



18

TRADITION VS MODERNITY: CULINARY IDENTITY AND GLOBALIZATION IN USTAD HOTEL

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Page No. 134-138

Abstract: *This article explores the presentation of culinary culture through the framework of interconnectedness in the movie Ustad Hotel. The film talks about a young man named Faizi, an aspiring chef who did his studies in Switzerland and wanted to work in a big 5-star hotel. During that journey, he discovers the importance and significance of cultural and traditional food practices through his grandfather, Kareem Ikka. The article examines the difference between the two cultures and how food serves as a mediator between them. Drawing on theories of Arjun Appadurai and Pierre Bourdieu, the paper will offer an ethical community-driven culinary practice, wild criticizing the exploitation of the food under global capitalism. Ultimately, the film Ustad Hotel shows how modern techniques are integrated with traditional values, proving that both can coexist together.*

Keywords: *Culture, Culinary identity, Modernity, Food, Cinema, Capital.*

Introduction

In recent times, Food has emerged as an area of cultural and literary studies. Food is not just a substance but a source of cultural identity and tradition. It is deeply rooted in culture, custom and beliefs. It connects past, present and future generations. Food brings the legacy and origin of culture. It is no longer seen as a basic necessity but as a medium that connects people. As Arjun Appadurai argues, global cultural flows reshape local practices while simultaneously generating new forms of identity (Appadurai 32). Within this framework, it becomes a powerful medium through which individuals negotiate their belongings and differences (Appadurai 36). Ustad Hotel is based on the dimension of cultural background. It shows how food played an important role in connecting people all around. The film follows the story of a young man from a wealthy family who always dreamt of becoming a chef, but his father was against his choice. He managed to escape and did culinary studies abroad. He returns to India



to work in a prestigious Hotel. When his plans fail, he is forced to stay in Kozhikode with his grandfather, Kareem Ikka. Kareem Ikka runs a hotel named Ustad Hotel, where he sells biryani. The food made in his hotel was not just a source of luxury but a source of love, respect and compassion. Faizi was very impressed by his grandfather and his practices. He used to look up to him and started helping him in his hotel. The turning point in the movie came when Faizi saw Kareem Ikka feeding the poor, which showed how food can be a source of Humanity. That experience changed the perspective of Faizi's life. He could clearly see the difference between the modern culture and the traditional culture. He tried working in an international hotel but realised that the hotel failed to fill meaning in people's lives. By the end of the film, Faizi embraces his modern culinary skills and traditional skills that helped him take forward his grandfather's hotel, 'Ustad Hotel'. The film plays an important role in making everyone understand the importance of traditional practices that the old generation preserved.

Faizi is a perfect example of being caught between modernity and cultural identity. He was shaped by Western training, and in contrast, Kareem Ikka shows how tradition is rooted in community and compassion. In the film, food is considered a part of cultural heritage, a way of life that is passed down from generation to generation. Kareem Ikka passes his legacy to Faizi and goes on pilgrimage. At the end of the movie, Faizi takes care of the hotel and understands Kareem Ikka's belief that "anyone can feel a stomach, but only a good cook can fill the heart as well". This idea reflects how food is linked with ethics and emotion rather than only material satisfaction (Bourdieu 57).

Globalisation and Cultural Flows:

Appadurai conceptualises globalisation as a set of overlapping Flows that influence cultural production and identity formation (Appadurai 33). Food here becomes a site of interconnection between global and local forces. In diaspora and post-colonial settings, people are stuck between Western food cultures and Traditional tastes. People who move abroad often long for the food of their homeland. Food becomes a key medium through which identity is maintained and expressed (Appadurai 38). Traditional food evokes memory, and Western food shows new adaptation and change.

Pierre Bourdieu, in *Distinction*, argues that taste is socially constructed and functions as a marker of class and cultural capital (Bourdieu 56). Culinary preferences are usually structured by power. It shows how the West overpowered traditional food in the Ustad Hotel. Western



fine dining represents elite cultural capital, while traditional cooking signifies a different and ethical value. This shows the complex relation between the two cultures. Rather than changing the differences, they tried to go hand in hand. Cultural flows also play a crucial role in shaping identity. In a globalised world, individuals often find themselves negotiating between multiple cultural influences. This is especially evident in diasporic communities, where people maintain connections to their homeland while adapting to new cultural environments. Food, in this context, becomes a key medium through which identity is expressed and preserved. Traditional dishes can evoke memory and belonging, while new culinary practices reflect adaptation and change.

However, globalisation is not an equal process. Power imbalances influence which cultures gain visibility and which are marginalised. Western cultural forms often dominate global media and markets, shaping perceptions of modernity and progress. This can lead to the devaluation of local traditions, which may be seen as outdated or less prestigious (Bourdieu 60). Yet, cultural flows also create opportunities for resistance, allowing communities to assert their identities and challenge dominant narratives.

Food as Cultural Identity:

In *Ustad Hotel*, food is a powerful symbol of culture and traditional identity. It shows how the people are connected together. The very famous Kozhikode biryani brings a sense of togetherness and shows the heritage of Kozhikode. In the film, food carries a deeper meaning. It shows love, care and respect rather than only business or ambition. The hotel is not just a business, but a space where people gather and build relationships over delicious food. The cooking practices emphasise authenticity and connection. Food plays a crucial role in building relationships and reinforcing a sense of belonging. Shared meals bring people together and create a space for social interaction. As Appadurai notes, “food practices are deeply tied to the construction of locality” (Appadurai 37). However, rather than disappearing, both try to merge together. Food is, therefore, a dynamic and complex indicator of cultural identity. It reflects social structures, maintains memory, promotes affiliation, and adjusts to shifting circumstances. One can learn more about how people and groups perceive themselves and their role in the world by studying food. Food habits and certain cuisines are also associated with status and prestige; it demonstrates that food is not just a personal choice but a practice that is followed by millions of people. In today’s time, food choices are highly influenced by the



trends, media and global culture. Western food begins to be associated with modernity and status, because of which people may feel encouraged to shift away from traditional food. The shift is not based on personal choices but is often due to the desire to be accepted by society. Western food is seen as new and traditional, as well as outdated and ordinary. According to Pierre Bourdieu, this pattern reflects broader cultural dynamics in which consumption and taste are linked to social position. It demonstrates how globalisation affects how people view themselves and others in social hierarchies, in addition to changing eating cultures.

Globalisation and Western Culinary Aspirations:

Globalisation has significantly reshaped culinary culture worldwide, leading to the influence of Western dining practices. The development of fast-food chains, fine dining restaurants and easy accessibility of food has changed the preferences of people. Faizi's character shows how he was stuck between the West and his own culture. He got training from the West and always wanted to join an international hotel, and worked there. He realises that Western culture is more focused on status rather than meaning. It is profit-driven, and it is detached from culture and tradition. It might look expensive, but it cannot serve food the way local people do. One of the main consequences of globalisation is the standardisation of taste, which leads to the global dominance of particular culinary styles. Western food is usually portrayed as better or more sophisticated because it is commonly connected to luxury and distinction. This is consistent with the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, who contends that taste is socially formed and associated with cultural capital and class. Understanding Western cuisine has become a prestigious, educational, and cosmopolitan identity marker in many nations. People could therefore want to follow these habits in order to conform to international norms of success. Today, local tradition is sacrificed to bring up Western culture. People tend to choose status over comfort. Food in the Ustad Hotel functions as a tool of community building. Kareem Ikka was a generous man. He helped poor people. He used to give money and offer food. It shows traditional values of helping everyone and serving food with their whole heart. The film does not reject the idea of modernity, but it questions its ethical implications. When comparing the food culture with both traditional and modern cultures. The film gives an understanding of the limitations and differences between them at the same time. The movie shows that the traditional culture is capable of adapting to Western culture.

Conclusion



In the film *Ustad Hotel*, globalisation may bring about new goals and methods, but it also runs the risk of severing people from their cultural heritage. The spread of Western culinary traditions through globalisation has introduced new techniques, tastes, and opportunities, but it has also contributed to the standardisation and commodification of food. However, this process does not result in the complete loss of local traditions. Instead, cultures actively respond by adapting, resisting, and reinterpreting global influences. As Arjun Appadurai suggests, cultural flows create dynamic interactions rather than uniform outcomes, allowing for the emergence of hybrid identities. Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital highlights how food choices continue to reflect social hierarchies and evolving notions of taste. The article shows the tension between tradition and Western culture, and how these two cultures are managed together, food becomes a medium of transformation and realisation. It helped in understanding how important it is to stay in touch with your tradition and with your own culture. It creates a space where identity is made, negotiated and redefined.

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