

‘Food that increases at-homeness’: Migrant’s food-nostalgia in selected partition narratives

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Abstract:

This paper reconsiders dominant understandings of nostalgia. It examines how food memory operates within selected oral narratives and literary texts shaped by the Partition of the Indian subcontinent. Rather than treating nostalgia as a purely retrospective or restorative impulse, it argues that food nostalgia functions as a mediating force that bridges the temporal gap between a lost homeland and an imagined future home, thereby redefining the meaning of home in post-relocation contexts. Through a close reading of Kollol Lahiri’s *Indubala’s Rice Hotel* alongside oral histories of Partition migrants, the paper analyses how everyday culinary practices—cooking, sharing, and remembering—mobilise sensory memory to produce affective moments in which geographical and temporal distance appear to be reduced. Drawing on theories of nostalgia, postcolonial modernity, and home-making, in turn, the paper demonstrates how culinary nostalgia acquires a creative and counter-hegemonic potential, enabling forms of belonging that resist the nation-state’s normalising tendency to produce homogeneous subjects. By foregrounding the transcultural and future-oriented dimensions of food nostalgia, the paper further shows how food nostalgia carries an anticipatory impulse that sustains the imagination of more egalitarian and ethical forms of sociality.

Keywords: Food nostalgia, home-making, postcolonial modernity, Partition narratives.