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Kruti

Every person in the world from birth to death does innumerable deeds. As one grows, one's personality also develops and meanings and references to such deeds keep changing. But those who concentrate on their deeds for the sake of acquiring knowledge and building character, they stand to acquire a higher level of excellence.

To gain knowledge, one of the most important skills is writing. To whom God has given the skill or gift of writing, to those people is given strength to light the flame in millions to be creative and thoughtful.

Any completion of creative work, appears in the form of Kruti. As per the nature of the deed we need to understand the creativity of the act. If Kruti is taken only in the literary sense as a piece of writing, then one is narrowing its meaning. Every particle of nature shows creativity. Kruti in a broader sense is creativity through any individual. Scientifically Kruti is connected to people with all branches of arts, science and commerce and where, deep thought analysis and valuation gives shape to creation.

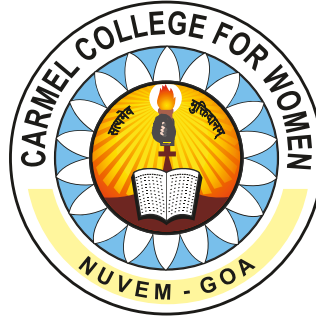
कृति

किसी भी सर्जनात्मक कार्य की पूर्ति कृति के रूप में रूपायित होती है। कृति की प्रकृति के अनुरूप हमें रचना की रचनाशीलता की थाह मिलती है।

कृति के निर्माण में क्रियाशीलता विद्यमान रहती है। यदि इस कृति के अर्थ को हम मात्र साहित्यिक स्तर पर ले तो इसके बृहद अर्थ को संकुचित करने जैसा होगा। प्रकृति के कण - कण में क्रियाशीलता नजर आती है। कृति का बृहद आयाम यह है कि वह किसी भी चेतन जीव द्वारा निर्मित क्रिया है लेकिन संशोधन के अंतर्गत यदि हम सोचे तो कह सकते हैं कि कला, विज्ञान, वाणिज्य या अन्यान्य शाखा से जुड़े विचारक विवेचन, विश्लेषण एवं मूल्यांकन के द्वारा अपने विचारों को मूर्त आकार देकर उसे क्रिया में परिणत करते हैं वही कृति है।

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Culinary Representations in Nineteenth-Century French Literature: Markers of Social Stratification

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Abstract

This paper examines the trope of food in select French literary works. France is known for its rich culinary tradition, having evolved over centuries of royal buffets. Historical forces of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries added a different aroma and brought the bourgeois table into centre stage. As French people moved up (and at times down) the social ladder, all they ate (and did not eat) became laden with significance. This paper looks at culinary and table habits as depicted in French literary works to bring out the full flavour of the symbolism behind the oft-ignored mundane evocations of a mere meal.

Keywords : culinary traditions, food, French literature, social mobility

Literature abounds with references to food. Essential for human survival and well-being, the aroma of food pervades the physical, social, psychological, cultural and metaphysical planes of existence. Authors attempting to paint realistic scenes into their fiction cannot afford to bypass food, and culinary scenes find a place in many literary works. French literature too is replete with texts dealing with food and eating.

This paper examines the representations of food in nineteenth century literary works as a reflection of the social stratification of the times. The culinary tradition in France enjoys worldwide renown. French people are attached to their gastronomic culture; hence it becomes pertinent to examine the effects of social change on representations of food. The nineteenth century is a fecund era in France and witnessed the popularizing of the French novel amid romanticist, realist, naturalist and symbolist literary movements. This century is also considered to be one of socio-political upheavals leading to wide-ranging consequences. We shall look at the phenomenon of social mobility as represented via scenes painting food and dining in major works of Honoré de Balzac, Guy de Maupassant, Gustave Flaubert, Stendhal, and Charles Baudelaire while drawing on references to other works of the gastronomic literature of the time.

In the light of this research question, it becomes imperative to begin with a brief overview of the evolving social conditions in France over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Under the *Ancien Regime* in France [prior to 1789] which was a caste society, opportunities for mobility were limited by social origins. The evolution towards a class-

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based society in the nineteenth century resulted in an opening up of opportunities. Despite a more liberal society, social stratification continued, as financial, social, and cultural capital as well as education came to play determining roles in social mobility (Bertaux et al, 2009). Cuin (1995) highlights the role played by the French school system and its democratisation, in the weakening of social heritage and the slow rise of meritocracy. Yet, social barriers although erodible through education, continued to exist. Sorokin (1998) maintains that social stratification is a permanent characteristic of society, despite the numerous efforts of historical movements aimed at equality. The vertical dimensions of social positioning evoke complex interrelations around hierarchy and ranks, as groups undergo promotion and/or degradation. Thus, studies on social mobility include diverse viewpoints ranging from the biological hereditary of social characters to the role of social transmission and education (de LaGorce, 1991). What seems indisputable is the fact that social mobility has far-reaching consequences. In this context, it is noteworthy that in his enumeration of the key aspects of the study of social mobility, Strauss (2017) highlights the changes in lifestyle associated with upward mobility.

Thus, we hypothesize that as French society evolved over the nineteenth century, lifestyle representations would see a change. Since culinary practices form an important component of lifestyle, we expect changes to reflect in this domain as well, and be mirrored in the writings of the time. The French *Grande Cuisine* was born at the Royal Court but with the sweeping socio-political changes ushered in by the French Revolution, French food depictions on all tables would become noteworthy. As social mobility became the order of the day and as everyone strove to move up the ladder and grow richer, the food on the plates, the wine in the glasses, the cutlery on the tables, the service and decor in the dining room would all become powerful indicators of class identities and social aspirations.

With the 1789 revolution and the ensuing crumbling of the monarchical order, nineteenth-century France saw the rise of a wealthy bourgeoisie empowered by newly-acquired titles, an urbanised working class, and an educated middle class. The demise of the monarchy effaced the cultural and political demarcation between Versailles and Paris. The increase in the capital's population led to a steep demand for eating establishments which came to be populated mainly by opulent *arrivistes* (social climbers). Private homes ceded to restaurants as the new venue for fine dining and public display of social status. Diners formed a social subgroup that stood in stark contrast to non-diners, and the ability to dine out defined the new elite of the nineteenth century (Ferguson, 2001). These new social realities pervaded especially realist literature which aimed at imitating real life. Nutritional and culinary discourse thus formed major elements of nineteenth-century French literature as writers took to painstakingly realistic depictions of everyday life. The French gastronome *Brillat-Savarin* had proclaimed "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are," thus affirming that what a person ate at ordinary meals spoke volumes about his personality. A wider interpretation of this meant that not only details of food preparations

but also evocations of dining rituals and company, table manners, and even stomach disorders would now find their way into books.

The nineteenth century is considered by scholars to be exceptionally long, being inaugurated with the 1789 Revolution which changed the course of French history and ushered in widespread change in French society of the nineteenth century. The tumultuous times in the wake of the Revolution, the Reign of Terror and the First Empire propelled travel as the more affluent and often at risk French people travelled to escape the instability at home. Although travel may have been out of necessity at first, it is interesting to observe that with the passing of time, as people became habituated to travel, and travelled not only out of compulsion, their outlook changed. Csargo (2011) explains that as travel intensified, expectations of travellers moved beyond mere nourishment of a fatigued body to the satisfaction of gustatory pleasure, as may be seen from the popularity of Grimod de la Reyniere's *Almanach des Gourmands* which recommends inns and eating establishments on the basis of quality food, wine, service and décor. This trend as seen from the literary production of the time is predicative of present day tourist expectations. The increased affluence led to travel for leisure and cultural exploration. Charles-Louis Cadet de Gassicourt proposed in 1809, the *Carte gastronomique de la France*. This map testifies to the first monumentalisation of food specialities via a graphical dissection of the national territory on culinary terms wherein regional specialties like *la truffe*, *le pâté de foie*, *la poularde* are elevated to the status of a tourist site, a cathedral or a castle.

The nineteenth century paradoxically views food through two opposing lenses - that of sensorial pleasure and good taste, as well as that of moral and dietary restrictions. Earlier on, gluttony was condemned notably by the religious authorities who termed it as a sin. As the nineteenth century progresses, there is a change in representations towards food and eating. The aforementioned *Almanach des Gourmands* and the work of French gastronome *Brillat-Savarin* who attempts to found a science of gastronomy, as well as the changing nature of children's literature (which grew less condemning of greed) and the development of the sweets industry, contribute to an evolution in peoples' perceptions. Creative packaging and publicity drive the sales of sweets as gifts among a younger consumer segment, and eating soon becomes attractive to a society that is increasingly able to afford the pleasures of food (Navarre, 2020).

According to Becker (2009), the omnipresence of the stout gourmand figure in nineteenth century literature points to a progressively gourmand society. The commercialisation of the food market; the richness and diversity offered by the market; and the rise of publicity -- are all factors that contributed to a propaganda campaign in favour of gluttony. The rich consumer gave in to tempting menus, and obesity (with its negative health effects) was not feared until the end of the century. On the contrary, bourgeois society considered corpulence and overweight as a sign of fortune and social success. This is amply illustrated through portrayals of Honoré de Balzac's bourgeois protagonists as seen in his *La*

Comedie Humaine. An interesting account may be made of the humorous representations of the miser's (M. Grandet) hesitancy to spend money on hospitality towards his young nephew. In the novel *Eugenie Grandet*, conversations between the domestic help and the daughter who secretly loves her cousin are about making arrangements for sugar to sweeten his tea; for flour and butter to make *galettes*; and for *frappe* to put on the bread.

Food scenes could be painted descriptively as done by Honoré de Balzac or evoked lyrically and even sensually as in the case of Emile Zola. Zola's roasted goose in *L'Assomoir* could well be taken to refer to his heroine Gervaise. His description of summertime fruit in *The Belly of Paris* appears to be an ode to feminine beauty. Writers deliver skilful descriptions of food and restaurants in realist and naturalist writing, often hinting to more than just food. The dishes served at the *Café Riche* are aphrodisiac and suggestive of more than just the pleasures of eating; the ambience in the private booths perfect for seduction, and the overall luxurious restaurant atmosphere simply magical according to Guy de Maupassant *Le Bel-Ami*. His short stories are populated by people wining and dining. In another of Maupassant's short stories, with a more frugal setting in the backdrop of the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, the poor prostitute Boule de suif (who is compared to a pig with sausage-like fingers), shares her food basket with fellow passengers of more favourable social backgrounds. Physical and psychological effects produced by the sight of food are highlighted as her generosity momentarily melts the aversion of the hungry middle-class and nobles and the mood is deceptively one of social fraternity. In Maupassant's signature style reflecting the harsh times, once stomachs are full, the story dips to its pessimistic end which was always faintly visible through the violent words following the initial description of the food basket. The odour of food is said to have evoked in this case dilation of nostrils, watering of mouths and painful contraction of jaws along with a scorn that could well drive the protagonist to a tragic and violent end. Food highlights ultimately the inevitable social barriers between Boule de suif and the rest of the passengers.

According to Becker (2017), Balzac and Maupassant draw attention to the gap between the food served in fancy Parisian restaurants and private provincial houses; they scrutinise table service rituals and examine the prejudices surrounding the slimness of the feminine body; or the risk of obesity and addictions. The discourse of food may be used to differentiate between social classes as does the nineteenth-century French writer Gustave Flaubert when he uses ceremonial dining as a marker of social status. In *Madame Bovary*, Emma's wedding feast stands in sharp contrast to the elegant banquet at La Vaubyessard where the elaborate dinner menu and refined ambience embody the elegance that she so pines for, whilst having to make do with the dreary existence that is hers. Her life and husband are mediocre and food is again put to use in the building of the ordinary atmosphere. The rural area around Yonville is described as the land of poor soil and inferior cheeses. Characterisations are also in terms of food – as Flaubert paints the image of a mediocre husband (Charles) unappreciated by Emma. Gluttony and poor table manners play a role in the portrayal.

On the other hand, Emma Bovary eats selectively or refuses food if the items on the menu do not reflect the refined upper-class taste. These anorexic-like symptoms may be paralleled and contrasted with other well-known heroines of nineteenth-century literature. Balzac's Madame de Mortsauf (*Le Lys dans la vallée*) also displays similar eating disorders while Emile Zola's Gervaise (*L'Assomoir*) often gives in to overeating. The three come from different social classes – the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and the poor respectively, and Gervaise who lives in Paris' slums sees food as a sanctuary in a life of deprivation. Her gluttony although in some ways comparable to that of Charles Bovary, stems from a very different motivation, that of eating for security. The bourgeois Emma also displays via her eating style and food preferences, a profound dissatisfaction with her current status, and an aspiration to climb socially and gain access to the aristocratic milieu. The dramatic events of the nineteenth century opened the doors to higher milieu and inspired people to dream of socio-economic mobility, but the reality of deprivation, hardship and class barriers did not disappear.

Food is central to human survival yet eating was not always possible due to poverty. The legendary quest for bread is what led the French people to the walls of the Bastille and food, especially in times of famine, becomes an obsession for the poor. Eighteenth - century France saw numerous famines, food riots and a rise in food theft. Andries (1983) concludes that the abundance of recipes, alcohols, vegetables and ingredients that figure in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century popular readings point to the perpetuation of an idyllic illusion of food abundance to counter the deprivation of everyday life. It is easy to understand that the notion of abundance is primordial and that the average French common man employed neither restriction nor restraint while dealing with food. Simplicity of food and of service, a lack of cultural capital implies *gourmandise* rather than *gastronomy*. Post-French Revolution, the aristocratic *Grande cuisine* transformed into gastronomy and came with a price tag. (Clark, 1975). Brillat-Savarin gives 1770 as the year for the opening of the first restaurant in Paris; many more mushroomed in the nineteenth century. Restaurants as democratic public and private spaces were underlined by Balzac thanks to the *cabinets particuliers* (private booths). Eating together came to connote equality and this is brought out by Stendhal in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. The ambitious hero Julien Sorel insists on eating with the aristocratic Renals when he enters their house as a tutor. By virtue of its long association with the aristocracy, the *Grande cuisine* conferred prestige on the bourgeois. Balzac's Lucien Rubempré (*Illusions perdues*) too hastened to dine at elegant restaurants - a first step on the bourgeois' path to success. Eating out and in the right company thus prefigures the evolution of social status.

Gastronomy was now based on merit, the two being dependent on wealth. Gastronomy gave and was a social status - the gastronome had a new maxim -“*je mange donc je suis*”. (I eat, therefore I am) The new *arrivistes* (social climbers) that populated the fine dining spaces possessed the necessary means to permit them an entry, but often lacked

savoir-faire. If French cuisine was to be instrumental in social legitimization, this new breed of the gourmand required education for he was not born eating truffles. Gastronomy thus gave birth to gastronomic journalism and cookbooks became popular. Brillat-Savarin came out with *La Physiologie du goût*, Marie-Antoine Carême, known as the Father of French cuisine and credited with having codified the four primary families of French sauces wrote *L'Art de la Cuisine Française au dix-neuvième siècle*. (Clark, 1975) Although literary history remembers Alexandre Dumas as the author of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, he was also a formidable gastronome. His *Grand Dictionnaire de cuisine* is more of a guide than a manual; details concerning the ingredients' quantities, the thermostat etc. are not precise. The author of adventure novels like *The Three Musketeers* invites his reader to embark on a culinary adventure. In the preface amidst meditations on the art, science, and psychology of cuisine, Dumas delivers a taxonomy of appetite. He also dwells on the perfect number of dinner guests. He fully understood the tragic and powerful grip of *bulimia nervosa* and called it a disease long before it was officially categorised as one.

Literary representations of food and drink reflected nineteenth century societal changes. Novels when describing the birth of children gave a brief mention of wet nurses (Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*). Nursing of infants by wet nurses was restricted to the wealthy in urban settings who could afford to, and believed that the nearly two-year stay in the countryside being nursed by a robust countrywoman would give the baby a healthy head start. Morel (2010) expounds that mother's milk appears to be a rare commodity and that later depictions of wet nurses are often accompanied with negative connotations and uncertainty concerning the safety and wellbeing of the child during the child's long stay with the nurse. Some accounts relate the departure of the baby and the return of the child in positive terms and testify to maternal love as seen in both the mother and the nurse. Drinks such as milk (and wine in the case of adults) are thus seen to be associated with social stratification, and employing a wet nurse was a privilege of the wealthy. Social distinctions and nutrition are thus closely linked right from the initial stages of human life.

Charles Baudelaire's symbolist poetry presents the duality of wine in *Les Fleurs du Mal* - a source of physical and mental rejuvenation - as well as a vehicle towards a corrupt world of depravity and debauchery. In *Benediction*, wine and meats are associated with the charms of a seductress. Through Baudelaire's *Le Vin de chiffonniers* the sad fate of rag pickers is vividly brought out. Wine is said to have been created by man to drown the bitterness of these poor people. (Avni, 1970).

In literary representation as in real life, food is equated with much more than just nutrition. Types of food and the extent or absence of table service, the quantity of food ingested, consumed or relished may be drily described, beautifully painted or sensually evoked in myriad ways. The author's choice in the manner of depiction speaks volumes about the layers of society represented in his work. In a socially mobile French sphere

obsessed with the upward economic climb, food symbolised much more than food. Culinary representations in literature bore witness to the social evolutions of the time.

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