Food

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Abstract

British rule in India was not only marked by colonial dominance and economic exploitation, but also by significant exchanges and resistance. This dynamic was instrumental in the development of Anglo-Indian culinary culture, which became a significant political site reflecting colonial remonstrance and cultural adaptation. If the culinary connection between the British and the Indians can be traced back to the spice trade, the adoption of Indian food in the daily lives of the colonial British masters testifies to their process of acclimatisation with the Indian climate, as well as social life. Moreover, food habits, foodways, and food culture also contribute to the identity construction of the British officials in India, who were positioned in a colonial mid-space in India. Therefore, eating food is more than a biological necessity; it is “central to our subjectivity...and our experience of embodiment” (Lupton 1). This paper intends to study the impact of fusion food in the Anglo-Indian context to explore how the integration of foodways and habits serves as a vital site for cultural contact and contestation. The study would also explore the idea of gastrosemantics to understand the social and cultural implications associated with fusion food through exploring tinned food as a symbol of pure British culinary tradition introduced into the colony and the adoption of curry as a marker of adaptation and contest.

Keywords: culinary culture; gastrosemantics; reception; adaptation; contest.

Introduction

Food is a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behaviours. (Barthes 21)

Any critical exploration of food and foodways entails the deciphering of the symbolic, cultural, and social codes that function as a medium of communication, interaction, classification, and identity construction. Marcel Mauss in *The Gift* (1925) goes further to state that food is the principal gift that can be exchanged; and it can be given to sustain and to create bonds, which clearly underscores food as a “total social fact” (100). On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1996) emphasises the power of food as a marker of social and cultural distinction and argues that choices and preferences of food indicate social class as well as cultural capital. The food that is consumed, the way it is consumed, and with whom it is consumed reinforce social distinction, underline political relations, and form cultural identity. Therefore, the trajectory of how an edible item becomes a food is at once social, cultural, and political, which makes food and the taste of food a social construct. The above observation on the poetics and politics of food and foodways brings in the idea of ‘gastrosemantics’ that tries to read the

symbolic meaning of food within a socio-political framework and refers to the meaning that it exerts, is understood, and interpreted across different cultural contexts. Gastrosemanantics takes food beyond its life-sustaining and nurturing connotations to a much broader area where the preparation of food, the place of its origin, the practice of eating the food, the socio-cultural rituals, and religious beliefs are focused upon to show how it builds a culinary tradition that forms and shapes cultural identities and worldviews.

The Anglo-Indian Encounter: The History of Fusion

The present study intends to adopt an interdisciplinary approach combining food studies, postcolonial theory, and also the cultural history to explore the Anglo-Indian culinary culture as a potent site of colonial transaction and resistance. The study engages in a textual analysis of Anglo-Indian life writings and household manuals related to British culinary practices in India. Drawing on the concept of gastrosemanantics, the study focuses on the cultural and political codes embedded in the culinary objects and practices, particularly the diametrical roles of tinned food and curry as markers of the preservation of imperial purity and colonial adaptation. Employing the postcolonial framework of hybridity, adaptation, and cultural exchange, the study also underlines how food acts as a medium through which colonial identities are formed, contested, and transformed, and eventually posits culinary praxis within the broader socio-historical framework to unfurl the ways in which food becomes a powerful domain for both imperial superiority and cultural remonstrance. It also purports to explore the trends of reception, rejection, resistance, and appropriation to underline the social, political, and cultural factors that went into the formation of the Anglo-Indian culinary fusion and the semiotic value of food within the colonial paradigm. Here, the idea associated with the hyphenated phrase ‘Anglo-Indian’ not only points to the mixed race of the Eurasian community born of the British colonial rule in India, but also encompasses and focuses on the hybrid culture that emerged from the intercultural assimilation of the colonial British masters and the colonised Indians. Nevertheless, the paper studies the tradition of the fusion food that was created in the kitchens of the Anglo-Indian community, but its primary focus is to trace the foodway that emerged from the colonial contact zones.

Before going into the analysis of the effects of the Anglo-Indian encounter in culinary culture, it would be rather helpful to have a cursory view of the history of the Anglo-Indian community that was born of this encounter. This would help to contextualise the exploration of the impact of Anglo-Indian culinary fusion within a firm historical framework. Mohona Kanjilal writes, “[w]hen the British officials living in the Indian subcontinent married women of Indian origin and had children with them, these children came to be called Anglo-Indians.” (147) The emergence and the socio-cultural location of the Anglo-Indian in Indian society during the pre- and the post-independence period were always in an interstitial mid-space. While the colonial masters largely saw them as inferiors, or “half-castes”, the Indians never trusted them for their inclination towards the British Raj. Moreover, there was a common belief that the Anglo-Indians always wanted the British rule to persist. This belief put the Anglo-Indians in a more vulnerable position when the British masters left India in 1947. The insecurity and the angst of their minority position compelled them to leave India and move to England, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Interestingly, a considerable number of Anglo-Indians live in India today, and the immigrants, nevertheless having a strong predilection for the European connection, feel a connection with India. Precisely, they are stuck between their unique collective memory of the past and the anxiety of maintaining their singular position within Indian society after Independence. Isha Doshi, in her essay on the impact of food and Language in the survival of the Anglo-Indian Community, observes that,

unlike other Asian mixed races that were born of the European colonial rule, the Anglo-Indians are a growing community because of their distinctive culinary tradition and their unique way of speaking, which is a result of their struggle to maintain their ethnic and racial singularity. She writes:

Anglo-Indians in India still speak English as a first language and communities exist which hold on to Scottish and English food traditions such as meatloaf and sago pudding. Meanwhile, Anglo-Indian immigrants in the West still use Hindi and Persian-derived words in their speech (at least when amongst family or community), recall snacks such as “rosa cookies” and “kul-kuls” with fondness, and often have spicy curry and basmati rice as their most frequent cuisine at home. (16-17)

Doshi’s observations go beyond the study of the culinary tradition of the Anglo-Indian community and eventually point to its importance in understanding the cultural codes and meanings of a particular society, community, or any collective identity. As E. Anderson indicates, culinary tradition “conveys messages about group identification” (128); food and foodways are, therefore, important factors to explore the identity, social location, and culture of the British-Indian society. It also helps to focus on how Indians interacted, correlated, entertained, and countered the British colonial rule of almost two hundred years. David Burton comments, “[T]he whiff of spice lured Britain to India.” (1). Precisely, culinary tradition has a complex connection with the colonial rule in India, and following Deborah Lupton’s observation, it can be inferred that though food culture is believed to be associated with “banal practices of everyday life” (1), it is charged with strong political and cultural implications. Moreover, this connection with everyday life gives it a social significance that, in turn, becomes instrumental in constructing the individual or collective identity. In this context, Lupton observes that food and foodways are “central to our subjectivity, or sense of self, and our experience of embodiment” (1), which aptly underscores the importance of Anglo-Indian culinary tradition in the making of their identity.

Gastrosemantics of Food: The Politics of Self and the Other

The importance of food and foodways in ascertaining the subjectivity and identity of any class, community, or collective also underlines and examines the gastrosemantics of food that spreads beyond the materiality and nutritional values of food to locate the social, cultural, and political codes embedded within it and subsequently explore how it functions as a system of signs communicating hierarchies, identities, desires, and power relations. Within the paradigm of a colonial socio-political and cultural context, the gastrosemantics of colonial fusion food emerges as a loaded semiotic site where the issues of race, class, and cultural capital negotiate. This gives rise to a distinct culinary tradition that is informed by ethnic hybridity and social in-betweenness. The present discussion on the Anglo-Indian fusion food purports to underscore the gastrosemantics of this British colonial culinary tradition, where the invention of curry was not only a counter discourse of the tinned food that was imported from England for the Englishmen posted in India, but also complements the European culinary tradition by acclimatising the Englishmen with a food habit that is commensurate with the Indian climate. The contrasting trajectory of the tinned food and curry also exposes how food and foodways connote meanings that cross their immediate and common functions to become the gastrosemantic markers of colonial supremacy, cultural reception and resistance. This assimilation of the food and foodways also helped the British rulers to understand the socio-cultural customs and rituals of India. On the other hand, it was also the determining factor between the colonial self and the colonised other. The very idea of food

seen from the socio-cultural perspective is connected to various spatial and temporal limits that help in maintaining this difference between the “self” and the “other,” in terms of social hierarchy, cultural differences, and power relations. Claude Fischler argues that “[t]he way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organisation, and at the same time, both its oneness and the otherness of whoever eats differently” (“Food Self and Identity” 275). Therefore, cuisine and culinary tradition become a very important political factor within a colonial context. In fact, commensality, according to the food anthropologists, is important for maintaining the social network. Food, then, becomes a social instrument in forming social or cultural groups that, in turn, function on the politics of inclusion and exclusion. So, food and foodways in British colonial India were a matter of class distinction, maintenance of hierarchy, and establishing order and meaning to the otherwise disorganised social structure of the colony. This colonial supremacy associated with food and foodways played on the binary of the civilised/uncivilised. Deborah Lupton comments that Erasmus von Rotterdam in *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium* (1539) “was intent on using the ritual of meals to make society more disciplined” (21). Caroline Lusin, in her study on Anglo-Indian Life Writing, also refers to Stephen Mennell’s *All Manners of Food* (1985), which has as its motto a quotation from Owen Meredith, Earl of Lytton: “[C]ivilized man cannot live without cooks. She further observes: “Mennell shows the development of eating practices and table manners was crucial to the development of a civilised European society that espoused its own peculiar concepts of proper taste and behaviours.” (471) Lusin’s study directly underlines the correlation between culinary culture and the idea of civilised or uncivilised. As a matter of fact, table manners, eating practices, and etiquette determined the rules of commensality in colonial India.

The emergence of colonial fusion food can be understood as a colonial strategy that tried to bridge the gap between the ruler and the ruled, maintaining the political and social distance required for smooth governance and management. The newly arrived British experienced India as an ‘other’ in terms of climate, population, and food. They found India to be a harmful place where physical contamination goes hand in hand with psychological and moral contamination, indolence, improper manners, and consequently leads to racial degeneration. A.E Collingham finds that the body was “central to the colonial experience” and “the taxing climate was thought to cause hypochondria, fatigue, irritability, headaches, insomnia, premature menstruation, sexual profligacy or insanity.” (2) The initial distance between the British with India and Indian life was also because of certain British beliefs and manners that always champion British customs, ritual, and culture, which is why, unlike other colonizers, who easily assimilated with and adapted to the social and cultural customs of the colonized, the British rulers tried to turn their colonies into England. As a consequence, the newly arrived British officials and their families indulged in an English breakfast with baked beans, fried or scrambled eggs, baked bacon, pork sausages, fried or grilled tomatoes, bread, marmalade, butter, and wine. This made them susceptible to dysentery, cholera, and other enteric diseases in the hot and humid Indian weather. Thus, the colonial distance between the British and the Indians was primarily due to climate and food habits that are closely related to each other, and, in turn, mark the importance of adaptation and assimilation in foodways and food habits for both ends to meet. Apart from the cuisine and culinary, the kitchen space also emerged as a site of conflict between the English and the Indian notions of cleanliness and hygiene. There are ample examples of somewhat funny but unappetizing stories of the English kitchen in India, run and controlled by the Indian cooks. The memsahibs, who later came to live with their husbands posted in India, reported having found soups strained through dirty pieces of cloth or the table servants using their toes as a toast rack. Flora Annie

Steel and Grace Gardiner, in their *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1888), focusing on the dirty habits of the Indian cooks, write in the preface:

The kitchen is a black hole, the pantry a sink. The only servant who will condescend to tidy up is a skulking savage with a red broom; whilst pervading all things broods the stifling, enervating atmosphere of custom, against which energy beats itself unavailingly, as against feather bed. (6)

The authors in the book put the task upon the memsahibs to instil the sense of duty, hygiene, organisation, and order that would refine the colonised cooks in the English kitchen in India. Such books turned out to be a rule book for how to become a perfect and dutiful Victorian memsahib who would take up the sacred task of refining the Indian cooks and the kitchens, which in turn is likened to the white man's burden to civilise India and the Indian mind with Victorian prudence and efficiency. Precisely, food and foodways in colonial India crossed the border of the "banality of everyday life" (Inglis 1) to arrive at a much broader social and political space that established the superiority of the civilised British culture. Gesa Stedman, while writing about this culinary exchange within a colonial relationship, observes:

If cooking symbolically corresponds to a process of civilization, one might take this metaphor a step further and argue that incorporating foreign foodstuffs into an established diet could be described in terms of colonization. In both cases, this involves imposing one's own norms and rules on the colonized. (274)

The above observation pertinently underscores how culinary culture and tradition within a colonial set-up attempt to form a fusion culinary culture entailing a political narrative where the coloniser's eating habits and style are considered a mark of civilisation, which should be emulated and adopted in order to be acknowledged as civilised and, in turn, powerful.

The Tin or the Curry: Celebrating 'Gastronomic Chauvinism'

The formation of the Anglo-Indian cuisine was a mark of the imperial superiority that strengthened the colonial hierarchy. A.E. Collingham points out that eating British food "was a means of claiming membership of the polite society" (71), and it offers a comparatively higher social position. While imitating the British food habits and table manners, the Anglo-Indian, along with the Indian, who were strongly influenced by the colonial rule, started to establish the superiority of the English food over the Indian, often rejecting the Indian food and foodways that were commensurate with the Indian climate and culture. Thus, this 'gastronomic chauvinism' (Duffy 231) resulted in their social distance from the common Indian masses, whom they looked down upon like the British officials. Interestingly, the British rulers, who were keener on acquiring political control and commercial monopoly over India, used the in-betweenness of this group comprising the Anglo-Indian community and the English-educated Indians to bridge the gap between the rulers and the ruled. This British political strategy was also instrumental in the formation of the Anglo-Indian culinary tradition that was not only a marker of social difference but also the instrument for assimilation and adaptation for a more complex colonial control over India. The Anglo-Indian culinary tradition, which is the focal point of this study, is characterised by the political, cultural, and social strategies that incorporate both the gastronomic superiority and efforts at cultural assimilation of the Anglo-Indian culture. The resultant tension between colonial dominance and collaborative practices is exemplified by the use of tinned food and curries. If tinned food stands for the imported Britishness, which is preserved and kept intact in a sealed can, the curry signifies a fusion of ingredients, spices, and cooking procedures.

The preference for tinned food among the British officers posted in India actually traces back to their nostalgic remembrance of their homeland. This preference, according to Lusin, “illustrates the idea that if food is consumed for its symbolic value, this value becomes more important than the food taste” (473). Lusin’s observation shows that these tinned foods were often inferior in taste, texture, and quality because the preservation procedures were not yet developed at that time, so that they could remain fresh for months. But these tins became metaphors of home for the British, which fueled their ‘gastronomic chauvinism,’ helped them to establish the superiority of British culture, and finally justified British rule in India. The imperial preference for tinned foods in India also provides a materialist dimension to the relationship between food and empire. Sidney W. Mintz in *Sweetness and Power* (1985) comments, “Food preferences are close to the centre of self-definition; they are reliable markers of difference, of rank, of class and personality” (185). It underlines how eating as a social act is firmly implicated in the economic and political structures. Mintz’s work examines how food items work through imperial circuits and become instrumental to cultural authority and work as the “cause of social differentiation.” (153). Within this framework, the imported tinned foods can be accepted as gastrosemantic symbols of imperial modernity, technological excellence, and the colonial tendency to maintain the imperial culinary distinctness within an unknown environment.

On the other hand, the invention of curry as a symbol of culinary assimilation happened in the kitchens of the British officials. These kitchens were primarily run by the Indian cooks, who were popularly known as *khansamas*. The word derives from the Persian *khan*, or the lord, and *saman*, or the household items. So, *Khansamas* literally refers to the high officials who were in charge of the Mughal households. Later, the British Indian households started appointing Indians as house stewards or butlers, who were supposed to manage the household affairs, finances, and eventually included the kitchen. In the early years, when the British officials or soldiers were posted in India, they used to come alone without their families. Naturally, their households were completely managed by the Indian *Khansamas*, who also cooked for the British masters. These Indian cooks fed their masters with rice and a meat preparation cooked with Indian spices, which could be considered the early form of curry. Thus, dishes like *chicken dak bungalow* were prepared in the British kitchens by the Indian *Khansamas*. The name itself originates from the government-run rest houses for the British officers travelling on mail routes or *dak*. The resident cook or the *khansama* would prepare a simple chicken recipe with whatever limited ingredients were available in the rest house, located in a remote place. The chicken dish was prepared with whole Indian spices, often with hard-boiled eggs, potatoes that suited and soothed the palate and heart of the weary British official after a long day. The popularity of chicken dak bungalow illustrates how the British palate was slowly getting seasoned with Indian spices and, in turn, with the Indian foodways. This development can be marked as the initial endeavour in the formation of the gastrosemantics associated with Anglo-Indian fusion food.

From Tins to Curry: The Poetics of Assimilation

The present study has already mentioned how the arrival of the wives of the British officials turned the British kitchens into a site of colonial contestation and assimilation. This cultural difference related to food hygiene, cleanliness, table manners, and etiquette ultimately became instrumental in the fashioning of a hybrid foodway, which can be termed the Anglo-Indian culinary culture. Here, ‘hybrid foodway’ refers to what Arjun Appadurai points to as a medium that negotiates social relations, identity, hierarchy, and power. In his essay “Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia” (1981) he reads gastro-politics as the political dimensions of

food practices, and observes, “[T]he general semiotic properties of food take particularly intense forms in the context of gastro-politics—where food is a medium, and sometimes the message, of conflict.” (495) Along with marking the culinary phenomenon both as a site of cultural conflict and negotiation, his study on gastro-politics underscores food as a medium and message of colonial encounter that “serves two diametrically opposed semiotic functions: it can either homogenizethe actors who transact in it, or it can serve to heterogenize them.” (494) If gastrosemantics exposes the symbolic valence of food within power relations, gastro-politics analyses how food mediates the power relations. Thus, the gastro-politics of Anglo-India fusion food records the paradox that juxtapose the conflict (heterogenisation) and the contact (homogenisation) of the colonizers and the colonized through culinary culture and praxis. This assimilative venture was successfully materialised by the British memsahibs and the Indian *Khansamas* through their unique contributions to the Anglo-Indian cuisines that were cooked with Indian spices. Mohona Kanjilal, in her book *A Taste of Time* (2021), writes that the Anglo-Indian fusion food was primarily prepared and served to the white, who gradually developed a taste for such food. While writing about these recipes, Mohona Kanjilal further comments:

Anglo-Indian shepherd’s pie tastes slightly different from its British counterpart. British shepherd’s pie is made with minced meat, which is cooked with chopped onions and other vegetables like carrots, corn of peas, salt, pepper, tomato puree, Worcestershire sauce, and meat stock.... Anglo Indian shepherd’s pie, on the other hand, is made with minced meat, which is cooked with chopped onions and other vegetables like carrots, corn of peas, ginger and garlic, ground coriander, cumin, dried red chillies and garam masala, as well as salt, pepper, Worcestershire sauce... (150)

The use of spices like coriander, dried red chillies, or garam masala that characterise Indian foods indicates the development of the fusion or mishmash of both cuisines. The *Khansamas* in various parts of India started cooking European cuisines with locally available ingredients that went into the making of a rich Anglo-Indian culinary tradition consisting of dishes like Mulligatawny soup, (spicy lentil and meat soup cooked with Indian spices), Kedgeree (a mixed rice with an assortment of smoked fish, hard-boiled eggs seasoned with Indian spices), the famous Vindaloo (the adaptation from the Portuguese ‘cane de vinhad’alhos’, where meat is cooked in white vinegar), or the Calcutta Chops. The Railway Mutton Curry also has a history of its origin. This mildly spiced mutton dish was popular with the British officials travelling by train. The dish was introduced by Spencer’s Catering Company sometime in 1900 and was served in first-class cabins, pantry cars, and also at the station refreshment rooms. Bridget White-Kumar, in her discussion on Anglo-Indian food, writes:

The curry was not too spicy, keeping in mind the delicate palates of the British. It was prepared with tender pieces of lamb or mutton, potatoes, and other Indian condiments, along with the addition of vinegar, tamarind juice, or yoghurt. The dish was left to simmer on low heat for more than an hour, so as to absorb all the flavours, making it truly a dish fit for a connoisseur! It was also popular with the Anglo-Indian Railway staff, who had to be on-duty for long periods at a stretch. (xiii)

Bridget’s comments on the ingredients and preparation of this dish mark some important aspects of the gastrosemantics of Anglo-Indian fusion food. Apart from seasoning the dish with Indian condiments, the process of slow cooking connects it with the Mughal culinary tradition of ‘dum pukht’ or the slow cooking in a sealed container. The *Khansamas*, who might have a connection with the Awadhi or Mughal culinary culture, could have introduced

this cooking method in preparing Anglo-Indian mutton gravy. The use of tamarind or vinegar to preserve food in long train journeys also signifies an interesting facet of the Anglo-Indian fusion food. Tamarind is a major ingredient in South Indian culinary culture, and vinegar was in Portuguese dishes, as in vindaloo. Therefore, the introduction of the Railway not only connected various parts of India, but the dish that was born in the Railway pantry cars fused the North Indian Mughal or Awadhi culinary techniques with South Indian cooking styles, thereby uniting India as a British colony through the rich tapestry of the Anglo-Indian culinary fusions.

The above observation on the Anglo-Indian fusion food clearly underscores the political valence of food and foodways in colonial India, where food culture, food habits, manners, and processes become a part of the diplomatic strategies. The advent of curry was not just a counter discourse to the tinned foods that were imported from England, but it emerged as a complement to the British food habit, making it more seasoned and apt for the Indian soil. The British officials or the soldiers posted in India started refashioning their eating habits and routine, which would start with a light breakfast or the “chota hazri” in the morning, followed by tiffin as lunch, the elaborate afternoon tea following the British culinary ritual, and dinner as the main meal in the evening. The routine clearly shows that despite their gastronomic superiority, they started adapting the Indian eating routine, style, and dishes that would help them to survive in India. Actually, the concept of curry is a mark of the formation of the gastrosemantics associated with the Anglo-Indian fusion food, where the British strive for political dominance and establishing cultural superiority go hand in hand with colonial adaptation. Instead of viewing cultural exchange as a hierarchical one-way process of colonial imposition, the ambivalence in Anglo-Indian fusion food can be examined in the light of Bhabha’s “Third Space” to define the colonial culinary encounter. If Bhabha’s “Third Space” underscores the emergence of a cultural matrix that unsettles the notion of a pure and stable identity and “enables other positions to emerge” (211), the evolution of curry in the Anglo-Indian culinary practice celebrates the hybridity that this ‘third space’ epitomises by making “the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process.” (37) This ambivalence not only resolves the tension between the two cultures but also blurs the fixed identities of the giver and the receiver. Precisely, the gastrosemantics of the Anglo-Indian fusion not only establishes it as a colonial contact zone but also as a language that both asserts and remonstrates colonial authority. Hence, the transition from tinned food to the making of curry shows a dual tendency of the British rulers towards Indian culture and social customs, which, in the words of Gesa Stedman, oscillated “between outright rejection and covert appropriation” (274). This shift also underlines the ramifications of the development of Anglo-Indian culinary tradition in the prolongation of nearly two centuries of colonial rule.

Grotesque/Civilised: The Politics of British Commensality

The inception of fusion food as a result of assimilative and adaptive politics of the British rulers to meet the gap with their colonised subjects also brings to the surface issues like the role of Anglo-Indian fusion food in drawing the boundary between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, and the resultant anxiety of the British in incorporating Indian food and foodways. This anxiety also underlines the colonial politics where the British-Indian commensality plays a pivotal role. The above issues can be addressed by referring to two collections of journal letters— Fanny Parks *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque, During Four-and-Twenty Years in the East: With Revelations of Life in Zenana* (1850) and *Up the Country: Letters from India* (1866) by Emily Eden, the sister of Governor-General Sir Auckland. Both Fanny and Emily were in India at the same time, though Fanny stayed for a

longer period of twenty-four years (1822-1846). Emily's six-year stay in India as the acting first lady to her unmarried brother offers a partial yet detailed account of her encounters and interactions with the political and social circle of the Upper Provinces of India. On the other hand, Fanny Parks was the wife of a British official posted in India, and was an English lady having an unusual and unconventional attitude towards Indian life and culture. Notwithstanding the contemporaneity of the ladies, their ways of seeing the social and cultural life of India were different because of their differences in social status. While Fanny was freer to explore India and Indian life along with its flora and fauna, Emily was restricted by the government protocols, which allowed her a limited scope to interact and communicate with the native Indians. Apart from the difference in the social stations where these ladies were posited, there was also a difference in their attitude towards India and Indian life, which offers us two different colonial lenses to look into the culture and customs of British rule in India. Interestingly, both of them heavily depended upon the culinary culture and tradition to look into Indian social and cultural life, along with drawing its differences from their own. The difference in their attitude to Indian culinary culture and custom can be understood from their observations on the British-Indian commensality. Emily records her experience of having dinner with the Sikh ruler Runjeet Singh. When the Maharaja serves them with his own hands, Emily recalls:

[W]e contrived to empty the glass on the carpet occasionally. That carpet must have presented a horrible scene when we went. I know that under my own chair I deposited two broiled quails, an apple, a pear, a great lump of sweetmeat, and some pomegranate seeds, which Runjeet gave me with his dirty fingers into my hand, which, of course, became equally dirty at last. (219)

The description shows how eating with the Indians was considered a lowly act, as that tainted their Britishness in terms of hygiene and also social difference. On the other hand, Fanny Parks developed a taste for Indian food, which helped her get into the very heart of the Indian household. While having food at the house of Colonel Gardner's, who was married to a Mughal Princess, she writes, "The dinner at first consisted of European, as well as native dishes; but the latter were so excellent, I soon found it impossible to partake of dishes dressed after the English fashion...Colonel Gardner had the kindness to banish European dishes from the table." (393) Fanny also shares her liking for the Indian chutneys that Gardner used to send her. She writes about the mixed taste of the Indian chutneys as the "ideal mixture of sharp, bitter, sour, sweet, hot, and cold!" (238), which also shows how she loved the exotic taste of the Indian foods. Caroline Lusin opines that, in the eyes of the British-Indian society, the uninhibited, or the 'unruly' disposition of Fanny towards Indian life and culture, makes her a 'grotesque' body, as opposed to the 'civilised' in the Bakhtinian sense. In this context, we can also refer to the observations of Deborah Lupton:

In Western societies, distinctions are routinely drawn between "civilised" and "grotesque" bodies. The "civilised" body is constructed as the body that is self-contained, that is highly socially managed and conforms to dominant modes of behaviour and appearance. By contrast, the "grotesque" body is uncontained, unruly, and less controlled by notions of propriety and good manners. (19)

The appearance of Fanny Parks as the grotesque, who is opposite to the civilised Emily Eden, can be understood in their difference in acceptance of the Indian food and foodways. Caroline Lusin, while discussing the writings of Emily and Fanny, mentions that Fanny's too much affinity with the Indian culture and cuisine was not only disapproved by the British-Indians,

but also by the Anglo-Indians, who were keener on emulating the British customs and culture. Precisely, identifying Fanny as the grotesque body for her openness towards Indian culinary culture is based on the colonial notion that a proper culinary culture is a mark of civilisation. Just as a proper recipe is followed to cook raw ingredients into a digestible and palatable dish, the colonial masters also follow rules and establish order among the uncivilised subjects to refine them. Fanny's favour towards Indian food and foodways, which was quite opposite to Emily's perspective, disturbed the ordered structure of the British colonial set-up. But an intensive study of both the writings of Fanny Parks and Emily Eden gives a different reading of their outlook towards India and Indian life. In fact, the British interaction with the Indian culinary culture that went into the making of the Anglo-Indian fusion culinary has at its bottom line the constant struggle to identify and differentiate the White 'self' from the colonised 'other.' Fanny Park's endeavours to enter into the Indian household to explore, understand, and appropriate Indian culture and cuisine were always done from the standpoint of a European. Her apparent transcendence of the British notions of refinement and civilisation, which eventually label her as the 'grotesque', is, in turn, steeped in colonial superiority, which helped her to explore and analyse Indian life and culture. It can be equated with the colonial government's imperial strategy that made them learn the local language for a better hold and control over the local administration. Unlike Eden, who overtly maintained her distance from Indian life, Fanny's curiosities were like those of a scientist who, with her inquisitiveness, tried to understand and assert control over her subject, which was India. This is quite evident in her experiencing the mixed taste of the Indian Chutney, which appeared quite exotic to her. The variegated Indian culture, customs, and cuisine, like that of the Indian chutney, were a mystery to the British masters, who tried to categorise and codify them in order to understand. Fanny Park's endeavour was no different from that colonial strategy that underscores the fact that the British interest in Indian culture and cuisine was the means to bridge the gap between the ruler and the ruled. But the bridge is not just a conciliatory agent that connects, but it also underlines the existence of the gap that, though connected, cannot be erased completely.

The above observation on the British reception of the Indian food may apparently appear contradictory to the primary argument of the study that emphasises the importance of Anglo-Indian fusion food in registering the contact and conflict between the ruler and the ruled. If the enthusiastic inquisitiveness of Fanny Parks finds the Indian food an exotic mystery that requires scientific analysis, Emily's disapproval of the Indian cuisine and commensality marks the colonial distance. Both these imperial attitudes underline how the Anglo-Indian culinary fusion testifies to the complex cultural entanglements of the empire. Along with distance and disapproval comes the scope of social negotiation and construction of cultural meaning, which is pertinently done with the Anglo-Indian fusion food. Fanny's scientific study of the exotic Indian food brings in the relevance of culinary exchange that she herself does, maybe unknowingly. On the other hand, Emily's distance from Indian social life and commensality not only marks the political valence of food that is embedded within power relations, identity, hierarchy, and social difference, but also makes it a powerful site of political exchange and contestation. Thus, the bridge that highlights the gap also offers a chance of connection.

Conclusion

The history of the Anglo-Indian culinary culture pertinently underscores that colonial encounters were never a unidimensional operation of authorial control or blind emulation; rather, they were punctuated by negotiations, adaptation, appropriations, and resistance. The

present study shows how food and foodways are important factors in understanding the political, social, and cultural connections within a colonial setup. The British attempt to preserve culinary purity with the circulation of tinned food was subsequently complemented by the introduction of curry, which not only marked the practical realities of life but also became an important part of colonial diplomacy. The gastrosemantics of the Anglo-Indian fusion food that emerged as a result of the socio-political and cultural interaction of the British and the Indians made complete culinary segregation impossible. The emergence of the Anglo-Indian culinary fusion also marks how colonial control was continually modified and revamped through acts of adaptation and exchange. The introduction of curry and Indian spices into British culinary goes beyond the change in gastronomic choices to cultural adaptation, acclimatisation, and the subsequent reconfiguration of colonial subjectivity. Exploring Anglo-Indian fusion food through the lens of gastrosemantics establishes it as a complex text encoding anxieties, inquisitiveness, and aspirations of appropriations, thereby making the colonial British dining table a contact zone, where the difference between the ruler and the ruled continuously confirms and disrupts. Finally, it can be asserted that being neither fully British nor Indian, the Anglo-Indian fusion food is posited in an in-between space embodying both colonial authority and remonstrance. This mid-space has also made it the most important part of the British foodways, making curry the most favourite dish in England. There are almost eight thousand Indian restaurants in England that serve Indian dishes to soothe the English palate. The tradition of Anglo-Indian fusion food not only survives as a colonial culinary tradition but also as an archive of colonial rule in India. Therefore, it can be said that the Anglo-Indian Fusion food not only bridged the gap between the British and the Indians in the colonial period, but it also helped them build their cultural identity as a former colonial ruler.

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Bio note

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