CHAPTER 1:

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Food along with clothing and shelter is considered as one of the basic subsistence needs of the human beings. It is defined as the substance which contains proteins, fats, carbohydrates and can be eaten or drunk for nutrition. Food can be obtained from a number of sources be it the plants, animals, fungus or others. Food is sought by the processes of hunting and gathering, foraging, fishing, ranching, farming or may include certain specific ways which are rooted in particular local cultures. Food can either be eaten raw or it has to be cooked and this bridges the gaps between nature and culture (Claudé Levis Strauss). As long as the former domain is concerned then food rotates in the realm of Nature and so its availability determines the interaction between humans and nature, so it is raw, natural. Food penetrates into the cultural or social realm with the food penetrating in the domain of cooking as it involves the human superiority of taming the nature and making the natural food mould towards the human necessities by making it more digestive, tasty, changing the flavour, colour, texture. What is added to the food or what procedures are followed to achieve this end, as is social or cultural so it is not uniform or universal like the cultural pluralities of the humans. It is determined by one’s religion, temperature, climate of the place, availability, needs etc., so the diversity involved in cooking can be rightfully accepted keeping in mind the human needs and the responses towards these. Cooking as it involves the element of individual skill so its susceptibility to be very individual automatically derives it’s uniqueness but this exclusivity is tied to the broader social, cultural or religious orientation of which an individual forms a part. Archaeological evidences suggests the presence of roasted foodstuffs in the Homo erectus campsites almost 420,000 years ago, even though the methods like boiling and roasting started with the invention of pottery but cooking proper can be traced back to the 10th Millennium B.C. Gustemes or the distinctive features of cooking is the crucial fact which varies cross-culturally and in the process is involved in creating an own identity as associated with those who engage in this ‘distinctive’ feature. The earliest of the Indian cultures was the Indus Valley Civilization that existed from 2500 B.C. on the banks of the rivers in Punjab, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The bones found at these sites indicate that beef, mutton, turtles, small Indian Alligators and river and sea fishes were all eaten in addition to foods like wheat and barley.
Coming to the Indian context, a country which boasts a population of 1 billion people, is spread from the Himalayas in the North to the Kanyakumari in the South occupying the largest areas of the South Asian continent exhibits a perfect example of the land of unity in diversity with eighteen official languages, twenty-nine states and six major religions of the world. This unique geographical position of India has always made it vulnerable to foreign invasions and intrusions who settled or conquered various regions which have not only contributed to the varied cultural multiplicity of India but also an admixture of the food habits of the original people living here along with the new settlers have created a myriad of cooking and food habits which perhaps is unique in the world. Food, in India is characterized by regional variations. Chicken and mutton are mostly eaten in the northern region; rice is the staple food for most of the Indians. The ancient food habits of the nomads of India were made simply from nature and constituted of wild berries, meat, fish etc. Indian cooking has a 4000 years timeline in which constant accommodations have been made to result in a sub-continental cuisine because of various geographical moderations of the boundary of the country. At the same time there is no national dish in India various regions thrive constantly to establish a different culinary identity. Following K.T. Achaya it can be said that some sort of taboo against eating persisted right down from the century. The diversity of the Indian cuisine can be located keeping in instance the foods of the Harappans. Mohenjodaro and Lothal showed evidence of tandoori ovens hinting on the existence of cooking mechanisms like baking (found in Punjab now). As Achaya notes chilli was not of Indian origin only getting incorporated in the late 16\textsuperscript{th} century\(^1\). The Ain-i-Akbari (1590) notes that in the Akbar’s court fifty dishes were cooked which were pungent and spice and evidence notes that pepper was used then. Tea, the most integral drink across India was not inherent here but is of Chinese origin. The Britishers, during their reign, finding it difficult to obtain it in India started growing tea plantations here. Coffee also has a different story with it. The Arabs introduced “kahwah” (brew) much before the arrival of the British. Story goes like in the year 1720, a Muslim divine Baba Budan while coming from Mecca brought seven green coffee berries with him, grew them outside the cave where he lived in a place called Chikmagalur in Karnataka. Britishers later cleared the jungles of the Western Ghats in South India to start coffee plantation. The fusion of the world food (mainly raw in the form of ingredients) also is

\(^{1}\) Achaya, K.T. (2000:116)
apparent if we take the examples of fruits and vegetables like *papaya* which in Kannada means foreign tree, *Guava* which is a Spanish word, popularized in South America in the 17th Century, *tomato, potato* all are of Andean origin.

Some of the foods are even 5000 years old. Indian food from the times of the Indus Valley Civilization (3000-1500B.C.), during which the people hunted turtles, alligator, wild grains, herbs and plants. Some of the then foods are common till toady. They used cucumber and eggplant, green pepper, wheat, barley, rice, tamarind, oils, ginger, salt, turmeric roots in their cooking. The fertile alluvial plains of the river valleys facilitated the cultivation processes. Further this is the time Hinduism shaped itself through the religious scriptures like the Vedas, the Mahavarata which channelized certain dos and do-nots for its members. Buddhism and Jainism during the 6th century B.C. propagated non-violence and so its followers resorted to vegetarian foods, along with the Hindus. Revulsions against eating meat, cows, as was considered holy and worshipped, were also preached by the Hinduism. The Aryan speaking people around 1500-1000 B.C. introduced leafy vegetables, lentils, milk products like yogurt and ghee or clarified butter, spices like cumin and coriander, black pepper started being widely used from around 400 A.D. The greatest influence on India’s culinary heritage was contributed by the Mughal invasion during the 1500-1800 A.D. They introduced garam masala in the cooking; the same was considered as an art as good food delighted the senses of taste, sight and touch. Their cooking is an elaborate process and some of the items they cooked contained as many as twenty-five spices, rose water, raisins etc. They also introduced the sealed-pot method of cooking or what we can call “Dum”. India’s intercourse with the foreign styles of food can be said to be a dual process as it not only modified India’s cuisine but also popularized the same in foreigner’s mother countries like the British influences opened coffee houses in India and Indian restaurants in England, also is evident from the introduction of saffron by the Greeks, the tea by the Chinese and the French and British incorporating red chilli, potato, cauliflower to the Indian platter. As, Aruna Kumari, V. Ketha recognizes that Indian food epitomizes the variety of spices, cuisines, flavours and aromas in comparison to all the cuisines of the world. The impact of the geographical diversity, climatic regions etc. calls for this variedness of the Indian cuisine. The change in the geography leads to modifications of the cuisine like fish and coconut are highly popular in coastal areas.
Similarly, the absence of fresh vegetables is often substituted by the pulses (dal) and pickles (achars) in desert areas.

Food preparation and consumption has long been used by sociologists to gain insights about the modes of production, political rule, rural development, social health issues, discourse and language, image and class, race and gender, family structure and function, intergenerational relations and regional differences. Food is a social construct, it brings families together, and as in the case marriage feasts and also denotes bonding between husband and wife.

Thus it goes on without saying that a multiplicity of factors has donated to the plurality of cuisines that India showcases. Even though the study of food and eating has a long history in Anthropology since 19th century with studies by Garrick Mallery and William Robertson Smith but mainstreaming of such studies were found since 1984. Food practices are the most accessible, easily manipulative feature of everyday life. The management of food throughout and across history has been the most consistent means of restricting secular socialization and for designing a religious self. Previously food, following Cicero was said to a way of intercourse between man and God and was manifested by the offerings made by the humans to the Almighty in forms of animal sacrifices or others. Then India’s caste arrangement guided by the rules of pollution and purity and manifested through the intake of ‘kachcha’ food and ‘pakka’ food\(^2\) by the people standing at different ranks in the social hierarchy. Food then was considered as a private affair to be restricted within ones kinsmen or caste-men. The rules of pollution and purity, was not about the constitution but about the status of the person, accepting food from a person is a matter of silent acknowledgement of the offerer’s status to be higher or at least equal to the person.

The act of eating is a social experience, whereby culture acts as a major determinant of what one eats or how one eats. Nature of the food intake is largely shaped by social, religious, economic and political processes. Following Bass, Wakefield and Kolassa (1979) food can be said to be the medium through which the following functions are served which encompasses both the biological and cultural realms:

- Satisfy hunger and nourish the body,
- Initiate and maintain personal and business relations,
- Demonstrate the nature and extent of such relationships,

\(^2\) Dube,S.C. (1990: 56-57)
○ Provide a focus for communal activities,
○ Express emotions of love and care,
○ Express individuality,
○ Proclaim the separateness of a group,
○ Demonstrate the belongingness to a group,
○ Cope with psychological and emotional stress,
○ Reward or punish,
○ Signify social status,
○ Bolster self-esteem and gain recognition,
○ Wield political and economic power,
○ Prevent, diagnose and treat physical ailments,
○ Prevent, diagnose and treat psychological ailments,
○ Symbolize emotional experience,
○ Display piety,
○ Represent security,
○ Express moral sentiments and
○ Signify wealth.

Even though the popularity of the term globalization is still continuing and expanding in its scope of application but it was introduced in the print media in the 1960 and it took to 1980s in order to see its systematic use by scholars and journalists (Sklair: 2007).

Food is essential to existence and to the religious experience as well. Every religion has rituals where food is offered to the worshipped, shared, eaten, or even tabooed. Food is also a means of identity creation of a particular groups largely rooted in certain other forms of frameworks like those of religion, culture etc. The culture’s cuisine is highly related to the dietary choices that people make in accordance to the religion like, kosher foods in Judaism and halal/haram foods in Islam are only permitted. Carole Counihan in Food and Culture argues that in India food is closely tied to the moral and social status of individuals and groups. Food taboos and prescriptions divide men from women, gods from human, upper from lower castes, and one sect from another. Food is believed to cement the relationships between men and gods and between men themselves. The neutrality of food from medical and moral grounds has been rejected by the author. Religion has reshaped its traditional boundaries to incorporate the
essences and elements of globalization as expressed through the eating out habits among people. Religion’s fixed, orthodox, defined prescriptions and proscriptions regarding food intake has been redefined and has taken a new vista under the post-modernist discourse, whereby what to eat? when to eat? where to eat? with whom to eat? and also why? are all getting endlessly constructed at the wake of this “fluid” era. This research seeks to uncover how the place of food has taken a major shift with a reorientation in the traditional function of religion and simultaneously compromising with the primordial and primary notions of viewing food as a medium of maintaining the purity and sanctity of the body.

Mary Douglas points out that ‘If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries.’ Thus from it follows, that the contemporary practices of food consumption educe the modern. The recent increase in the number of restaurants accompanied by the increase in the eating out practices reveal that eating out produces the private pleasures like sense of luxury, excitement, novelty and fun. The restaurant in all its form is projected as the best sites where these pleasures are sought to be best realized. The biography of restaurant is a complicated one. Going by the general definition of restaurant as an establishment providing food and drinks to whoever can meet the cost, it can be said that restaurants existed from centuries. The open kitchens of medieval village, the remote abbeys and convents along the Northern European coasts, the dens in Chinese cities are all seen as restaurants, mostly of the rudimentary form. But the modern form of restaurant can be traced back to the French Revolution. The common view of the rise of modern restaurants is associated with the emancipation of cooks from the aristocratic household of France during the Reign of Terror. These skilled cooks looking for jobs opened establishments where meals were served to anyone who could afford them. However evidences of restaurants are found in England since twelfth century in the form of cookshops who would serve food to travellers. The London Tavern was established in 1768, which was a place for wealthy travellers. Paris was next to follow, Paris provided public houses because of the connections between parliamentary life and the need to provide public services to the members of parliament living away from their houses during parliamentary sessions. In Paris an intertwining of public life with the growth of restaurants became apparent after the revolution when a new public arena and political
structure emerged which is free from the restraints of tradition. The emergence of modern
restaurants is associated with the emergence of the new economic order and a class of
restaurateurs, who got a social status independent from the status of the private aristocratic
household.

Coming to the range of diet types it is seen to vary between:

- **Vegetarian**: A strict vegetarian eats no meat, no fish or other products
obtained at slaughter, such as lard or soup stocks. Vegetarians do not consume
eggs also.

- **Non-vegetarian**: The non-vegetarians do not have any reservations for any
kind or source of food.

- **Vegan**: Vegans neither consume the mammals, birds or fish, honey, gelatin,
nor any milk or dairy products like: yogurt or ice-cream, excepting human milk
for the babies. They consume vegetables, fruits, soymilk, beans, tofu/ bean
curd, whole grains and nuts. A vegan is one who adheres to a philosophy and
way of living which seeks to exclude in all forms and as far as practicable
exploitation and cruelty to animals for food, clothing or other purposes. It is a
natural extension of vegetarianism.

- **Recently**, groups have emerged in the global scenario that do not eat meat,
fish, eggs or milk produced under conditions of intensive rearing.

- **Another** group practice that as fish do not have any nervous system so they do
not experience pain like the mammals and as is also a vital source of nutrition,
so they consume fish meat but refrain from other sources of meat.

However, the categories mentioned above are not exclusive and such water-tight
compartments cannot be maintained when food consumption is considered by people. They
categories often overlap each other in instances like the Hindus are non-vegetarians but they
do not eat beef, the Jains are vegetarians but have reservations against vegetables that are
grown beneath the soil like carrot, potato etc. So the diversity of diet ranges is characteristics
of human civilization and culture.

Religion primarily refers to the human encounter with an irreducible sacred such as a god, an
appeal to the essential experiences of holiness is generally considered to be felt with the
enunciation of religious foodways. Food through the prescriptions and prohibitions simulates
the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’ via the human body, so certain rituals are common which may or may not be routinized across religions are also universal. In the social discourse food has always been functional to the extension in the form of taboo and sanctions. Food in the traditional religion was a means of maintaining “diffentia”, whereby keeping certain foods out of bounds of certain people would help in maintaining the ‘uniqueness’ of a group and thus the sanctions. Mary Douglas in “The World of Goods” (1970) identifies that a social distinction is sustained through the consumption practices around goods, foods and drink which were considered as ritual activity. The purity of the body through food that strengthens the boundary of the body, society and religion acts as a distinguishing mark for delineating religious boundaries. By permitting what is prohibited in one religion for consumption is actually a way of creating an identity for another religion. Perhaps the law of negation is the basis for creation. As food is for regular consumption so these practices and prohibitions are ways of making God live through everyday life and action. Being ‘clean’ or ‘pure’ means to be within God’s order and the dichotomy of ‘pollution’ and ‘purity’ is strengthened by not consuming what is considered as polluting to one’s religion. Not only are boundaries of religions created through acts of food and eating but often the reinforcement of these boundaries occur through communal consumption in ceremonies and ‘holy’-days but also on the social level it exhibits the communal fidelity of its followers. In the lines of Claude Lévis Strauss food is the language through which humans express their basic perceptions of reality. The underlying notions of differences between the ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are reflected through food and what is universal and appears to be across cultures are the various sacred stories in the form of myths and prohibitions in the form of taboos, however may be different in form and content, dictate the rules observed in eating cooked and raw foods. Not only food in-itself but also food preparation involves the embeddedness of the ‘sacred’ in the ‘profane’ and it is through cooking that ‘religiosity’ is often expressed or it finds expression. Susan Starr Sered identifies that human’s religious experience’s major mode in the form of diffused religiosity is somewhat integral to the practice of ritual food preparation. As ritual food preparation is doing the everyday work with ‘holiness’, so it acts to strengthen the interpersonal relationships and in its own due course creates identity, tradition and law. Mary Douglas identifies how food communicates ideas about holiness and that provide identity and order in
the social life. Across all religions abstinence has been traditionally practiced as a means of disciplining controlling the body.

Food is a social construct as it brings communities together. Builds, defines and re-inforces self and communal identity. Consumption in terms of edibility and inedibility is culturally defined and so it can be said to be constructed socially. The rules of commensalism as practiced in Hinduism manifests how food rules serve as codes of class distinction and further how social boundaries are constructed and maintained through religious purity and sanctity.

Food creates logo-centrism as it serves as a symbol of uniting the adherents. Symbols serve as the building blocks myths. Thus, ghee or clarified butter which is symbol sanctity feeds not only humans but also the deities. So the food symbols connect the reality of life in a place to the holy intangible and vital ways. The universal sacred symbols associated with food have different meanings attached to it. An inherent ethnocentrism operates however diffused it may be as a feeling of superiority not only disjuncts adherents of one group from another but also creates stratification among those who hold fast to the dos and do nots of consumption with those who do not abide by the religious prescriptions and prohibitions. Food which is an essential element of individual sustenance generates within it strains of collective or social solidarity and within it are stimulated grounds of group dynamics based on the identity creation of both the self and also of the community. Sacrifices, which means ‘to make holy’ is in whatsoever form a gift to the God which if later shared can make humans ‘holy’. However what is essentially ‘holy’ is nominal and not essential across communities, cultures or societies.

Coming to the context of religious prescriptions and proscriptions in terms of food consumption across the Muslim, Christian and Hindu religious communities it goes without saying that no two religions hold the same ideology about diet, health and spiritual wellness. Starting with Hinduism it restricts any kind of consumption that might slow down the spiritual or physical growth. The association of Hinduism and vegetarianism is not more than 1000 years old with the birth of Jainism. Pork, fowl, crab, camel, snail are doctrine to be avoided in Hinduism. Cow, as is an object of veneration and is sacred, so beef is strongly condemned in Hinduism. Products from cow like milk, clarified butter, butter, yoghurt etc. are considered as innately pure. The purity sought to promote the purity of the mind and the body. Devout Hindus fast on eighteen major Hindu holidays as well as on personal days like marriage, death
anniversaries, on days of positions of planets and moon etc. Fasting is sought to promote spiritual growth. The Hindus generally refrain from non-vegetarian food on the day before fasting. Alcohol is generally avoided in Hinduism.

Sohail Hashmi, a noted food critic, identifies that even though half of India’s population is vegetarians but this connection between Hinduism and vegetarianism is only 1000 years old with the birth of Jainism. Scriptures never documented any connection between Hinduism and vegetarianism. The food discourses associated with Hinduism are concerned with:

a) Worldly life and becoming,

b) Healing and happiness and

c) Self-control and salvation.

As rooted in the Hindu mythologies, food is always related to ‘rasṇa’, that is which satiates the taste buds, along but it comes secondary to the prime position that is credited to the rules of commensalsity and pollution and purity. Whether and how different kinds of social phenomenon guides the choices of food among the people in Kolkata is, how food has been shifted from the boundaries of subsistence and merged with that of experience as reflected by the food habits of the people is the concern of this research.

Islam as directed by the Holy Quoran prescribes all permitted foods as ‘halal’ (lawful), and prohibits consumption of ‘haram’ food that includes dead meat, pork, others derived from it like gelatin, birds of prey, alcohol. Ice-creams, sweet containing gelatin are all haram in Islam. Islam prohibits consumption of meat that is not slaughtered by anything other than the name of Allah (zabiha) by a Muslim to ensure free flow of the blood. The foods questionable for consumption are called ‘makrooh’, which includes prawn. As the purpose of eating in Islam is for the preservation of health so stimulants like tea, coffee, alcohol, and smoking are discouraged. They are also advised to stay away from soya sauce and pure vanilla extracts as they are alcoholic. Fasting is practiced in Islam at regular intervals. Fasting is regularly on Mondays and Thursdays for six days during Shawwal (the 10th month of the Islamic year). The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is devoted to prayer, fasting and charity. Abstention from all food intakes is observed from sunrise to sunset. Fast is broken in the evening by a meal called ‘iftar’ with dates, water, sweet drinks and fast is resumed the following day with sunrise. This month is considered as ‘holy’ as during this month the holy Quoran was revealed to Prophet Mohammad by god. Fasting during this month constitutes one the basic five pillars
The fast is broken with the festival called *Eid-ul-Fitr*. Overall healthy diet is considered to be meaningful and wastage is considered as a sin as the Quoran prescribes that even though Allah has made many things but having all of them at a single time is unlawful. As a matter of fact, Islam is the second most practiced religion in India after Hinduism and account for 13.4% of India’s population (Census: 2009).

The Eastern Orthodox adherents consider fasting as an intrinsic value in the development of the spiritual self. The Church and the Old Testament are the basics that serve to justify fasting as a means of disciplining the body and the soul. There are four extended fasts in the Orthodox tradition, but their duration and the level of strictness vary. The Great Fast of Lent begins seven weeks before Easter then there is the Fast of the Apostles which starts on the eighth Monday following Pentecost, on the eve of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the Assumption Feast lasts and the Christmas Fast lasts forty days, although the intensity, severity and extent of fasting varies across different categories of people. Fasting teaches life restraint and is thereby is the source of all good. In general the lesser orthodox Christians has to observe the lent period of forty days, very similar to the fasting during the Ramadan but this fasting as evident has fewer restrictions and they during this period has to consume vegetarian food that includes fish, but is devoid of meat of any kind. Protestants however follow a few restrictions in terms of food and fasting observation. Pork, Alcohol is not prohibited in Christianity, the Orthodox Catholics have more restrictions on meat consumption than their Protestant counterparts who only consider ‘gluttony’ and ‘drunkenness’ as sins and hence to be avoided. The rationale behind their lesser restrictions in food consumption is that God has made all animals and natural products for human’s enjoyment. The Holy bread *prosforo* (from *prosfora* ‘offering’), plays a central role during Communion. The Protestants consider the bread and wine as the Christ’s body and blood of Jesus and thereby it serves as a sacrament among them. The bread is cut out by the priest and distributed strictly among the Christians to commemorate the miracle of Christ to break a bread to feed thousands of followers. The commandment to sacrifice bread is found in the Old Testament.
Before getting into further details in the context of urbanization and the changing role of women it is essential to point out the traditionally demarcated roles and duties of women. It is necessary to analyze the roots of the ideas of women’s close association with cooking and food. In *Grihinir Kortobyo* (The Duties of a Homemaker), Bharati Ray identifies that following Solomon (an Israeli Intellectual) that precision at work and respect are a woman’s jewelry, cooking is a way of showering her love, kindness, emotions. She is the one who has to be very active, do all the housework with expertise, look after all the guests, look after the cleanliness of the house, be merciful and must be forgiving others for their wrong-deeds, spend less etc. these are the qualities that would make her husband and children love her.  

Whether such ideas are ubiquitous still today and how far are such notions of woman stand relevant is questionable.

Bengal is made up of the Indian state of West Bengal and the sovereign country of Bangladesh, formerly known as East Bengal or East Pakistan, comprising of a total area of 228,000 sq. km. Most of the terrain is flat, delta plain crisscrossed with river, with a few hills and forests. Most of the area is flat green land, divided into fields, primarily growing rice as the staple food crop. The rivers of Bengal have a crucial role in sustaining life, prosperity, diet, culture and civilization in Bengal.

The rivers that criss-cross Bengal are the

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5 Ray, Bharati (2002: 36)
Ganga, Padma, Ajoy, Damodar, Jamuna or Brahmaputra, Tista, Karnaphuli etc. which have been great conduits for movement of goods, the Bay of Bengal have provided natural entry for incoming trade.

Coming to the context of Kolkata, it is necessary to get a rough idea about the history of Kolkata. The word Kolkata or Kalikata is derived from the Bengali word ‘kalikshetra’ which means; ‘ground of Goddess Kali’. The city had its original settlement on the bank of the canal (khal). On the Eastern bank of river Ganges three large villages called Sutanuti, Gobindapur and Kalikata (villages) were bought by the British from the local landlords. In lieu of Rs. 3000.00 the East India Company was given the right to trade by the Mughal emperor. As this city is dominated by the Bengalis so, a little analysis of the Bengali cuisine, culture and civilization is necessary to depict the culinary scenario of Bengal. The Bengali people are considered as the greatest food lovers in the Indian subcontinent. A long leisurely meal of many items which require long hours of labour and ingenuity in the kitchen to be produced is as much a part of Bengali culture as ceremonious eating in France. Fish has always been an integral part of the Bengali diet. The eighteenth century narrative poem, Annadamangalkabya by Bharatchandra accounts for fifty-one types of fish that Bengalis ate. The long period of Muslim rule from the eleventh century to the demise of the Mughal Empire and thereafter the establishment of British rule in the mid-eighteenth century, established Islam as the second most important religion in Bengal. Mass conversions to Islam took place for lower caste Hindus and also Buddhists. The eventual conversion of East Bangladesh to East Pakistan with the independence of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 occurred as the Muslims only had strength of numbers and was geographically concentrated in northern and eastern Bengal. However the dissatisfaction of the Bengali Muslims within Pakistan made way for the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 as a South-Asian country. Culinarily, the impact of Muslim cooking was seen among the leisured and affluent classes, specially the Nawabs. The Bengali Muslim cuisine is different from the Nizami cuisine of Hyderabad and the Mughal cuisine of Northern India. The kheer and cream are substituted with yoghurt and lemon juice thus making the taste more subtle and less spicy. Beef and chicken were also introduced. The former even though is a source of contention but the later has become a part of the Hindu household. The pulao, biriyani, parota bread, kebabs, even though are common these days among Hindu households, but these are owed to the Muslims. Huen Tsang accounts that onion and garlic were taboo
items, the people thrived on rice, wheat, milk, sugar, mustard and some fish and meat. Onion and garlic did not enter Bengali diet until the fourteenth century and was accepted by Hindus only in the nineteenth century as these were considered to have libidinous effect on the character. The British advent and two centuries of presence in Bengal however did not make any remarkable difference to the urban and rural Bengal’s eating apart from the development of Anglo-Indian cuisine, which remains confined to the community itself. The two misnomers that landed to Bengali cuisine from the British household to the urban eating joints, which claim to specialize in the genre are ‘chops’ and ‘cutlets’. It is served with a portion of Bengali mustard paste called kasundi, much different from the Coleman’s mustard. Restaurants and guesthouses in Bengal have pretentious ‘English’ menus that include boiled vegetables or fried potatoes as accompaniments and as reminders of legacies of the past. The first time a Bengali drank tea is probably when the renowned Buddhist scholar Atish Dipankar Srignan went to Tibet in the eleventh century at the invitation of the king to propagate Buddhist teachings in Tibet, but that was Chinese green tea. This instance is considered as the only case whereby the Bengalis have developed the British tradition. It is also interesting to note that the Bengali Brahmins eat fish as part of their diet, whereas the other Brahmins of India are strictly vegetarians. The rural as well as the urban Hindu household rice is treated as synonymous with Goddess of wealth and prosperity, Lakshmi. Thus it is found irrationally to waste a single grain of rice, even when the portion on the plate is too much, thus finishing the rice is of prime importance as wasting single rice is tantamount to insulting the goddess.

Sweets are an integral part of the Bengali diet. So is the importance of moira i.e. the sweet maker in the Bengali cuisine and society. In both Kolkata and Dhaka over the last fifty years sweet shops have risen and fallen. Each sweet shop is famous for certain products like rosogollas by K.C.Das, rosogolla has been invented in the year 1868 by his father, Nabin Chandra Das. Sandesh from Bhim Chandra Nag or Mishti doi from Jalajoga are famous. There are stories that goes like one day, Lady Canning, the then Vicereine of India, challenged Bhim Chandra Nag to prepare a new sweet for her birthday. Nag obliged by creating a product which is neither the langcha, a bolster-shaped creation nor the pantua (gulabjamun), he called it ladikanee after the patron, which is large, spherical, succulent and fragrant. Suryakumar Modak invented the jalbhara sandesh (new sandesh) during renaissance because of Bengal’s

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6 Banerjee, Chitrita (1991:14)
cultural connections by combining *German pot cheese* with *gur* ‘jaggery’. Prior to that, *sandesh* meant ‘*chinir dela*’ that was found in shops in the vicinity of temples. People were so used to this high concentration of sugar that once Swami Vivekananda went to a reception where this ‘new sandesh’ was served and people complained it to be pale and forced the host to serve sugar to supplement the paleness of ‘new sandesh’.

The remarkable feature of the Bengali cuisine is its variety. The two Banglas are home to a wide variety of food that varies across religion, regions, economic statuses and even homes. Together, they comprise the ‘Bengali Cuisine’ that the two nations (West Bengal and Bangladesh) are savouring like never before. Bengali cuisine also dose not only differ simply from Western to Eastern Bengal but in every district the cuisine has some special features be it the use of spices, the techniques involved in cooking or the preparation or food items itself. Differences also are found in cooking styles of Muslims and Hindus and also between *ghotis* (those Bengalis who originate from West Bengal) and *bangals* (those who were originally from East Bengal but were forced to migrate to West Bengal during partition). The Muslims use more onion and garlic in their preparation of fish than the Hindus. There is a wider variety of cuisine with regard to vegetables in West Bengal and among the Hindus. Muslim cooking of vegetables tends to emulate the cooking of meat dishes using lots of onion, garlic and other spices. Whereas the typically Hindu home-cooked vegetables are more subtle and offer a wider variety of tastes not so pronounced on spices. The *ghotis* have a fetish for adding sugar and ginger in most of their preparations. The *bangals* love spices and add lots of chillis, garlic and mustard oil in their cooking. The traditional cooking of varieties of *pitha* on the occasion of *poush sankranti* has become very limited or extinct because of the labour intensivity that is required in the process in both Bengal. Drinking however was never common with the Indian middle-class men. But it became incorporated since the nineteenth century. Previously, drinking was restricted to religious occasions and was considered essential as part of the Hindu ritual. The *tantrik* families used to drink. Whisky was very cheap during the nineteenth century, which induced the drinking habit among men. Mughals drank brandy and at that point of time brandy was in fashion. The influence of Brahmoism and other associated forces made to disappear the excesses of drinking habits among the Bengali *bhadrolok*. Poor man’s drink like toddy was common in both Bengals. Drinking of fruit juices were also incorporated
in the Bengali household from Muslims and others. However drinks like, *beler shorbot, aam porar shorbot, phalsar shorbot* were common in Bengali households.

The famed *gourmand* is the ‘*khadyoroshik*’ who is common to both Bengals who swear by the *Illish* and gorge on the *pithe-puli*. Food critic Nondon Bagchi observes that the similarities over differences galore in food in West Bengal and Bangladesh. The time of consuming meat may be different in case of both the countries but both consume meat. Other factors like frying the fish before making a preparation are common to both West Bengal and Bangladesh. *Saag-bhat* is also common in both the places. As geographically the place is the same, the difference finds expression partly in case of religious practices or reasons of community, so the food is similar. In Bangladesh the use of ducks in preparations, the use of fruits in preparations of fish and meat are more common than in West Bengal. The emotional bonds are titillated when people of both *epar* and *opar* Bangla gets a flavour of each other’s food as partition has caused the forcible departure of many Bengalis from their place of origin.

With urbanization and widespread migration in the cities by the rurally closed communities in India, this has led to the diffusion of the caste system to a great extent. An ethnic and cultural admixture is a feature of the urban centers. Changes have subsequently occurred in the production-consumption-distribution-belief systems, which is presented in a tabular form below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MODERN SYSTEM</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRODUCTION</td>
<td>Large scale highly specialized, industrialized, de-localized, and global. Majority of the population have no links with production of food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISTRIBUTION</td>
<td>International and global, access governed by money and markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSUMPTION</td>
<td>Food always available at a price, independent of season, choice available to all who can pay. Nutritional inequality between and within societies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELIEF</td>
<td>Debates between those who believe in human domination of the environment and those who challenge this model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Economic opportunities post industrialization galore in the cities and the constant urge for luxuries in the cities propel a number of dual career families intended to meet these various other superficial needs that urban life creates. Convenience, over caste takes the supreme guiding position and the rules of commensalities concerning food are diluted. This in a way creates certain new needs for these nuclear families to cope with the pressures of the urban lives. The propensities and the possibilities of expenses galore in the urban quarters. Hired helps or cooks take over the age-old empire of the women, i.e. the kitchen. Changes from one’s own caste-rules are easily accommodated to keep pace with the fast changing lives. The nuclear families cannot provide ample support to each other often because the terms of the employer are too exhausting to respond to all sorts of psychological, social, cultural needs of the other member. This cushioning of social support was previously provided by the members of the extended families and also by the caste men. The proximity to the origin tied the individual to his roots, being uprooted from the same often makes him stand in the cross-roads of life.

Fast food restaurants are seen by Jennifer Parker Talwar (2002) as a venue in which immigrants adapt to American culture while simultaneously shape local operations of the global corporations. Not only are the immigrants adapting to American culture. The natives of India are also in the outlets of the International fast food chains to adapt to American culture. Not only are changes observed in the sphere of food habit, food culture and the likes a wide range of changes are visible in the sphere of food preservation techniques. The ancient people relied upon some basic techniques like drying the desired item of preservation in the sun or simply roasted it. Then the use of salt and some other herbal spices for the purpose of preservation became prevalent. The practice of dipping pickles in oil to restrict its contact with air to prevent its decomposition was common. The modern man however resorted to controlling of the temperature to aid in preservation and a wide spread introduction of cold storages, refrigerators can be noticed since then. Using of chemical preservatives or antioxidants. Nicholas Appert in the year 1809 introduced tinned or canned food. This technique of preservation not only helps in keeping food fresher for longer but also it facilitated the global journey of food across the four corners of the world. The use of these chemical agents result in a vicious cycle whereby further certain ‘buffer agents’ are used to minimize the

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7 Jana, (1991:17)
effects of the preservatives which make them loose their normal flavour and taste and to bring that back again they use ‘flavouring agents’. Thus the normal value (food value) is distanciated from the consumer. The use of processed food is harmful for the human body and may cause some serious physical disorder.\(^8\)

Post globalization, being facilitated by the liberalization of 1991s, agriculture and food sector has developed and India has been connected and opened up with the rest of the world. Globalization is not bad per se.\(^9\) It with the immense development of transportation, the availability of foods and food items is no longer restricted to a particular locale. The need to unwind and expediency offers people with a number of eat-outs as a provision of enjoyment. Responses to the mall culture and the international food chains are mammoth not only in the eight major cities’ sixty million people but also among those who live in not so urban squares.

As supply creates its own demand so globalization has subscribed to terms which perhaps have created the retail chains as windows or outlets to the world for the developing countries. The paradox lies as in how these windows while opening up to the world actually closes and distanciates an individual from the roots of his particular culture and in turn moves towards washing away the cultural pluralities and heads towards Westernization and becomes victims of underlying standardization through the guises of global brands and retail chains. The top ten brands of the world can be listed as:

i) McDonalds
ii) Coca-Cola
iii) Disney
iv) Kodak
v) Sony
vi) Gillette
vii) Mercedes-Benz
viii) Levis
ix) Microsoft
x) Marlboro

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\(^{8}\) Jana, Swarajit (1991:18)
\(^{9}\) Dasgupta, Biplab.(2005:26)
Certain key ingredients are identified for creating a successful brand (57, Introductory Sociology). These include:

- **Brand Exposure**: visibility to public eye at a global level.
- **Brand Experience**: successful brands are seen as a means to an experience, not merely an end.
- **Brand Essence**: the ability to cross-cultures, appealing to consumers at a universal level.
- **Brand Lexicon**: creating a symbol that expresses a value or idea.

Post-modernism is associated with change, both industrial and technological, expanding consumerism, modified pattern of paid labour for women, domestic help, shifting immigrants patterns, increasing affluence and new leisure activities for large number of people. With these changes have come alterations in food practices as people travel and eat out more. Food stylists in cookbooks and magazine advertisements have pursued food as a photographic art and consume food enhanced by food chemists and nutritionists. The popular culture has been infused with food: food writing proliferates in newspapers and on the web, cooking shows and “food travelogues” fill television airtime and simultaneously food services enter all the domains of leisure activities domain and sites: like in malls, theatres, stadiums, airports, movie theatres, grocery shopping centers etc.. Food has been infused into the construction of lifestyles, ever-expanding its role as a marker of social position. As Steve Redhead (1995) argues that a global popular culture industry has developed which has already incorporated the two separate areas of leisure and pleasure. Concepts like ‘global kitchen’ and ‘kitchen table tourism’ which is means of sampling other people’s culture through their food have become more dominating with food becoming more of a leisure activity. Food media play a havoc role whereby chefs counsel on cooking and cutting techniques, ingredients, recipes of other cultures. ‘Food adventuring’ reflects a quest for the unusual and exotic somewhat exposing colonialist attitudes embedded in one’s everyday relationship with foreign foods (Heldke, 2003).

In India each holiday marks a feast and everyday calls for an elaborate food course followed by a desert, The year of 2002 experienced 55% of more eating out than the previous year.

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10 Lake, Oh (:194,195)
however the other side of the population, 22% is undernourished as the World Bank estimated.

A history of gastronomy and culinary arts is difficult to outline and the pursuit of it may be rather fruitless. It is however easier to follow tangential issues about the point of change. Like the less spiced dishes common to the Renaissance became the foundation of *haute cuisine* popular in the twentieth century or to ascertain that *nouvelle cuisine* and *cuisine minceur* which are recently highly fashionable appeared centuries ago. The indeterminable nature of gastronomic habit is evident through the popularity of heath foods on one hand and on the other the popularity of ham-burgers, a potential source of saturated fats (American Medical Association). The evolution of cooking styles and the mannerisms of food consumption reveal characteristics of other social phenomenon, mainly social class. In the society *ancient régime* foods were served in a manner that concealed their natural origins. This slowly got replaced with an increase in restraint which got displayed in the courtly manners of consumption. Huge quantity of food and wastes, a feature of the medieval table got replaced with concentration on the quality of food. Heavy spices got replaced with piquant sauces that highlight the natural flavours of the food. The courtly fashion in foods emphasized small, delicate and costly. Individual servings were also introduced. The items of food exhibited the status and aspirations of the host but the changing style of presentation and the manner of consumption also introduced a change in the style of human sociality. A self-consciousness regarding food emerged with individuals showing a restraint in the table manners by not gulping food, nor eating enormous quantities nor spitting out what is considered as unpalatable. The individuals exercise a psychological imagination of seeing oneself as others might and to practice constraint and discrimination largely because of the awareness of other’s gaze are important changes of human behaviour which is now taken for granted in contemporary social codes and manners began centuries ago. Dining out is a much advertised and a widely touted pleasure and pastime. Now eating out always needs a setting which is necessarily public but varies in terms of the range of privacy that is offered by the restaurants. In traditional times ‘eating out’ was more prevalent among the travelers but they mostly had food in the inns where they dropped in to take rest after a day’s journey. Now-a-days, even though the eating

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11 Finkelstein, Joanne (1989:33)
out culture is widespread, but variations in terms of the country’s economic condition are expected to reflect upon the choices people make or can afford to make. The world’s first restaurant was established in Paris in the year 1765 called Monsieur Boulanger, which was not a coffee or a wine shop. It offered sheep’s feet simmered in white sauce. This dish restored one’s health and so the word has its origin in the meaning ‘restorative’, which in French was called ‘restaurant’. It was followed by the Delmonico’s restaurant of the 1830s called ‘Restaurant Francais’ in the US. Food catering however in the name of restaurants developed in the Song Dynasty of China in Hangzhou around the 12th century. Catherine de Medici has been long attributed to the introduction of the ‘fork’ which she referred as ‘those Italian neatness’. But culinary practices tend to appear and disappear and overlap each other and the fork was used in various shapes and sizes for five hundred years before it became a convention of the table meal.

The traditional manner of eating once a day, or perhaps only three or four times a week, has changed with Western ideology and practices. Early visitors to the Pacific islands decried the large amounts of food they saw being consumed at feasts, terming it “gourmandizing” or “gluttony.” They taught the people to regulate their food intake, that is, to eat at least once a day. Today people eat two or three times a day. Obesity results from eating a high-fat diet and excessive consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and the prevalence of abundant varieties of food in cafeterias or supermarkets are dietary factors in the development of obesity. Reduced energy expenditure relative to energy intake is another major component.

Now people are no longer satisfied with just phuchkas or rasgollas, they want tinned or canned rasgollas and international cuisines, courtesy globalization. Sweets of Bengal are migrating to Mumbai, Bangalore, and Delhi. A paradox can be located that in earlier times people supplemented the sweetness deficit in sweetmeats with sugar while eating but now-a-days there is a demand for pale sweets, according to Saibal Modak, the present owner of Surya Modak sweet shop. Increasing demand is for fusion sweets like Cadbury mishit/sandesh, Cadbury mishit with champagne, baked doi, fusion doi, aam sandesh, lichur payesh etc. says, Sudip Mallick, the owner of Balaram Mallick. For certain sweets following him, supply becomes a constraint because of high demand. Patenting in sweets is not possible

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and that hampers the innovativeness in the research and development as the items are copied instantly. Bengalees have a long legacy of spending both time and money on food. ‘Eating in’ as against ‘eating out’ elaborate meals each day is what that was traditionally favoured. Kolkata is a hub of happening restaurants since the 1960s which dwindle over time. But the vibrant restaurant culture can be credited to the 1990s. The mushrooming of a number of roadside and fast food stalls on one hand is contrasted by the presence of international food chain like Kentucky Fried chicken or KFC and the McDonalds, being launched in 2007 at the Park Street. A number of restaurants ranging from the ones offering haute cuisine and highly expensive to the mediocre to the budget friendly ones are coming up in the city everyday. Now eating out which incorporates manner, styles, change in menu and hand overall contributes to the experience that people opt for. Examining the social practices related to food among people of Kolkata is what we aim to look for in this research, as, food just not related to eating, but is always are accompanied by a number of underlying social phenomenon. What shifts, if at all have taken place in the spheres of food consumption and choices concerning food among people of Kolkata need both exploration and explanation.

Kolkata is the ‘Mecca’ of hotels and restaurants and they range from local, road-side to star and deluxe ones. Hotels in Kolkata can be classified into, Star, Deluxe, Budget and Heritage categories. There are about 413 registered restaurants in Kolkata and their classification into the following twenty-nine categories provide a rough collage of the food plate of Kolkata. The categories of restaurant are:

- American
- Bengali
- Chinese
- Fast-food
- Hyderabadi
- Juices
- Maharashtrian
- Multi-cuisine
- Pizza
- South Indian
- Andhra
• Coffee-shops/bars
• Chaat
• Food-Courts
• Ice-cream parlours
• Italian
• Continental
• Chettinad
• Rajasthani
• North-West frontier
• Mediterranean
• Gujarathi
• Kerelean
• Mughlai
• Karnataka
• Thai
• Asian and Pan-Asian
• North-Indian
• Punjabi

But this list is in no way exhaustive as every alternate day a new type of restaurant spring in Kolkata. As the competition of drawing crowd by being beyond the edge not only makes this distinction difficult and water-tight compartmentalization of restaurants on the basis of regions or countries are over-taken by the theme restaurants which daunt the practice of mundane eating.

Various sensitizations of the public is carried on in events like World Food Day Celebration ensuring Food Safety and Quality for All on 16th October by the Food and Agricultural Organization or FAO comes with the plea for joining the National Movement on Food Safety and Quality. The Confederation of Indian Industry through the newspaper Business Standards ventilates various poster sessions, slide shows, awareness campaigns, leaflet distribution to make people aware of the food security and quality issues. The plea to observe hygiene and food safety and the steps to be on the safe side from food borne diseases are enumerated as:
• Buying ‘fresh’ and ‘clean’ food products.
• Checking ‘best before’ or ‘use before’ dates.
• Storing foods at the required temperature.
• Discarding food appearing stale or rotten.
• Using drinking water for cleaning of food.
• Using fresh food.
• Using pasteurized milk.
• Using boiled or cooked eggs.
• Keeping hands clean, covering wounds and keeping nails trimmed.
• Cleaning cooking area regularly and methodically.

One way to cosmopolitanism lies in or cosmopolitanism in itself is reflected by the ways and what people eat and to a certain extent how. The late nineteenth century saw food as a culturally significant object and includes the notion of the perceived body (body image, disorders, stigmatization process etc.). Joanne Finkelstein (1989) perceived eating out as form of entertainment that by turning emotions into commodities allowed people to purchase and present images of the self. Another noticeable trend is how food and eating out are emerging as ‘lifestyle quotients’ as are evident from the way how every newspaper flashes regular columns about the whereabouts of food and cooking. The more and more inclinations of taking up cooking as a profession and seeking professional education towards the same are of course stances that reveal mainstreaming of the food from private to flashy public arena. The emergence of a class of celebrity chefs and restaurateurs and their columns in the English dailies in Kolkata are indeed markers of change of outlook towards food in general. The rise in consumption levels and the increasing inclination towards luxurious and convenient living can of course be attributed to the increase in the purchasing power of the traditional and the emergent ‘new middle’ class. It can however not be denied that the sole impetus for such augmentation can be attributed to the hike in Indian salaries to up to 10.6% in 2010 as estimated by Hewitt Associates, an HR Consultant. The Indian economy has shown faster growth in case of sectors dependent on domestic growth and consumption. Those sectors which rely on the Global dependence are expected to show such rise by mid 2010. Pay hike is possible as the firms are experiencing strong sales stemming from good
domestic demand. The current fiscal rate of economy at 7.2% is expected to expand to 8.2% in 2010, as estimated by the Indian government.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>2009:</th>
<th>2010:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETAIL (WHOLESALE AND DISTRIBUTER)</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANKING/FINANCE AND INSURANCE</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT AND CONSTRUCTION</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cosmopolitanism that the middle class proceeds towards is just an allegory or a metaphor that is like a never reached oasis, but the illusion keeps the middle class shedding more and more money just for the sake of it. Those who have resources to shed engage in the practice of eating out without employing any discretion. The economic liberalization of the 1990s can be considered as one of the most effective programmes in the Indian context as it creates a set of public discourses which went to change the character of the Indian middle-class. The new Indian middle class is the site of the commodity production, is the back on which the retail sector is built and is also the one who are identified as the beneficiaries of liberalization. The liberalization has entailed a dramatic transformation of the lifestyles of the middle class. The retail boom in India is basically surviving on the blood of the upwardly mobile middle class who are the ones who appreciate the conveniences and comforts of modern retail and also is the power driver of the market. A total of 228.4 Indian million families are identified as Middle Class till the end of 2009-10 by the National Council of Advanced Economic Research (NCAER), it also conducted a survey which confirms that 62 per cent of Indian households belong to the middle class, which is the target of most consumer goods firms. What is more alarming is not what provided grounds for the liberalization of the market in
general and the food sector in particular but what is more fundamental to our concern is at the milieu of these changes how the previous symbolic interactions using foodstuffs as a form of exchange, which were used to express and cement social relationships have changed following the changes in the patterns and processes of food offering and intake.

Junk foods are consumed in large quantities these days. Children are among the biggest consumers of junk food. In 2010 a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Delhi High Court to ban junk foods in schools and prohibit selling of junk foods within 500 yards of school premises. It is aimed to substitute ‘unhygienic food’ with ‘healthy foods’. World Health Organization (WHO) has come out with a report to ban junk foods in schools and playground around the world. The Delhi High Court acting on the PIL has given Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the statutory body under the ministry of health and family welfare to lay down the guidelines to be followed by schools across India. Not only that the FSSAI is the licensing authority whereby the businesses relating to food must get a license for conducting their trade legally. Various efforts are being made from their part to create awareness among masses through hoardings, advertisements etc. and also they organize fairs whereby by checking the quality standards and thereby give them licenses.

At an era which epitomizes blends like that of the classic and contemporary Indian cuisines as found in ‘Pan-Indian’ dishes or simply mixes of creative and contemporary culinary threads as offered by chefs a single meal may offer ‘Mishti doi Cheesecake’, ‘Watermelon Rabri’ or even ‘Chandan Ice-cream’. Exoticism has reached a never thought of level whereby in the interiors of such restaurants the otherwise popular retro genre of music is replaced by the fusion ones, genda flower (marigold), khadi and jute plays prominence in upholsteries, drapes and interiors. The specialty restaurants offer Signature Sections like ‘bold and beyond’ specially designed as the carte du jour (menu) says ‘not for the faint-hearted’ patrons. But all these restaurants have set-meals and what is noteworthy is that they have separate major vegetarian sections and beef and pork, even though are available but have to be ordered separately. Terms like, ‘tease your appetite’, or ‘build your taste’ are used to market menus like ‘amuse bouch’ and ‘blue cheese kulcha flavoured with a hint of mint’. A glimpse of the menu at ‘Saffron’ of the Park can reveal the interesting interplay of the available binaries often making the decoder transport into the world of the curious maze of dining.
Eating out as a phenomenon has not been studied sufficiently from the sociological perspective. So this research aims to unfold the various social dimensions involved in the context of eating out. The endemicity of the phenomenon makes it highly relevant for study, hence the research. Food is basic, raw, natural and private. Eating involves an art, an aspect of performance done while consuming the food. As long as food is consumed in the private an individual can engage in the act without being under the surveillance of anyone else. Food can be consumed for the mere satisfaction of the self or for satiation of hunger.

Food is basic, natural, private. But when it comes to eating it essentially intertwines the notion of performance as eating is the act of having food, it involves an attention towards the performance of the act while eating out. Now when this act of having food takes place in ‘public’ the performative notion provide a space for the individual agency to translate this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saffron</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Starters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mushroom Two Ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shredded Lamb Patyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subz Sikhampuri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhungar Prawns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Course</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage Cheese and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asparagus Goolar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urlai Roast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anda Timatkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Indian Bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Dal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desserts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelnut Phirni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guava Kulfi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
mundane, bodily need of having food to the act of consuming food in turn relegate it to an altogether different status. Thereby a steady relocation of attention to satiation of self through food to performance along with satiating the self becomes the foci of attention while majorly people engage in the act of eating out.

Considering eating out, likewise in case of food the former cannot just simply be seen and delineated as just the act of having food outside home. The pull towards the outside setting is strengthening with the passage of time and thus the all pervasive dominance of eating out can be seen as an important locator of change in the contemporary society. It not only can be seen as a micro or private phenomenon of an individual or a group of individuals having food outside but the frequency of substitution of the private kitchen highlights that eating out can be located as a close knit collage of micro acts which because of its ever-increasing omnipresence definitely has important implications and concerns for the macro. When one eats out at a public set-up it is essentially unrestricted and thereby open as against the private act of eating at home and thus it involves a multitude and complexity of exchanges which are significant both ‘within’ and ‘across’ groups in society. Thus the phenomenon of eating out can be seen as something much more than just having a variety of food outside home but the act of eating out itself can be analyzed as social construction loaded with special social meanings making the act socially significant and thereby ‘desirable’. The research is motivated towards locating and placing the fast paced act of ‘eating out’ in the continuum in the dualism that pervades between ‘subsistence’ (as people need food for survival, so any kind of food has to be analyzed from subsistence perspective) and socially-cultivated habit of ‘substitution’ (of food cooked at home with that of the one prepared outside home) and also between the categories of the ‘traditional’ (as home cooked food is a reflector of one’s culture) and the ‘modern’ (as in the public set-ups of eating out the variety may be seen as an interactive ground with other cultures). Through eating out, food fads by themselves (being interwoven with people’s lifestyle, trends and class aspirations) are seen to be culminating into popular trends often acting as an important indicator of the movement of society. With availability and easy accessibility of eating out options each culture’s preserved tradition of ‘everyday cuisine’ and ‘ceremony feasting’ have somewhat blurred as special days are no longer considered important for indulging in special cuisines or food always on offer now-a-days. Eating out as a phenomenon has majorly intervened the social sphere by being the ‘site’
of social interaction and with the rapidity it is intermingling with other social institutions and forces makes the phenomenon relevant for the focus of sociological attention.

Eating out can be analyzed as a bi-dimensional phenomenon. Two aspects of the act of eating out can be underlined. One is eating outside food at a public setting (i.e. outside the confines of the home, in restaurants, food courts etc.) and secondly, it is having outside food at a private setting (i.e. home). In the current era the prevalence of the both are increasingly on a rise witnessed through the dominance of eateries and mushrooming of home-delivery services. Taking into account both the cases, culture takes a crucial role in redefining the social experiences engaged in the act of ‘eating out’. When one eats outside food at home then new social experiences are cultivated both ways either if the meal is collectively consumed by all the family members (as new experiences are shared or merely for the purpose of convenience) or by an individual alone (as it disengages the individual from the family meal and thereby has certain important social implications and at the same time engages the individual with the ‘world’ cuisines and thereby connecting the ‘individual’ with a collectivity). Considering eating out at a public setting too involves certain vital social experiences both by engaging in eating out concerning simultaneous questions of ‘engagement’ and ‘disengagement’ with kins of different orders that are considered crucial in the research.

Food has always been a vital part of human life since civilization. With the intervention of Globalization how the existential notion of food is getting endlessly manipulated reorients the vital, fundamental connotation of food. The research area of this topic is relegated to the sphere of Sociology of Food as this tends to study the overall eating habits and the role of food choices involved in different social relationships and the structures and how the consequent interaction highlighting upon the dialectics between them. As the research area is interdisciplinary, so the next chapter aims to summarize the various pieces of literature, from varied dimensions, the policy initiatives of the Government of India that would help in generating crucial ideas about the research.