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Food as Text and Data: Bhadrakok Identity Across Literary and Digital Spaces using Mixed-methods

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Abstract

In Indian English literature, food has often been labelled as a stable marker of cultural identity, memory and belonging. By focusing particularly on the bhadrakok—an educated, urban middle class formation emerged during the British colonial era, historically associated with cultural refinement, restraint and social reforms. The paper argues that food increasingly unravels the true identity of the bhadrakok subjectivity under such conditions like diaspora, global circulation and digital mediation.

Drawing on Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*, and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* and *The Shadow Lines*, the paper demonstrates how food in literary narratives moves beyond domestic threshold into transnational and imperial circuits of trade, migration and labour. In these texts, culinary practices no longer function as a cultural continuity, instead, they represent emotional distance, class anxiety and the instability of elite subject positions. The literary analysis is extended through a curated corpus of bengali food blogs and instagram posts, where bhadrakok food is visually curated, branded and algorithmically circulated by shifting it from lived experience.

Moreover, the proposed chapter intends to combine mixed-methods as a part of its research methodologies. By combining close-reading with digital humanities tools such as Voyant and thematic analysis, this ensures not only the computational involvement but also the traditional process. Both of these promise to trace patterns of food-related language, space and affect across literary and digital corpora. The theoretical framework relies on diaspora studies, postcolonial class analysis and theories of circulation to conceptualise food as a commodified entity.

By situating food at the intersection of literature, digital culture and class, the paper contributes to discussions on digital marginality by showing how elite subjectivities themselves become fractured and destabilized, generating plural, unsettling modes of belonging.

Keywords: foodways, diaspora, digital culture, bhadrakok, class distinction

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I. Introduction, Background and Approach

For a long time, food has not only been a biological necessity, it is a cultural archive in which societies build identity, memory, class and belonging. Culinary practices as expressed in Indian English narrative offer an insight into migration, colonial encounter, caste, gender and regional identity. Everyday acts of cooking and eating are thus rendered into social and historical acts (Appadurai, 1988; Banerjee-Dube, 2019; Counihan and Van Esterik, 2013). Food is also a language through which we negotiate our relationship within changing times historically, embracing our social and cultural values. Meals reveal intimate bonding, social hierarchy and cultural values (Ashley et al., 2004; Avakian & Haber, 2005).

Most of the scholarship sees food mainly as nostalgia or cultural continuity, especially in diasporic writing. Culinary practices are often seen as having the potential to keep alive memories of the homeland and sustain an ethnic identity in the wake of migration (Mannur, 2010). While this nurturance lens has vastly broadened literary food studies, it often imagines food as a fixed cultural signifier. Any assumption of authenticity ignores the changes made possible by colonial histories, global mobility and digital circulation, as recipes change, ingredients replace and practices are repeatedly instantiated; thus, it reveals extensive negotiation, adaptation and fragmentation.

The tension arises with the emergence of *bhadralok*, a term originally referring to the educated Bengali middle class that came into being during the colonial rise of the nation. The tension in question is highlighted by the emergence of the *bhadralok*. The identity of *bhadralok* class was closely associated with a number of factors, likely western education, government jobs and cultural refinement (Chatterjee, 1993; Ray, 2004; Sarkar, 1975). The culinary practices embedded in a culture became a distinctive marker of class formation and moral development. But the frontier is more and more contested as globalisation, migration and digital media grow. In contemporary time, food no longer supports elite identity but exposes changing social valuation, emotional displacement and changing forms of cultural performance.

This paper explores Jhumpa Lahiri and Amitav Ghosh's works that uncovers the experiences of such transformations. In *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *The Namesake* (2003), food shows how diasporic families negotiate memory, loneliness and intergenerational identity. The act of cooking traditional recipes creates a connection with Bengal; however, migration continuously remodels these recipes to demonstrate that belonging is a process of constant reconstruction and never recovery. In addition, Amitav Ghosh links food to the greater history of colonialism, transfer and exchange. In *In the Shadow Lines* a meal that is shared breaks all political barriers; while *Sea of*

Poppies locates culinary practices within imperial trade, labour migration and commodity circulation. These texts reflect the food's association with different political networks of the past, imperial and globalization.

This paper focuses on the analysis of contemporary digital cultures which facilitate the circulation of Bengali food. The customary items like shorshe ilish, luchi, kosha mangsho, mishti doi are often made to 'look' heritage and authentic. Once food is removed from its everyday use in domestic practices it becomes digital content, cultural branding and aesthetic performance. Thus, the *bhadrakok* identity is reconstructed as an effect of not merely lived culinary practices but also as a platform that celebrates visibility, participation and algorithmic circulation.

This study adopts a convergent mixed-methods digital humanities approach, combining qualitative close reading and quantitative computational text analysis of the data used and received through the voyant tool. Computational methods employed in the literary and digital corpora (Moretti, 2013; Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016) do not stand-in for literary interpretation but rather complement the close reading by bringing out repeat lexicon or collocations. This paper uses two works of Jhumpa Lahiri – *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* and *The Shadow Lines* and *Sea of Poppies* both authored by Amitav Ghosh. The analysis of these texts is done together with a selective corpus taken from Bengal food blog and Instagram posts to uncover their culinary representation continuities and transformations.

The research utilizes three complementary theoretical frameworks. According to diaspora studies, the migrations remapped connections between food, memory and belonging (Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994; Hall, 1990). Postcolonial framework identifies the *bhadrakok* to be a historically conditional formation of colonial modernity, rather than a fixed social category (Chatterjee, 1993; Sarkar, 1975). In the end, circulation and digital culture theories display how food increasingly operates within transnational and platform-mediated networks (Appadurai, 1986; Tsing, 2015; Van Dijck, 2013).

The main argument here is that food is no longer a marker of *bhadrakok* identity stability. Literary narratives and digital food cultures, rather, show identity as a process that is constantly being forged anew through migration, historical mobility, globalisation and digital mediation. Utilising digital humanities methods to examine literary criticism, this study contributes to literary food studies, postcolonialism, and digital cultural studies. Moreover, the analysis illustrates how food as a cultural archive serves as a site of negotiation and reconfiguration of memory, class, and belonging.

II. Literature Review

Emerging as a lively interdisciplinary field, food studies exhibit food as not just a source of nourishment but also a cultural practice whereby identity, memory, power and social relations are negotiated. Scholarly studies have compared food to a language, one that conveys meaning and reflection on change-over-time, emotional experience and social belonging. Lately, the more recent field of digital humanities has brought computational approaches, allowing scholars to inspect numerous textual patterns in large literary and digital corpora. This review brings together scholarship on five interconnected domains: food studies; *bhadralok* identity; diaspora and migration; digital cultures of food; and the digital humanities before identifying the research gap which this study addresses.

2.1 Food Studies and Literary Representation

The theoretical origins of food studies are in anthropology, wherein food was first conceived as a cultural system rather than a biological one. According to Douglas (1972), meals have a social grammar, and later communities form hierarchy and order through food. According to Lévi-Strauss (1966), food practices mediate the relationship between nature and culture. Following these perspectives, Mintz (1985) linked everyday food consumption to colonial economies and global capitalism. Appadurai (1988) argued that cuisines evolve through mobility and exchange which negotiates the regional, rather than being culturally fixed.

According to Ashley et al. (2004), food has become an important analytical category and lens through which narrative negotiates with class, gender, memory and political authority. Therefore, it symbolises several attributes. In *Food and culture: A Reader*, Counihan and Van Esterik (2013) demonstrate that food embodies cultural memory through sensory experience and identity. Scholarship on diasporic literature has further shown that culinary practices retain emotional ties with the homeland while adapting to new sites (Mannur, 2010). While these works connect literary food studies significantly, they tend to value the significance of food as a signifier of continuity and nostalgia more than they do the cultural instability and division of class.

2.2 *Bhadralok* Identity and Colonial Modernity

It is essential to investigate the historical formation of the *bhadralok* to understand Bengali food culture. Though it emerged during the colonial period, the identity could not be entirely

defined by that possession of wealth and social status. The identity also relies on the respectable employment in the state and performance of cultural refinement (Sarkar, 1975). In addition to that, middle-class identity was re-defined by hegemonic domesticity.

The acts of eating and arrangements are viewed as part of sophistication by following a certain set of regulations and processes; thus the moral and civilizational progress was determined by food (Ray, 2004). Nonetheless, recent studies have questioned the identity of the *bhadrakok*, suggesting it might have significant internal tensions including caste, gender and historical change (Chakrabarty, 2000; Mukherjee, 2017). A limited study discussing the depiction of food in literary works is significant in understanding the transformations involved in migration and globalization.

2.3 Food, Diaspora and Digital Food Cultures

The reason food has a dominant place in diaspora studies is because of its ability to mediate migration, memory and belonging. According to Hall (1990), identity is not something that is 'being' but is rather 'becoming'. This lens is useful to understand how we use recipes, taste and eat across spaces. Scholarly work on South Asian diasporas further shows that food both preserves cultural memory and engages in multicultural economies. According to Mannur (2010), culinary authenticity is performative and continuously negotiated, while adaptation is an essential characteristic of food cultures of migrants (Narayan, 1997). The rise of social media has made food more visual and more cultural and more about algorithms than ever. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube and food blogs are pushing for the aestheticisation of everyday foods, where culinary value is now increasingly reliant on visibility, engagement and digital circulation (Highmore, 2011). The influencer culture propagates this process through performances of authenticity in commercial platform economies (Abidin, 2016). The theorists of platform studies similarly argue that algorithms do not only analyse content, but also shape culture by regulating what gets seen and engaged with (Gillespie, 2018; Leaver et al., 2020).

The domain of digital humanities has introduced computational methods to study conventional literary interpretation. In projects like *Distant Reading* and *Text Mining the Novel*, Moretti demonstrates how patterns of words and themes recur across large texts. This allows scholars to study word frequencies, collocates and semantic relations without requiring a high level of computer programming skills (Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016). In recent times, Voyant Tools has emerged as one of the most used platforms for corpus analysis, suggesting merging computational with close reading to develop richer interpretations of literature (Drucker, 2013; Underwood, 2019). In partic-

ular, studies investigating food, class and digital culture, the approach to digital humanities is still limited in terms of Indian English literary narratives.

III. Research Gap

Although there is a growing need for research on food studies, diaspora and *bhadralok* identity using digital humanities tools and methods. Food studies in literature often emphasize food as nostalgia and cultural continuity. At the same time, food studies neglect how food reveals fragmentation in the midst of globalization and digital mediation. Studies of *bhadralok* identity hardly examines food as a site of changing class identity. At present, research on Jhumpa Lahiri and Amitav Ghosh has largely evolved independently, with little comparative focus on food as a common framework linking diaspora, colonial mobility and cultural circulation. Also, a limited number of studies combine the analysis of literary food cultures versus digital food cultures within the frame provided by digital humanities.

The present study focuses on bringing together literary criticism, postcolonial theory and digital humanities to fill the gap in an interdisciplinary way. It argues that food no longer serves as a fixed marker of *bhadralok* identity. Food is not merely a source of social discontent or aggravation within the cultural sector. To analyse these transformations, the proposed study draws on diaspora studies, postcolonial theorisation of *bhadralok* identity, theorisation of circulation and commodity culture and platform studies. The combination of these frameworks provide a meaningful way to understand how food travels from an intimate practice in the domestic field to transnationally and digitally into bodies and a cultural archive.

3.1 Food, Diaspora and Negotiation of Belonging.

Brah (1996) and Clifford (1994) argue that diaspora studies challenge essentialist notions of identity. In contrast, they claim that the immigrant separates the activities of cultural practices from action and freezes its meaning as tradition. According to Hall (1990), the identity is a process of “becoming” and “being”. This notion can help us understand the culinary practices of societies, as ingredients, recipes and eating habits certainly differ across space.

Meals serve a two-fold purpose whereby new memories of places and nations undergo formation while old memories of homes get preserved (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013). However,

memories are constantly being reshaped by substitution, adaptation and interaction. According to Mannur (2010), the process of commodifying ethnic food helps in preserving cultural memory. Further, in the multicultural societies, authenticity itself is performed and negotiated.

3.2 Colonial Modernity and *Bhadrakok* Identity

The second conceptual foundation of this study is the background of the *bhadrakok* identity. It emerged as a culturally privileged social formation through colonial education, administrative employment and social reform and their authority operated through refinement, domestic discipline and respectability. According to Chatterjee (1993), colonial modernity ensured that the middle class was born and performed at home.

According to Ray (2004), food serves a vital role in moral order establishment as well as cultural difference. Bourdieu's (1984) notion of cultural capital further describes how everyday tastes and culinary practices reproduce social hierarchy through embodied dispositions. Within Bengali middle-class culture, food operates as symbolic capital signifying education, refinement and social aspiration. Culinary creations have now begun to reveal these practices and their uncertain relation to *bhadrakok* identity. It will be shown that class itself is constantly reconstituted by migration, globalization and altering cultural practices.

3.3 Food, Circulation, and Digital Culture

It is evident that food does not always carry the same meaning. Theories of circulation can help build a bigger picture of this process of re-meaning. Appadurai (1986) describes how commodities have a social life; that is, meaning of commodity changes as it passes through different systems of exchange. Similarly, Mintz (1985) shows whose daily food practices are bound up with historical practices like colonialism, labour and global capitalism. Tsing (2015) further proposed the idea of the emergence of cultural meaning through the movement of commodities through worlds.

During this digital age, food circulates over social networks. There, visibility—helped by algorithms and user-related mechanisms—increasingly controls its cultural value and cultural production is actively organized by digital infrastructures instead of just being their hosting location.

3.4 Integrated Conceptual Framework

The paper argues that food functions as a cultural archive, wherein *bhadralok* identity has been produced, negotiated and contested by joining these perspectives. Food studies is a multidimensional field that intersects with numerous disciplines, theories and methodological approaches. Notably, it engages with compelling case studies emerging from the Global South. To illustrate, consider how this topic engages with four key areas. These include diaspora, post-colonialism, circulation and platform studies. This paper engages with each of these topics and provides compelling examples from South Asia.

This framework strengthens the main argument of the paper that food has ceased to be a fixed signifier of *bhadralok* identity. Moving images, gastronomical literary texts and digital food cultures, on the other hand, define identity as a process of becoming with fluid boundaries. Employing these theoretical lenses through a mixed-methods approach in digital humanities makes it possible to analyse food as memory, cultural practice, commodity and digital object.

IV. Methodology

4.1 Research Design.

This mixed-methods research study conducts a quantitative test study and qualitative examination of two domains in one methodology. In other terms, it would create a study that combines the perspective and experiences of people with the analysis of some particular data. It also employs close reading and corpus-based analysis, which will complement—not displace literary interpretation (Berry, 2012; Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016). The quantitative part utilizes Voyant tools to study the occurrences, collocations, contexts of keywords and thematic links. The integration of the two methods will enable us to make interpretative claims about the texts that we will show evidence of, rather than merely describe. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), when a researcher conducts methodological triangulation in qualitative and quantitative studies, the qualitative research enriches the quantitative study, thereby incorporating both in this research.

4.2 Selection of Corpus

Research investigates two complementary datasets, a literary corpus and a digital corpus. Purposive sampling was employed for both corpora based on their common outcome.

4.2.1 Literary Corpus

The four Indian English texts in the literary corpus represent different historical moments in the making of Bengali identity.

Table 1: Literary Corpus

Author	Text	Analytical Focus
Jhumpa Lahiri	<i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (1999)	Food, migration and domestic memory
Jhumpa Lahiri	<i>The Namesake</i> (2003)	Diaspora and intergenerational identity
Amitav Ghosh	<i>The Shadow Lines</i> (1988)	Food, memory and Partition
Amitav Ghosh	<i>Sea of Poppies</i> (2008)	Colonial trade and culinary circulation

Note. Prepared by the author.

By examining them as one corpus, it is possible to make wider comparisons related to the historical change of *bhadrakalok* identity.

4.2.2 Digital Corpus

To expand the literary attributes to existing culture, the inquiry also studies a corpus of public engagement Bengali food blogs and Instagram posts. The following criteria were used to select content.

The focus will be on Bengali cuisine and food practices:

- Mentioning memory, heritage, festival, or family tradition(s);
- A lot of text that goes with recipes or food stories.

Something that is made available for the common people.

Commercial advertisements, reposts, and irrelevant promotional material were omitted for analytical consistency. The collection of digital corpus offers an understanding of Bengali food circulation in platform environments.

4.3 Data Collection and Preparation

The literature was converted to machine-readable plain-text (.txt) for computational analysis. The information about authors and publishers, as well as page numbers and other obstructions were removed.

The food blogs and Instagram captions that are publicly available were used to prepare the digital corpus. The study is specifically concerned with textual representation only. By textual, we mean, the recipes, comments, descriptions, stories etc. Images, emoji, hyperlinks and video were excluded from this analysis.

Subsequently, the corpora underwent various preprocessing. We converted the documents into UTF-8 encoded text files, removed duplicate material and metadata, and standardized spelling inconsistencies wherever necessary. Notably, Bengali food terms like *ilish*, *shorshe*, *luchi*, *mishti*, *bhat*, and *panch-phoron* are retained as they do not constitute mere statistical noise but rather meaningful analytical tools.

Standard English stop words were filtered out with the built-in stop-word list available in the Voyant tools, however, the culturally-specific vocabulary was kept. Despite using the same script for all languages, culturally specific artefacts were not eliminated.

4.4 Computational Text Analysis

Analyzing this content was performed with Voyant tools (Sinclair & Rockwell, 2016), a corpus analysis platform that is open-access and regularly used in digital humanities. There were four complementary analytical techniques:

1. The analysis of the frequency of words helped to identify the most used terms in each corpus, and helped to give an overview of the recurrent semantic fields, which are associated with food and identity.
2. The collocation analysis for food-related keywords revealed meanings of diversity between food and family, migration, memory, authenticity, and heritage.
3. The analysis on the specific distribution of selected culinary terms across texts and digital documents helped us to highlight the narrative moments in which food assumes specific significance.

4. Finally, an analysis of Keyword-in-Context (KWIC) involved looking at the contexts of frequently used food-related words. This method differentiated between literal food references and broader symbolic meanings related to identity, memory, and belonging.

The computational findings were not used as separate evidence but interpreted alongside qualitative literary analysis, ensuring that quantitative patterns remain situated within their narrative and cultural contexts.

4.5 Qualitative Analysis

The main qualitative method was close reading. Textual analysis of selected excerpts from the various literary texts examines how food serves as narrative structure, cultural sign and historical archive. More cooking and eating scenes featured; migration, ritual, hospitality, and domestic labour were all included.

The analysis of the close reading findings generated six overarching thematic categories, which are as follows:

1. Food and Household Memory.
2. Food and Immigrant Identity
3. Food and Mobility through History.
4. Circulation of Food and Colonial Commodities.
5. Food and digital authenticity.
6. Food as an Expression of Identity

These themes provided the interpretative framework for comparing literary narratives with contemporary digital food cultures.

4.6 Reliability, Validity, and Ethical Considerations

The study's reliability is enhanced through methodological triangulation by combining quantitative computation and qualitative interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). To triangulate findings and minimise reliance on one approach, various analytical techniques were employed,

including word-frequency analysis and collocation analysis, KWIC and close reading.

By comparing two complementary corpora from different times and cultures, validity is strengthened. Using a comparative design allows for an understanding of the shift in Bengali culinary identity, without being restricted to a particular text.

The research recognizes the shortcomings of computer methods. Lexical frequency and semantic association cannot account for symbolism, irony, or emotional nuance on their own; hence, quantitative findings are consistently interpreted via close reading.

Only digital materials available to the public were used, ethically. No private accounts or personally identifiable information were collected. All data collected online was only analysed for academic purposes. Though the corpora for both the literary as well as the digital texts are purposive, not exhaustive, the methodology provides transparency and replicability for future cross-disciplinary work on food, identity and digital culture.

V. Results

This part discusses the results of the computational study of both the literary and digital corpus. The research examined how the themes related to food were represented through the lens of frequency, collocation, keywords and theme using the Voyant tools. These analyses provide empirical evidence that works alongside the close readings discussed in the following chapter, rather than replacing them in qualitative interpretation. The findings reveal that food is a central semantic category across the two corpora but at the same time shows significant historical and cultural differences.

5.1 Corpus Overview

Statistical data were collected to check the general characteristic of the two corpora before measuring linguistic patterns.

Table 2., Descriptive Statistics of the Literary and Digital Corpora

Corpus	Documents	Total Words	Unique words	Vocabulary Density
Literary Corpus	4	301,845	18,214	6.03%
Digital Corpus	5	92,378	9,846	10.66%

Note. Prepared by the author

Due to the narrative complexity of the fiction and short stories, the literary corpus has a greater range of vocabulary than the digital corpus which mainly consists of shorter texts with repetitive culinary vocabulary. Although those structural differences exist, both corpora possess enough richness to facilitate a corpus comparison.

5.2 Lexical Frequency Analysis

An analysis of word frequency in each corpus identifies the most frequent lexicon items. We provide an overview of the dominant and repeated semantic fields concerning food and identity.

5.2.1 Literary Corpus

The vast majority of texts have the words associated with home, family, migration and food. Words like home, family, mother, rice, fish, and kitchen appear commonly. Here culinary practices do not function as descriptors. They indicate belonging, memory, and relationships.

Figure 1. Word Cloud Generated from the Literary Corpus Using Voyant Tools



Note. Generated by the author using Voyant Tools

Table 3., Representative High-Frequency Lexical Items in the Literary Corpus

Word	Frequency
Food	248
Rice	183
Fish	121
Home	167
Family	154
Mother	112
Kitchen	97
Meal	89
India	141
Memory	105

Note. Prepared by the author

The prominence of domestic vocabulary indicates that food serves mainly in familiar social spaces where memory, kinship and the continuity of culture are negotiated.

5.2.2 Digital Corpus.

The vocabulary of the digital corpus is unique. Aside from references to Bengali food, most used terms are recipe, authentic, traditional, festival, taste and cooking. Through different kinds of words used, the online food vocabulary is centred on knowledge, authenticity and culture.

Figure 2. Word Cloud Generated from the Digital Corpus Using Voyant Tool



Note. Generated by the author using Voyant Tool.

Table 4., Representative High-Frequency Lexical Items in the Digital Corpus

Word	Frequency
Kolkata	312
Bengali	276
Food	251
Taste	214
Restaurant	198
Traditional	163
Festival	142
Recipe	127
Authentic	119
Family	86

Note. Prepared by the author

As compared to the literary corpus, terms about cooking often collaborate with text and sharing that food operates more and more like a cultural performance.

5.3 Comparative Lexical Patterns

A comparative analysis of the two corpora shows both continuity and divergence in food representation.

Table 5., Comparison of Dominant Culinary Vocabulary

Literary Corpus	Digital Corpus
Food	Kolkata
Rice	Authentic
Fish	Recipe
Home	Taste
Family	Festival
Memory	Restaurant

Note. Prepared by the author

Both of the corpora invoke food in marking a Bengali identity but differently. The focus of literary texts is on familial relations, home and memory, while the digital texts deal with taste, recipe and authenticity.

5.4 Collocation Analysis

The lexical field of food in literature is heavily associated with family, home, memory, kitchen and mother, meaning that cooking is situated in domestic life and upbringing. By contrast, the digital corpus displays stronger associations with recipe, authentic, festival, restaurant, culture, and share, suggesting public mediation of food discourse that extends beyond private households.

Table 6., Representation of Collocational Patterns

Literary Corpus	Digital Corpus
Food →Family	Food →Authentic
Rice →Kitchen	Recipe →Traditional
Fish →Home	Festival →Celebration
Kitchen →Family	Bengali →Heritage
Home →Memory	Taste →Restaurant

Note. Prepared by the author

According to the semantic relation analysis, we can argue that food can not be more central to the Bengali identity in both the corpora but its cultural functions also change from domestic experience to public representation and digital circulation.

5.5 Trend and Keyword-In-Context (KWIC) Analysis

According to the trends, the vocabulary of food is centred around key narrative moments and not distributed throughout the text. High points commonly overlap with scenes of moving, gathering, illness, ritual and historical transition. In contrast, the digital corpus shows fairly stable distributions of food terms since recipes, festivals and everyday food discourse continue to be used.

The findings of the Keyword-in-Context (KWIC) analysis further illustrated how the same culinary terms have different cultural functions in the two corpora. In literary work, words like ‘home’ and ‘fish’ pop up frequently in migration and emotive memory narratives. In digital texts, the words recipe, authentic, and festival primarily occur in the context of culinary preparation, cultural branding and community engagement. These findings reveal that food may embody different meanings depending on where they are situated, their historical context and the function of the text.

5.6 Thematic Clustering

Thematic clustering illustrated a lot of shared ideas across the corpora.

Table 7., Major Computational Themes

Literary Corpus	Digital Corpus
Domestic Memory	Culinary Authenticity
Family and belonging	Heritage Branding
Migration	Festive Culture
Historical Mobility	Digital Food Performance
Commodity Circulation	Online Community

Note. Prepared by the author

While both culinary corpora foreground Bengali identity, they organise food within different semantic structures. According to literary texts, memory, migration and historic experience is important and on the other hand, visibility, authenticity and participation in digital texts.

5.7 Summary of Findings

The computational analyses yield four main results: The first food vocabulary is one of the dominant lexical fields in the two corpora, namely text and blog, and is considered central in representing Bengali culture. Furthermore, collocation analysis shows different semantic environments. Literary texts frequently connect food with the ideas of home, migration, family and memory, whereas digital texts focus on authenticity, recipes, festivals and digitisation. In the third place, suggest that food has different functions at different times in history. In literature, food references are concentrated at significant moments in narrative history. In digital media, food communicates culture and self all the time. In the end, thematic clustering shows a wider history. Within the shifting narrative of food, one can recognise a shift from a marker of domestic belonging to a medium of historical mobility and colonial circulation. The digital corpus promotes this trajectory by transforming cooking practices into public, networked cultural performances.

Taken together, these findings provided empirical backing for the main argument of the study that food is not a mere marker of nostalgia or ethnic continuity. Instead, it acts as an active cultural archive that shows how *bhadralok* identity is constantly negotiated in the domestic, historical, and digital spheres.

VI. Discussion

A careful analysis of both literary and digital texts shows that food is central to their lexicon and meaning. However, these discoveries are not restricted to this vocabulary. The studies and theories of Stuart Hall, Pierre Bourdieu and Arjun Appadurai demonstrate that food as an ever-evolving cultural archive through which *bhadrakok* identity is negotiated mainly in domestic, historical and digital categories. In contrast to just a consumer product or mere nostalgia, an object of the past, food practices act to mediate memory, migration, class and technology. The analysis merges computational findings with close reading in order to show how literary and digital food cultures together reconfigure Bengali middle-class identity.

6.1 Food, a domestic domain and or cultural memory.

In literature, food is connected with home, family, mother, kitchen and memory. Based on word-frequency and collocation analyses, these meanings make up the most salient semantic environment of food terms, which suggests that food belongs in intimate domestic relations rather than happening as incidental narrative description.

Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* have also depicted a similar pattern. Cooking is not just preparation of food in both the texts; it becomes a way of keeping up with the distance from Bengal emotionally. Ashima's preparation of Bengali dishes, for example, turns regular cooking into an experience of the culture. Food maintains the customs of language, ritual and family even as the larger society. The interpretative conclusion of this paper is supported by reasonably strong computational findings which show sustained lexical associations between food, family and belonging in the text corpus.

The idea of cultural identity as a "becoming" proposed by Hall (1990) allows us to interpret these images. Food does not return one to a displaced birthplace; rather, it restores one's identity in the cultural setting they now find themselves in. Consequently, Bengali food operates less like an established tradition and more like an ever-changing practice tailored to shifting historical contexts.

These novels question the notion of a culinary identity being passed down intact from one generation to the next. The experience of food of the first-generation migrants shows how the essentialization of cultural continuity is happening but the younger characters are negotiating identities made of the Bengali and the Western. Consequently Bengali cuisine is a cultural resource through which belonging is continually negotiated rather than inherited intact.

Bourdieu's (1984) habitus makes these processes clearer. The knowledge about cooking, eating, and food preferences is embodied cultural knowledge acquired through socialisation. Migration disrupts these standard practices due to the introduction of new ingredients, marketplaces and social environments. As a result, culinary identity becomes adaptive. Computational evidence supports that while domestic vocabularies remain consistently important, their meanings in relation to each other change across different stories, reflecting changing experiences of migration and belonging.

6.2 Food, Mobility and Historical Transformation

Although food is largely involved in the domestic memory in the fiction of Lahiri, in Ghosh's novels, culinary representation gets the chance to expand into a larger history of mobility, colonialism, and political change. Computational analyses show growing links between food and the lexical fields of borders, travel, labour, goods, and migration.

Shared meals do not follow political borders in *The Shadow Lines*. In fact, the same dishes survive after crossing national limits. Food references happen more in journeys, family get-togethers, and migration hassles rather than in everyday home life. According to the patterns, food serves as a medium of remembrance for bonds that partition has broken while confronting the less flexible myths of territorial identity.

Again, Hall's (1990) theory is instructive, he claims that a person's identity is shaped by history rather than geography. *The Sea of Poppies* shows how cuisines participate in the global net of commerce. Food here is closely tied to produce from farms, the sea and migrant workers. Results obtained from collocation analysis indicate unexpected associations between names of dishes and the names of ships, markets, commodities and exchange. Food is a part of these imperial systems, not a domestic one.

The findings can be interpreted through Appadurai's (1986) theory of the social life of commodities. As food moves through colonial and trade routes, it acquires new significance. In Bengal, these meanings broaden due to migration. Culinary practices thus superseded in historical evidence imperial circulation, not merely regional tradition.

The comparison of Lahiri and Ghosh discloses a significant development. Initially, families use food as a way of remembering. In the diaspora, food becomes a marker of negotiation and, finally, for colonials who shifted from their homeland. Food became a marker of the globalisation of

the colonials. This paper is based on the production of food and the changes that have happened throughout history to attain this social equality. Thus the *bhadrakok* identity does not serve as a fixed social category but rather a historical formation subject to change, exchanges and adaptation.

6.3 Food as Digital Performance: Literary Continuity and Contemporary Transformation

This history has expanded into today's digital corpus, which is part of a networked culture. The data analysis with the word frequency analysis actually suggests the major lexical items to be recipe, authentic, traditional, festival and Bengali. The collocation analysis further indicates that the words share, heritage, community and culture. Eating manners, cutlery related vocabularies are registered in literary corpus in terms of power relation, whereas food is invariably located in documentation, recommendation and public practices in digital corpus.

An in-depth analysis of food blogs and Instagram captions reveals that recipes are not merely sets of instructions. Rather, they are accompanied by tales of childhoods, family customs and festivals and regional memories. Culinary images perform identity in ways that encourage responses from far-flung receivers. As a result, digital food culture develops, opposed to the influence of literary traditions.

Through Hall's (1990) conception of identity being the constant production, it again understands this continuity. Across literary corpus and cyberspace, Bengali identity gets reconstructed on a daily basis in the kitchen. Only the medium has changed through which these practices circulate. In the writings of Lahiri, the space of the kitchen is where identity is negotiated. In Ghosh's novels, it travels through histories of migration and colonial exchange. In digital culture, it is mediated through photographs, captions, hashtags, online communities and so on. Computational findings suggest that food has developed a growing number of cultural functions.

Domestic memory, diasporic identity, historical mobility, colonial circulation, digital performance and networked cultural archive, can recreate all these concepts drawn from pivotal historical movements and performances, enhancing cultural productions in Indian history. These developments show that the cooking practices take on new meanings rather than replacing old ones. The kitchen is still important, but it now reaches across the digitally mediated public spaces of everyday life. Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus also gains new relevance in digital knowledge about cooking that still comes from our physical experiences within the home. However, with social media, experiences are externalised through photos and recipe videos and stories online. The habitus is thus lived and mediated at the same time, in which tradition is preserved in established forms, but in real-time mediated by the latest

communications.

In *Sea of Poppies*, the contemporary relevance of food is traced through imperial trade networks. On the other hand, instant circulation of recipes, techniques and regional cultures to audiences worldwide is possible through digital spaces. While food is still being exchanged around the world, processes today are mediated technologically, rather than the objects. These transformations can be viewed through computational analysis combined with close reading. An examination of word-frequency profiles shows repeated use of culinary terms, while collation analysis suggests altered semantic associations over time. Further, theme clusters show importation of food from domestic practice to digital cultural performance. The use of computational methods in interpreting literature allows texts to enter measurable evidence of their repetition.

6.4 Theoretical Contribution

The findings make three interrelated contributions to contemporary scholarship. The first contribution to food literary studies is to show that food functions not only as a signifier of nostalgia or universally shared ethnic continuity but as a critical archive through which the history becomes visible and these culinary practices are evident by migration, colonialism, globalization and digital cultures.

Second, the research contributes to the field of postcolonial studies by reading the *bhadralok* identity as a changing cultural formation, crafted through mobility and exchange, rather than preserved through static tradition. Food illustrates the historical adaptability of middle-class Bengali identity across domestic, imperial, diasporic and digital realities.

Ultimately, this outcome is significant to digital humanities as it shows how computational text analysis can enhance close reading, rather than turning literature into numerical datasets. Through employing the corpus analysis, the qualitative interpretation provides a replicable methodological model for investigation of literature, culture and digital media. According to both textual and computational evidence, food is best viewed as dynamic cultural archives through which *bhadralok* identity is continually remembered, negotiated and remade. Culinary practices usually do not maintain a cultural past through time as this forms different kinds of belonging from changing historical, spatial and technological conditions.

VII. Conclusion

The research looks at how the culturally-archived food in Indian English literature as well as contemporary digital food cultures represents, negotiates and transforms *bhadrakok* identity. The research shows that food is neither a trope nor a nostalgic symbol in the homeland imagined via close reading and computational text analysis. It is a marker of a complex cultural process that reflects the changing relationships between domesticity, migration, colonial history and the digital cultures.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* highlight how food mediates memory, belonging and identity across generations. In this way, individuals retain culture by cooking and eating together. In his novels, *The Shadow Lines* and *Sea of Poppies*, Amitav Ghosh presents food as a non-domestic narrative that complicates representational modes of imperial trade, partition and global mobility. Food is evidence of history; it tells its own story and connects personal experience to broader political and economic change.

Computational analyses support findings from qualitative reports; the analysis of food in literary and digital corpora goes through word-frequency, collocation, trend and thematic analysis. Food texts in literature commonly deal with families, homes, memories, migrations and historical change while digital food narratives engage with authenticity, recipes, festivals, cultural branding and participation. The findings reveal how food remains an important part of Bengali culture, but its functions change in light of history and technology.

A comparison shows how food was historically represented. It is interesting how humanity has essentially rewired the food system through literary works for several centuries. As digitally written material an edible acts as a public display of a cultural performance that is networked and visible. Instead of retaining previous meanings, digital media widen the cultural life of food, they enable recipes, family traditions and regional cuisines to circulate globally. As a result, *bhadrakok* identity does not belong to a fixed social category, it is rather a cultural formation constantly produced by migration, mobility, globalization and digital mediations.

The study shows how the digital humanities approach might successfully complement qualitative literary criticism, using computational text analysis it can identify large-scale lexical and semantic patterns in literature by complementing close reading process. Most importantly, it supports empirical methods for literary interpretation. These tools must not be used to reduce an unruly text to a single meaning. The approach creates a replicable model for future interdisciplinary analyses that wish to combine a corpus with a cultural and literary analysis.

The paper provides three main contributions. To begin with, it expands literary food studies

through conceptualising food as an evolving cultural archive rather than a mere marker of nostalgia or ethnic continuity. It helps postcolonial framework by showing that *bhadralok* identity is prevalent in history and negotiated through food. In addition, it contributes to digital humanities by showing how computing offers systematic textual evidence for literary interpretation.

Food is more than just something to consume or use. In literary and digital narratives, it becomes a live archive in which memory, identity, class and history are continuously constructed, challenged and reinvented. Looking at food both literally and computationally shows how everyday food can continue to illuminate wider issues of cultural transformation in an ever-more connected world.

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