

INTERACTIVE ARTICLE COVER

RUPKATHA JOURNAL
ON INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN HUMANITIES



About the Journal

Journal DOI	https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha
Journal Home	www.rupkatha.com
Indexed by	Scopus Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) DOAJ
Journal Metrics	CiteScore 2021: 0.2 SJR 2021: 0.194 SNIP 2021: 0.642 JCI 2020: 0.50

About the Issue

Themed issue	Volume 4, number 2, 2022 (March-June) Themed Issue on Literature of Northeast India
Guest Editor	Jyotirmoy Prodhani
Issue DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n2
TOC	https://rupkatha.com/v14n2.php

About the Article

Title	Forbidden Cravings: Exploring socio-cultural ramifications of food practices in <i>Aamis</i>
Author/s	Alicia Jacob ¹ & Dishari Chattaraj ²
Affiliation	Department of English and Cultural Studies at Christ University, Bangalore.
Author IDs	0000-0001-7889-2684 ¹ & 0000-0003-2684-9179
Funding	No funding received. Published free of any charge.
DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n2.ne37 Pages: 1-10
Full Text HTML	https://rupkatha.com/v14n2ne37
Full-text PDF	https://rupkatha.com/V14/n2/v14n2ne37.pdf
Article History	First Published: 30 June 2022
Article Impact	Check Dynamic Impact
Copyright	Aesthetics Media Services
Licensing	Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0

This Open Access article is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For citation use the DOI. For commercial re-use, please contact editor@rupkatha.com.

Forbidden Cravings: Exploring socio-cultural ramifications of food practices in *Aamis*

Alicia Jacob¹ & Dishari Chattaraj²

Department of English and Cultural Studies at Christ University, Bangalore.

Email: alicia.jacob@res.christuniversity.in

Abstract

Food choices represent conscious affirmation and expression of personal, group, ethnic or national identity. Due to its multidimensional role, food that we rely on sustenance is often politicised and used as a tool to create conflict amongst and within diverse social groups. Assamese cuisine includes a rich platter of authentic food varieties, often limited to the north-eastern region. Although food consumption is a subjective experience, cultural taboos within a community might be acceptable practices in another culture, creating conflicting notions of food practices. The balance between the twin axis of culture and politics regarding food is disrupted when heterogeneous cultural patterns and opposing political notions are in discord. Similarly, the solidarity within a cultural group becomes hostile when the authority of the individual concerning food choices is not aligned with the authority of the social structure. This discord from a political and cultural standpoint is evident in the Assamese socio-cultural scenario. Taking Bhaskar Hazarika's *Ravening/Aamis* (2019) as a case study, this paper proposes to analyse the representational troupe of food, through a structuralist anthropological lens, with respect to food politics to understand socio-cultural ramifications of Assamese food patterns.

Keywords: food, Assamese cuisine, *Aamis*, food politics, cultural appropriation

The need to begin human settlement emerged out of the need to procure food. Food thereby was the foundation on which culture was built. Every culture is the point of interaction between tradition and innovation. Globalisation and change in patterns of consumption are erasing distinctive traditions and culture. Cultural contact and postcolonialism have increased the pace of cultural diffusion in the Indian context. Being a diverse country with multiple religions, ethnicities, languages, and cultures, India is waging an endless battle to attain cultural homogeneity. Additionally, in the context of India, cultural contact and postcolonialism have increased the pace of this cultural diffusion. In his work *Multiculturalism*, C. W. Watson (2000) emphasises the mutating role of culture and how collective identity is constantly modified and transformed. Apart from its nutritional value crucial for man's survival, food is a social construct that is not often meant for conscious consumption. Kaplan (2012) asserts that the essence of food includes thirteen main conceptions. Ranging from the most natural to the most cultural, these conceptions include "nature, nutrition, fuel, medicine, diet, pleasure, taboo, commodity, goods, meaning, spirituality, recipe, and art" (p. 19). Thus, due to its multidimensional nature, food becomes a breeding ground for hegemony and creates disparities between cultures.

The eight north-eastern states in India are victims of cultural subjugation. The majoritarian culture from the mainland side lines these minority states, subjecting them to cultural loss (Misra, 2011). The sense of alienation from the mainland due to their cultural diversity creates tension between

the mainland and North-eastern states (Harriss, 2002). The liminal position of the north-eastern states within Indian politics began with the independence of India and is attributed to their geographical location as well as their cultural practices. Food becomes a tool to create an inclusive exclusion within the north-eastern community in India. While they are part of the Indian subcontinent, they are excluded from full membership and forced to assimilate mainland practices and food choices through food politics. Food politics refers to the rules and regulations governing food production, distribution and consumption. Food through government manipulation becomes an instrument in heightening differences and creating a milieu of alienation. Michael Twitty (2017), in his talk on Culinary Justice, differentiates between cultural diffusion and cultural appropriation. He defines cultural diffusion as a natural and innocent process where different cultures interact and, as a result, assimilate certain practices into their culture. This assimilation is mutual. In contrast, cultural appropriation subjugates a minority culture and forces them to assimilate into the prominent culture, erasing their cultural aesthetics. Evidently, the north-eastern states are subjected to cultural appropriation.

One among the eight states of north-eastern India, Assam is an amalgamation of diverse cultures. Assamese cuisine includes a rich platter of authentic food varieties, which remains absent in the Indian cookbooks from the mainland. The balance between the twin axis of culture and politics regarding food is disrupted when heterogeneous cultural patterns and opposing political notions are in discord. Similarly, the solidarity within a cultural group becomes hostile when the authority of the individual concerning food choices is not aligned with the authority of the social structure. This discord from a political and cultural standpoint is evident in the Assamese socio-cultural scenario. Taking Bhaskar Hazarika's *Ravering/Aamis* (2019) as a case study, this paper proposes to analyse the representational troupe of food, through a structuralist anthropological lens, with respect to food politics to understand socio-cultural ramifications of Assamese food patterns.

While anthropology, in general, is concerned with the scientific study of human beings, socio-cultural anthropology, in particular, focuses on understanding human behaviour in association with nature and culture (Eriksen, 2004). Natural behaviour refers to the set of common philosophical patterns seen in all human beings. In contrast, cultural behaviour refers to distinctive patterns of behaviour practised by an individual or within a community. However, structuralism is a cultural theory that aims to study human culture and practices through their relationship with broader social systems. Therefore, structural social anthropology, pioneered by Levi Strauss, study communicative structures and their mechanisms on both conscious and unconscious levels to understand intricate cultural forms (Leach, 1973). The idea of art as an imitation of reality is an age-old dictum that finds realisation in films. Additionally, being a product of culture, films tend to portray the culture that it represents in intricate ways. Structuralist film theory further interprets how meanings are channelled through a set of codes through both linguistic as well as visual cues (Benshoff, 2015). Food, a cultural marker that often finds its place on the big screen, is instrumental in implicitly transacting meaning. *Aamis*, set in Guwahati, the largest city in Assam, enthalls the viewers through the appealing visuals of food while problematising the politics of food.

Assam, food and culture - Inclusive exclusion

The etymological origin of the word 'Assam' has its root in Food culture. Taken from the Sanskrit word 'cham' the derivation of the verb 'to eat', Assam got its name after the arrival of Brahmins, who cleared the misleading reputation of the land as one of cannibalism. 'A-cham' refers to 'non-cannibal land and people' (Saikia, 2005). The politics of food and culture within the terrain of Assam can be directly linked to the State's position within the country. The relative absence of Assam from the documented history of modern India, along with the lack of representation from the Northeast within the socio-political reforms of Indian history, has been an area of discussion (Barua & Lal, 2020). The relative non-existence of the history of Assam within the ranks of Indian chronicles can be attributed to the diverse non-Aryan linguistic and cultural heritage along with the presence of multi-religious communities (Goswami, 2014). Additionally, cultural appropriation of this northeastern state through the invasiveness of mainland culture blurs the boundaries between indigenous traditions and modernity. The loss of cultural identities and the issues of creating new cultural identities through intercultural interactions has remained a prominent subject matter within Assamese literature (Misra, 2011). While included within the geographical and political terrain of Indian policies, Assam remains excluded and 'othered' based on cultural differences. Food, a prominent marker of every culture, has also been subjected to appropriation in the Assamese context. Assamese cuisine, like Assamese history, has been excluded from the texts of the mainland. The majority of the Indian cookbooks available in the market split Indian cuisine into North-Indian and South-Indian cuisine and rarely includes authentic dishes from the north-east. However, despite its side-lined existence within the world of cuisines, Assamese cuisine retains its authenticity within its geographical boundaries (Das, 2008). Relying on a wide variety of plant as well as animal products, Assamese cuisine refers to the authentic dishes and stylised cooking from the state of Assam. Assamese dishes are simple and rely on fresh, fermented and dried forms of food products to add flavour to the dishes. Meat remains a popular dietary choice within Assamese communities, besides a diverse variety of fish, poultry and animals to choose from. The popular types of meat include: fish, mutton, pork, chicken, squab, and duck. Although not widely popular, beef is consumed within Assam (Biju Borah et al., 2018). Consumption of dog meat, pangolin meat, and a wide variety of insects such as rice grasshopper, cricket, water bug, snail, adult termite, and silkworm larvae in Assam are also accounted for (Chowdhury et al., 2015; D'Cruze et al., 2018). These food groups are unique to the northeastern region and are relatively absent from the cuisine of the mainland. Religious restrictions on meat consumption practised in the mainland remain void on Assamese grounds. Assamese brahmins consume meat, while Meitei brahmins restrict themselves to fish consumption and avoid other forms of meat (Datta, 2012). In addition to their geographical position, these attributes within Assamese culture become sources of alienation.

Cultural appropriation aims to erase these authentic functionalities within the Assamese culture to create a more unified national identity and culture. Although a secular country as per the constitution, India has evidently leaned towards the demolition of the secularistic spirit of the nation. Additionally, the tendency to proclaim India as a Hindutva nation has been accelerated in recent times. In the wake of the political change of guard after the 2016 state elections in Assam, cultural appropriation of the state was set in motion with an aim to spread the dogmatic ideology of the mainland (Jaffrelot, 2017). An attempt at religious polarisation within Assam has been underway since then (Saikia, 2020). Food, as a cultural marker, is often instrumental in cultural

practices. Food politics refers to the policies governing the production, distribution, and consumption of food endorsed by a political/governmental body. Cultural appropriation can be achieved through the policing of food practices and restricting the availability of food groups that are not aligned with the consumption patterns of the mainland. Assam's Cattle Preservation Bill of 2021 is one such political agenda that aims to create food restrictions within the State (Correspondent, 2021). Although the bill does not explicitly ban the production, distribution, and consumption of beef, the restrictions imposed by the bill make it seemingly impossible to sell or consume beef. This restriction was inflicted upon every community, especially the Muslim community, within the boundaries of Assam with an aim to achieve the spirit of the 'Hindutva nation'. The beef ban exacerbates the oppression of religious minority groups and often becomes a tool to normalise violence against Muslim and Dalit communities (Parikh & Miller, 2019). Additionally, the call for the ban of pork slaughter and distribution within a 500-metre radius of mosques, as consumption of pork meat is considered taboo by the Muslim community, was refused arguing that the pig was not a sacred animal (Zaman, 2021). Warren Belasco (2008) introduced the concept of the culinary triangle of contradiction to better understand the factors that influence food consumption on a personal, social and global level. Identity, convenience and responsibility take up each side of the triangle. While identity is the preliminary factor determining food choices, convenience or the availability of food factor is the second. The lack of availability of certain food groups through political interference forces people to choose a more convenient option making cultural appropriation invisibly actionable. *Aamis* by Bhaskar Hazarika is a film that implicitly addresses the disparity between political appropriation and cultural resistance by questioning the authority of the social structure.

***Aamis*: Mirroring Reality**

Although the Assamese film industry had its foundation in the early 20th century, it was only in contemporary times that Assamese cinema gained significant national and international attention. Apart from its entertaining quality, regional cinema is an instrument that addresses, influences and often mirrors the ideologies of a community and works towards empowering society. Assamese movies stand true to this statement as regional narratives give us insights into the intricacies of Assamese culture and society (Deori & Bora, 2020; Deka, 2021). Written and directed by Bhaskar Hazarika, *Aamis* (2019), alternately titled *Ravening*, is an Assamese film that first premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, New York. The movie received critical acclaim for its unique portrayal of a haunting love story centred around food and the intricacies of intimacy and taboo. The movie is closely aligned with the culture of Assam and takes us through an exotic journey through its representation of Axomiya cuisine. The movie also bagged the Best Director Award along with the Best Actor: Female Award at the 3rd Singapore South Asian International Film Festival (SAIFF) 2019.

'Aamis' literally translates to meat. Whereas the film's English title 'Ravening' refers to the extreme hunger of a ferocious animal hunting for prey. Both titles remain significant to understanding the essence of the movie where meat is a metaphor for love and intimacy that the protagonists are ravening for. *Aamis* is an all-consuming love story between Nirmali, a paediatrician and Suman, a research scholar. The complexity of the plot is attributed to the forbidden nature of their

relationship and the lengths to which each character has to go to control their insatiable desire until it consumes them. Nirmali, a woman with strict values and a mother, is contemptuous towards illicit relationships and adheres strictly to the societal construct of a 'married woman' despite the fact that her husband is more or less absent. Sumon, who is conducting research on the meat-eating traditions of the Northeast, is a non-conformist who is assertive with his culture and ideology. Sumon is part of a meat club in which they hunt, kill, cook and eat the meat of wild animals and birds. He is scornful of processed meat available in stores. Sumon says "we don't buy dressed meat in the Meat Club. These days people put anything in their mouth not knowing where it came from, how it was stored, how old it is. Feels sick thinking about it. In our Meat Club we buy the thing live, slaughter, cook and enjoy it" (Hazarika, 2019). The politics of food and the involvement of governmental agencies to regulate food consumption within the Assamese culture are questioned through Sumon.ⁱⁱ Axomiya cuisine comprises a rich platter of meat varieties which is often reduced to a few basic variants like mutton, chicken, pork and fish through governmental interference. Sumon and his meat club is a form of resistance against cultural appropriation through which he is inhibiting governmental policies attempting to erase the cultures and practices within Assam.

A serendipitous encounter between Nirmali and Sumon catapults a series of meetings that revolve around testing and tasting different varieties of meat. Nirmali treats a vegetarian friend of Sumon, who was suffering from indigestion after overeating mutton for the first time. On getting to know about the meat club that Sumon was a part of, Nirmali promises to take a portion of the meat, they cook as the fee for his friend's diagnosis. While tasting wild rabbit meat enthralls her tastebuds, Nirmali complained about the increasing availability of processed food in the market and how it is difficult to trust the food on the plate. Nirmali's interest in consuming unadulterated meat and Sumon's resistance towards processed food consumption leads them to explore authentic meat delicacies. Soon these food rendezvous develop into love, although Nirmali is hesitant to admit this to herself. The food on the plate becomes an extension of Sumon himself. "When I am eating with you, all I want to eat is meat. Nothing else registers" (Hazarika, 2019).

The meat here becomes a metaphor for love,ⁱⁱⁱ which she is unable to reciprocate physically. Her conflict in adhering to the social stigma of having an illicit relationship and going against the moral codes of society weighs heavily on her. This prevents her from reciprocating her longing for Sumon who is desperate for her attention. While her internalised social parameters prohibit her from embracing her newfound love, she rebels against societal norms surrounding food which to her is less threatening. While Sumon talks about the meat varieties consumed by people from the Northeast like deer, elephant, donkey, dog, cat, lizards, worms, snakes, snails and so on, Nirmali is brimming with passion. Sumon, upholding the idea that there is no universal 'normal' when it comes to food, is excited to fulfil Nirmali's wishes to try foods that are culturally forbidden. While Sumon remains a forbidden object by the societal conventions inflicted on a married woman, Nirmali is unwilling to break her commitment towards her family. Meanwhile, her indulgence in forbidden meat is a means to satisfy her craving for Sumon, which, while giving her the pleasure of being a non-conformist, remains seemingly harmless. The story takes a dark turn when what seemed seemingly harmless, and simply Sumon's idea of indulging in Nirmali's love for meat, turns to cannibalism.

Food Ethics and Cannibalism as resistance

David M Kaplan (2012) in *Food Philosophy* discusses the concept of food ethics as the food-related obligation one has with oneself and the society at large. It refers to the responsibility an individual has to himself and his community in creating an environment of wellness and wholesome nourishment. Cannibalism, although prevalent in certain tribes in the remotest part of the world, is generally frowned upon by civilised society. Consuming human flesh as the last resort for survival, emergency cannibalism, although undesirable, is not considered immoral; however, any other form of cannibalism is strictly prohibited in contemporary society (Kaplan, 2012). Nevertheless, cannibalism or cannibalistic tendencies in literature and films often represents a wide array of meaning. Carolyn Korsmeyer (2014) argues that within literary discourse, cannibalism tends to represent societal breakdown. In the movie *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, Cannibalism becomes a metaphor that signifies the disintegration of civilised society and, by extension the end of consumerism (Armstrong, 2004).

Sumon, who is madly in love with Nirmali, is desperate for their physical union. However, respecting Nirmali's need to adhere to societal codes, he realises a conventional union of the bodies is unfeasible in their case. Desperate, he comes up with a solution that would ascertain their union. With the help from his Veterinarian friend, Elias, Sumon obtains a piece of his flesh claiming, that he needs it for his research. He then prepares an egg dish which, when consumed by Nirmali, makes her ecstatic and takes her to orgasmic heights. The egg is symbolic of fertility and carries sexual connotations. Replacing the yolk of the egg with his flesh can be connotative of their physical union where the egg is representative of the female sexual organ, and the action of filling is symbolic of the act of sex itself. Every dish prepared from Sumon's flesh has sexual underpinnings to them. The rice cake stuffed with meat provides a similar symbolic meaning. Additionally, the way the tomato is gutted and stuffed with meat alludes to sexual union. The preparation of Sumon's meat on a skewer symbolically exerts the image of a phallus. Every dish prepared on-screen carries an underlying allusion to their sexual union. Similarly, the cutlet made out of Nirmali's flesh is representative of the female reproductive organ, and the cabbage dressing is symbolic of purity and fertility. Further, cabbage, with reference to its shape, is also representative of a fertile womb (Rinker, 1995).

Nirmali is disgusted with herself for enjoying the dish when she realises that it was made of human flesh. Although initially upset at Sumon, Nirmali understands what propelled Sumon to take this drastic step. For Sumon, the consumption of his flesh signifies a sense of spiritual union that is absolute, uniting them in a single body. Peggy Sanday (1986) defines cannibalism into multiple categories based on their motivation, and the 'psychogenic hypothesis' best represents Suman's motive as it implies the satisfaction of psychosexual needs. Moreover, we see Nirmali reciprocating her love by preparing Sumon a cutlet made of her meat for the first time. Sumon vomits when he finds out. This may be because Sumon is not reined in by societal pressure to consummate their love; it is only the lack of consent from Nirmali that is stopping him. Nirmali admits that she has tasted the fundamental flavour of life through tasting human flesh and, there is no going back. Things go out of hand when she develops an acute addiction to human meat, which is driving her insane. Left with no option, Sumon promises to find her a large chunk of human flesh, which is the only way to curb her craving. Unfortunately, Sumon is caught in the act of murder and is convicted along with Nirmali. Towards the end of the movie, we see Nirmali striking a realisation

that murder is a detrimental societal taboo than an illicit relationship. We see them holding hands for the first time in the movie, which is publicly pronouncing their love for each other. Humans are bound by cultural norms, and social dictums and cannibalism erase those boundaries set forth by these socio-cultural milieus (Brown, 2013). Nirmali and Sumon are both socially non-conforming, and cannibalism signifies their resistance toward the restrictions imposed on them through cultural appropriation.

Apolitical Stand in *Aamis*

According to Anne Bower, food films are the ones where food plays a central role in the development of the narrative, negotiating questions of identity, power, and culture, and the inclusion of a film into this genre is generally subjective (Bower, 2012). *Aamis* evidently belongs to the genre of food films and implicitly critiques dominant attitudes that are part of cultural appropriation. However, explicitly, the movie remains apolitical. The conflict regarding the consumption of beef and pork in Assam is an extension of the Hindu-Muslim conflict and is an area of political/religious disparity. Despite the conflict, the consumption of pork and beef within Assam remains consistently high. In a study on meat-consumption in North-East India, pork ranked first, which owed to 70% of the meat consumption in the Northeast, and beef ranked second with 10% of total meat consumption (Mahajan et al., 2015). The study also shows that there is a supply–demand gap in the production and consumption of beef in Assam, which might be attributed to governmental food policies. Similarly, in the case of Assam, a large majority of 79% of the population indulged in the consumption of pork while the consumption of beef was below 10% (Biju Borah et al., 2018). However, despite the evident consumption of pork and beef by the people of Assam, Bhaskar Hazarika's decision to neglect the existence of these varieties of meat have raised questions. The decision to avoid representations of pork and beef might be a deliberate attempt to steer clear of controversy and political backlash. Every cultural product is forced to undergo censorship to maintain the status quo of the political and social practices of the region. The intolerance of politicians towards filmmakers, especially in the Indian context, has influenced the creation of Cinematographic laws (Banerjee, 2009). One can only argue that the inclusion of politically controversial topics in the movie would have resulted in censorship, which would have had detrimental effects on the transaction and success of the movie. By choosing to self-censor and remaining apolitical, Hazarika was able to address the issues of food politics more inherently and reach a wider audience without uncanny political attention.

Conclusion

Films, primarily feature films, are carefully constructed reflections of reality. Food, which is an inevitable part of human life, inherently mundane, when presented on screen provides insight into the existing hegemony within cultural and social structures and also marginalisation and disenfranchisement causing, social, political and economic implications. *Aamis*, although superficially a haunting love story that finds expression through food, addresses the socio-cultural ramifications of Assamese cuisine and the exertion of political influence in appropriating

Assamese culture. The association of cannibalism to the breakdown of the socio-cultural system can be aligned with the attempt of political policies to erase the authentic practices and culture of Assam in particular and the Northeast in general. Cultural appropriation, be it forceful or seemingly harmless, imply the collapse of culture. Food and air are the primary necessity for human survival. However, food carries additional cultural significance, for it remains a marker not only of socio-economic and cultural identities but also is responsible for creating communal, religious, gender, and national identities. Indian culture has always been diverse, and attempting to compile these cultures into a standard framework is atrocious. Food politics provides autonomy to the authority to police what is and what is not be consumed. *Aamis*, although a dark love story revolving around food taboos at the surface, addresses wider socio-cultural implications. Carefully integrating political concerns that threaten to erase Assamese culture, the film, while remaining apolitical, succeeded to sow the seed of resistance. Additionally, the film attempts to create a space for Assamese cuisine and the rich platter of meat varieties within the wide spectrum of Indian cuisine.

Declaration of Conflict of Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

Funding

No funding has been received for the publication of this article. It is published free of any charge.

Notes

ⁱYasmin Saika (2005) in her interpretation of the etymological origin of the name 'Assam' discusses two derivations; the first from the Sanskrit word 'asama' meaning 'uneven' or 'undulating' referring to the hilly terrain of the land, the second from the Sanskrit word 'cham'.

ⁱⁱFood and associated practices, along with its connotative meaning, help define cultural citizenship. The term 'cultural citizenship' was first introduced by Toby Miller in his book *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism and Television in a Neoliberal Age* (2007), and it refers to the participation of an individual in a society where his consumption of goods and services is aligned with the ideologies of his culture.

ⁱⁱⁱFood metaphors are symbolic of sexual consumption and allude to sexual desire, where the appetite for sex and food becomes inseparable (Andrievskikh, 2014).

References

- Andrievskikh, N. (2014). Food symbolism, sexuality, and gender identity in fairy tales and modern women's bestsellers. *Studies in Popular Culture*, 37(1), 137–153.
- Armstrong, R. (2004). All-consuming passions: Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. In *Reel Food: Essays on Food and Film*. Routledge.
- Banerjee, A. (2009). Political censorship and Indian cinematographic laws: A functionalist-liberal analysis. *Drexel L. Rev.*, 2(1), 557.

- Barua, S., & Lal, L. D. (2020). Identity, indigeneity and excluded region: In the quest for an intellectual history of modern Assam. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 12(5). <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v12n5.rioc1s17n3>
- Belasco, W. (2008). *Food: The key concepts*. Berg.
- Benshoff, H. (2015). *Film and television analysis: An introduction to methods, theories, and approaches*. Routledge.
- Biju Borah et al., B. B. (2018). Analysis of pork preference and consumption pattern among households in Assam. *International Journal of Agricultural Science and Research*, 8(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.24247/ijasrapr20181>
- Bower, A. L. (2012). *Reel food: Essays on food and film*. Routledge.
- Brown, J. (2013). *Cannibalism in literature and film*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chowdhury, S., Sontakke, P. P., Bhattacharjee, J., Bhattacharjee, D., Debnath, A., Kumar, Arvind, & Datta, J. (2015). An overview of edible insects in Eastern Himalayas: Indigenous traditional food of tribals. *Ecology, Environment and Conservation*, 21(4), 1941–1944.
- Correspondent, S. (2021, July 13). Assam's cow protection bill bans sale of beef within 5km of temples. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/assams-cow-protection-bill-bans-sale-of-beef-within-5km-of-temple/article35293853.ece>
- Das, J. (2008). *Ambrosia, from the Assamese kitchen*. Rupa Publications.
- Datta, B. (2012). *Cultural contours of North-East India*. OUP India.
- D'Cruze, N., Singh, B., Mookerjee, A., Harrington, L. A., & Macdonald, D. W. (2018). A socio-economic survey of pangolin hunting in Assam, Northeast India. *Nature Conservation*, 30, 83–105. <https://doi.org/10.3897/natureconservation.30.27379>
- Deka, V. B. (2021). The world of Assamese celluloid: 'Yesterday and today.' *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 9(1), 393–423. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2021.358>
- Deori, M., & Bora, A. (2020). Assamese cinema through nine decades: Challenging journey with encouraging trends. *Global Media Journal, Indian Edition*, 12(2).
- Eriksen, T. H. (2004). *What is anthropology?* Pluto Press (UK).
- Goswami, U. (2014). *Conflict and reconciliation: The politics of ethnicity in Assam*. Routledge.
- Harriss, J. (2002). Crisis states programme Thestate, tradition and conflict in the North Eastern States of India. *Crisis States Programme. Development Studies Institute*, 1(1), 1–5.
- Hazarika, B. (Director). (2019). *Aamis* [Assamese]. MovieSaints.
- Jaffrelot, C. (2017). Toward a Hindu state? *Journal of Democracy*, 28(3), 52–63. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0044>
- Kaplan, D. M. (2012). *The philosophy of food*. Univ of California Press.
- Korsmeyer, C. (2014). *Making sense of taste: Food and philosophy* (p. 184). Cornell University Press. (Original work published 1999)
- Leach, E. (1973). Structuralism in social anthropology. In *Structuralism: An Introduction* (pp. 37–56). Oxford University Press.
- Mahajan, S., Papang, J. S., & Datta, K. K. (2015). Meat consumption in North-East India: Pattern,

opportunities and implications. *Journal of Animal Research*, 5(1), 37. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2277-940x.2015.00007.8>

Miller, T. (2007). *Cultural citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, consumerism, and television in a neoliberal age*. Temple University Press.

Misra, T. (2011). *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India: Fiction*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Parikh, A., & Miller, C. (2019). Holy cow! Beef ban, political technologies, and Brahmanical supremacy in Modi's India. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 18(4), 835–874.

Rinker, S. (1995). History of childbirth: Fertility, pregnancy and birth in early modern Europe. *Nursing History Review*, 3(1), 282–284. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1062-8061.3.1.282>

Saikia, S. (2020). Saffronizing the periphery: Explaining the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in contemporary Assam. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 8(1), 69–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2321023020918064>

Saikia, Y. (2005). *Assam and India: Fragmented memories, cultural identity, and the Tai-Ahom struggle*. Orient Blackswan.

Sanday, P. R., & Godelier, M. (1986). *Divine hunger: Cannibalism as a cultural system*. Cambridge University Press.

Twitty, M. W. (2017). *Culinary justice: Defining a theory of gastronomic sovereignty* [English]. Sustainable Food System Program. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HArigX7Bfg8>

Watson, C. W. (2000). *Multiculturalism*. Open University Press.

Zaman, R. (2021, July 16). Nobody worships pig, says Assam BJP on pork ban call. *Times Of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/nobody-worships-pig-says-assam-bjp-on-pork-ban-call/articleshow/84463525.cms>

Alicia Jacob is a UGC Junior Research Fellow and Research Scholar at the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Christ University, Bangalore. She did her MA in English from the University of Calicut. Her ongoing PhD research includes areas of gender and cultural disparities that exist within the terrain of Food Studies.

Dr. Dishari Chattaraj is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English and Cultural Studies at Christ University, Bangalore. She received her M.Phil and Ph.D. from JNU, New Delhi, and her MA from EFLU, Hyderabad. She has been hosted as a Fulbright Fellow at Indiana University Bloomington, USA. Her area of research is primarily in the area of Food Studies, Pedagogy and Curriculum development in higher education.