

Culinary Spaces for Subaltern Sites of Resistance: A Subaltern Studies Reading of *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada* by Shahu Patole

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Abstract—This study, grounded in subaltern studies and culinary nationalism, explores how Dalit kitchens in Marathwada serve as spaces of cultural and political resistance to caste hierarchies. It examines Shahu Patole's *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada* and how Dalit culinary practices, particularly the consumption of non-vegetarian foods like beef, challenge Brahminical purity-pollution notions and assert Dalit identity. Dalit kitchens, through the act of defying food taboos, become sites of cultural resistance, subverting caste-based oppression. Drawing on Marathi Saint Literature, the paper highlights the role of Dalit women as custodians of cultural identity within these kitchens, asserting agency in spaces historically limited by caste and gender restrictions. The research positions food as both a medium of self-assertion and symbolic resistance, transforming the kitchen into a site of resilience. Additionally, it critiques the pervasive caste-based food discrimination, especially the marginalisation of non-vegetarian diets, as tools of social control. The study emphasises how food practices among Dalits, through subtle everyday acts of defiance, challenge the caste system and reclaim their rightful place in India's socio-cultural landscape. Through this analysis, the Dalit kitchen is seen as a domestic space and a political arena where culinary choices actively resist caste domination. The study underscores food's power in resistance and the kitchen's role as a subaltern site of identity and agency in the face of entrenched caste norms.

Index Terms—subaltern studies, cultural identity, poverty alleviation, the resilience of the poor, social protection

I. INTRODUCTION

In India, food culture and caste intersect to reflect socio-political power dynamics. This study offers a Subaltern reading of Dalit food culture in Marathwada, Maharashtra, examining how culinary practices challenge caste hegemony, resist social exclusion, and contribute to poverty alleviation efforts in marginalised communities. *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada* by Shahu Patole gives us a critical perspective on how the historically marginalised can resist upper caste domination and recover their dignity. This research utilises subaltern theory to analyse how culinary practices resist dominant narratives and anthropologically confirm Dalit identity.

To this day in India, the practice of food has been guided by caste with upper caste norms that ascribe vegetarianism

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as morally superior and 'pure' (Patole, 2024, p. xii). The norms on which these are based are driven by the Savarna ideology, which stigmatises everything Dalit eats, especially the non-vegetarian diet, as 'impure' and 'undesirable.' Claude Lévi-Strauss, a pioneering anthropologist of food, wrote in 1969 that food is not only pleasurable to eat but also intellectually stimulating, noting that it is "not only good to eat but also good to think with" (p. 98). In the Indian context, caste-based food taboos are used as a tool for social control that further perpetuates discrimination and stratification (Caplan, 2001, p. 67).

Furthermore, these norms are perpetuated by institutions like religious texts, education, and media established through Brahminical patriarchy. Chakravarti (1993) shows how foods are perceived as restricting 'caste purity' and what is allowed for consumption based on identity within a caste (p. 28). It follows that non-vegetarian diets for Dalit communities are frequently concealed and met with stigma and discrimination under prevalent social pressures. Food then becomes a site of subjugation and diffidence in this context. The kitchen is a political space (Rege, 2006), and Dalit culinary practices and their forms of resistance challenge the purity–pollution dichotomy imposed by 'upper caste' ideologies (p. 112). This backs up Spivak's (1988) argument that subaltern groups fight against dominant ideologies by writing their own stories of resistance (p. 24).

Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada is an ethnographical representation of Dalit food practices, particularly the consumption of cattle meat, a taboo within the norms of the upper caste. Food is more than just sustenance for Dalits; for them, food is a medium of cultural expression and social assertion (Guru, 2009, p. 41). In celebrating foods that upper caste ideologies deem shameful, Dalit communities effectively defy socio-cultural boundaries meant to silence and marginalise them. Through documenting these practices, Patole shows how these practices make possible a singular food identity, even amid pervasive social exclusion, and positions the Dalit kitchen as, in fact, a space of resistance to caste oppression (Patole, 2024, p. 17).

Even the subaltern studies framework derives importance from emphasising the empowerment of the voices of the marginalised. "The need for 'history from below' to understand struggle outside of dominant power structures" was argued for by Guha (1982, p. 45). This approach finds resonance in the study of Dalit food habits and how food practices are marked out as a distinct and oppositional collective identity, marking itself out from the Savarna dietary hierarchies.

This research examines the socio-political implications of food as a site of resistance by focusing on Dalit culinary traditions. The act of reclamation of agency by Dalits in an oppressive caste system is asserting identity to assert individual autonomy through whatever particular modality of choice they can do so, even if that is around their culinary choices. This research argues that Dalit kitchens are not merely domestic spaces. They qualify as arenas of symbolic resistance as food is reclaimed as a medium of dignity to resist and challenge caste-based discrimination.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Culinary Nationalism and Exclusion

A concept of culinary nationalism has been central to discussions of caste and food, particularly among dominant cultural narratives of uniform Indian gastronomy based around vegetarianism. This narrative is often such that it leaves us with no Dalit and other marginalised food practices in evidence, thereby reinforcing caste hierarchies. Examining the Dalit women's autobiographies, *The Prisons We Broke* by Baby Kamble and *The Weave of My Life* by Urmila Pawar, James and Mathew (2023) view them as texts of resistance. Nonvegetarian Dalit cuisines are viewed as 'counter cuisines' that operate as an opposing force to the purity-pollution binary defined in Hindu cultural nationalism, and these autobiographies highlight the centrality of these nonvegetarian Dalit cuisines, they argue. "These narratives establish alternative national identities, challenging the upper-caste hegemony of food culture while preserving marginalised culinary practices" (James & Mathew, p. 36).

Similarly, Kashyap (2023) critiques the representation of Indian cuisine in national and international spaces. Kashyap argues that dominant portrayals reflect upper-caste vegetarian standards, marginalising regional and Dalit contributions. This exclusion perpetuates cultural elitism, positioning vegetarianism as representative of Indian identity while erasing the diversity of food practices, particularly those of marginalised communities (Kashyap, p. 220). Such portrayals highlight the broader issue of cultural hegemony in constructing national identity through food.

B. Caste-Based Food Discrimination

Dalit communities face everyday discrimination that extends to culinary practices, often referred to as culinary untouchability. Particularly in the Northeast Indian context, casteist ideologies label non-vegetarian foods consumed by Dalit and other marginalised groups as "dirty" or "polluted". Kikon's (2021) ethnographic study reveals how terms like *ganda* (dirty) are used to pathologise Dalit food habits, reinforcing caste and racial hierarchies. These food-based stigmas serve as a mechanism for caste-based exclusion and social stratification (Kikon, 2021, p. 87). This notion is further explored by Guru (2009), who characterises food as a "site of humiliation" within caste-determined social structures. He argues that caste-based food prohibitions restrict Dalit communities to a predefined, inferior food hierarchy, reinforcing the cultural and social divisions imposed by the Savarna order. Guru emphasises that food and its consumption are powerful symbols of caste oppression, acting as both a metaphor and a means for maintaining social stratification (Guru, 2009, p. 4). These insights underscore how food practices, particularly those that defy caste-based norms, become acts of

resistance. By consuming foods deemed "impure", Dalit communities subvert the hierarchical food system and assert their cultural identity.

C. *Dalit Kitchens as Testimonial Spaces*

Dalit food narratives are a critical epistemological framework in subaltern studies for their testimonial power. Gupta (2021) situates texts such as *Isn't This Plate Indian?* as a form of 'testimonial literature' situated as a counter to systemic exclusion through documentation of Dalit culinary practices. Instead, the narratives here place Dalit kitchens not as a mere culinary activity but as cultural ways of being, of resistance. These food narratives are thus entrenched in historical and cultural frameworks that hold food practices within the locus of lived experience, a local narrative that challenges dominant Brahminical discourses (Gupta, 2021, p. 179).

Similarly, Wankhede (2009) examines how Dalit women use food preparation and sharing as acts of resistance. By reclaiming agency within domestic spaces, Dalit women subvert both caste and gender oppression. Wankhede's analysis highlights the transformative potential of food practices in redefining domestic spaces as sites of empowerment and cultural resilience (Wankhede, p. 59).

D. *Public Acts of Culinary Resistance*

Dalit activism has increasingly integrated food into public demonstrations of anti-caste solidarity, mainly through events such as beef festivals. Garalyt  (2023) provides an ethnographic account of Dalit student politics in Hyderabad, where beef festivals serve as resistance against casteist norms. These festivals transform university canteens into spaces of subaltern resistance, challenging the stereotypical hegemonic standards imposed within educational institutions. According to Garalyt , public consumption of beef represents a broader vision of inclusivity and a caste-free society (Garalyt , p. 231).

Natrajan (2018) complements this perspective by situating beef festivals within the movement for "multiculturalism against caste." He emphasises that such events assert Dalit cultural rights while critiquing the Brahminical domination of Indian food culture. However, he cautions that using cultural practices as tools of resistance risks reinforcing caste as a cultural marker, even as it subverts hierarchical systems (Natrajan, 2018, p. 112).

E. *Gendered Dimensions of Culinary Resistance*

The intersection of caste and gender is evident in Dalit women's food narratives. Works like Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* depict the kitchen where Dalit women negotiate subjugation and defiance. James and Mathew (2023) argue that these narratives portray everyday food practices as symbolic resistance, disrupting patriarchal caste norms that regulate women's access to food and agency. Drawing on de Certeau's theory of everyday life, the authors frame these culinary practices as "tactics" of resistance, challenging casteist exclusion subtly but effectively (James & Mathew, p. 37).

Later, Wankhede (2009) explains how Dalit women reclaim their autonomy within oppressive structures through food preparation. The act in which Dalit women turned cooking and sharing food into instruments of empowerment redefines their roles not only at home but also at the level of the social space. This resistance is articulated through meal politics as politics of personal food bridges and bridges the power of food as a feminist tool in its anti-caste movements (Wankhede, 2009, p. 59).

F. *Media Advocacy as a Tool for Cultural Resistance*

While much of the existing literature focuses on culinary practices as subaltern sites of resistance, it is essential to recognise other media through which marginalised communities assert their identity and challenge dominant narratives. In this context, media advocacy is a powerful tool for cultural preservation and resistance, particularly among minority groups.

The case of Sin Chew Daily (SCD), a prominent Chinese-language newspaper in Malaysia, illustrates how journalism can function as a medium for cultural advocacy. SCD has historically played a pivotal role in preserving Chinese cultural identity, advocating for educational rights, and addressing religious freedom issues within the Malaysian Chinese community. This aligns with Peng's (2005) observation that using the Chinese language in media reinforces cultural identity while facilitating linguistic preservation. Furthermore, SCD's extensive coverage of Chinese education highlights ongoing struggles to recognize the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) and funding for vernacular schools, which have historically relied on community support due to governmental neglect (Voon, 2008).

Just as Dalit kitchens in Marathwada provide spaces for resisting caste hierarchies and asserting agency through the act of cooking (Patole, 2024), Sin Chew Daily operates as a symbolic space through which Malaysian Chinese communities contest systemic marginalisation. Both cases illustrate how marginalised groups use the resources available to them, food in one and media in the other, as mechanisms of resistance and identity assignment in the face of erasure.

G. *Intersectionality in Advocacy*

Dalit kitchens and Sin Chew Daily are both sites of intersectional struggles of caste, gender, language, and religion. For instance:

- Kitchens become sites of defiance against patriarchal caste norms for Dalit women reclaiming agency (Wankhede,

2009).

- SCD also tackles some of the problems the Malaysian Chinese community faces, including the diversity of beliefs held and the gender roles and dynamics that persist in preserving culture (Ng & Lee, 2020).

In making these associations, it becomes evident how the subaltern strategy of food practices and media advocacy serves as an essential means of resistance. These media archives marginalised identities and resist systematic exclusion in their respective geo-political contexts.

H. Synthesis and Significance

The literature shows that Dalit food practices have preserved the culture and the resistance. These practices encompass everything from autobiography to public protest and strive to undermine caste hierarchies and reclaim a Dalit identity that asserts its otherness to Brahminical cultural hegemony. Food also has power as a metaphorical site for resistance and dignity (Guru, 2009).

Integrating gendered perspectives, as suggested by Wankhede (2009) and James and Mathew (2023), the review illustrates that Dalit women's culinary practice is potentially transformative. This resistance is carried over into broader social movements as public acts like beef festivals, explored by Garalyt  (2023) and Natrajan (2018), become the means through which they build toward inclusivity and anti-caste solidarity. Collectively, these studies synthesise the resistance to the homogenising tendencies of culinary nationalism, arguing for food as a powerful weapon of cultural stake-claim and social critique.

TABLE 1
OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE ON DALIT FOOD CULTURE AND CASTE RESISTANCE

Author(s) & Year	Key Focus	Significance
James and Mathew (2023)	Autobiographies by Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar emphasise non-vegetarian cuisines as "counter-cuisines", challenging caste binaries.	Establish alternative national identities and preserve marginalised culinary practices.
Kashyap (2023)	Critiques of upper-caste vegetarian dominance in Indian cuisine portrayals.	Highlights the erasure of Dalit and regional cuisines in global and national narratives
Kikon (2021)	Investigates the casteist labelling of non-vegetarian foods as "dirty" in Northeast India and Dalit communities.	Expose food-based discrimination as a tool for enforcing caste hierarchies.
Guru (2009)	Describes food as a "site for humiliation" within caste-based social systems.	Reveals food's symbolic role in perpetuating caste stratification.
Gupta (2021)	Frames Dalit kitchens as testimonial spaces, documenting cultural resilience through food practices.	Counters Brahminical erasure and asserts Dalit heritage.
Wankhede (2009)	Analyses Dalit women's use of food preparation to challenge caste and gender oppression.	Position food as a feminist tool for agency and empowerment.
Garalyt� (2023)	Documents about beef festivals as public protests transforming canteens into spaces of subaltern resistance.	Advocates for inclusivity and anti-caste solidarity.
Natrajan (2018)	Situates beef festivals within movements for "multiculturalism against caste."	Highlights Dalit cultural rights and critiques caste-based food dominance.
Dutta Chowdhury et al. (2022)	Food is both a necessity and a cultural artefact within Dalit narratives, embodying resilience and resistance.	Positions food practices as tools for reclaiming agency and cultural identity, bridging personal and political dimensions.
James and Mathew (2023)	Dalit women's autobiographies (Kamble, Pawar) highlight food practices as subtle yet powerful acts of resistance against patriarchal caste exclusion.	Demonstrates how culinary practices allow Dalit women to defy caste-based restrictions and assert their identity daily.
Wankhede (2009)	Analyses how Dalit women use culinary practices to disrupt caste and gender norms, leveraging food preparation as an avenue to assert identity and autonomy within domestic contexts that extend to broader societal impacts.	Positioning food preparation as a feminist act for Dalit women, highlighting intersections of caste and gender resistance through domestic and communal culinary activities.
Sin Chew Daily	Media advocacy by the Malaysian Chinese community through journalism (<i>Sin Chew Daily</i>).	Demonstrates parallels between media/culinary practices in resisting systemic marginalisation.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present research involves closely reading the primary text, i.e., *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada* by Shahu Patole, and analysing the primary text for the subaltern themes of resistance through culinary practices. This research adopts subaltern theory to analyse Patole's work as a narrative of resistance. It also applies Scott's (1990) concept of infra-politics to examine the subtle forms of defiance in Dalit kitchens, as well as testimonial literature to highlight the personal experiences of Dalit communities in their struggle against caste oppression. This analysis aims to draw a fruitful

cartography for Dalit kitchens as Subaltern sites of resistance, underscoring the act of cooking and eating the 'forbidden' to resist the prevalent norms and critiquing the caste food hierarchies. The study also considers the lens of infra-political ideology and the genre of testimonial literature to analyse the text at hand. The gendered perspective, the sense of nationalism attached to food, and the author's incorporation of local classical literature in the text will also be closely examined.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Dalits' Kitchens of Marathwada as Subaltern Sites of Resistance

Through an investigation of Shahu Patole's *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada*, this research paper maintains that Dalit kitchens work as subaltern spaces of resistance to the caste system. Cooking, on their terms, reverses casteist norms, and this study seeks to identify the counter-hegemonic cultural expressions. Grounded in subaltern studies, this investigation examines how these kitchens operate as intimate and political spaces where marginalised communities mobilise their identities in opposition to the dominance of caste hierarchies over food practices. This paper examines Dalit kitchens as collective spaces for resistance that challenge the inherent limitations of Brahminical supremacy through the symbolic and material significance of the Dalit kitchens.

B. Culinary Practices as a Celebration of the Action of Defiance

This study offers ethnographic insights into Dalit kitchens in Marathwada as sites of defiance against caste-based restrictions daily through cooking and eating. "This quiet defiance of Brahminical purity laws that seek to order every aspect of our existence is what each meal cooked within a Dalit kitchen signifies" (Patole, 2018, p. 17). These tenets of subaltern studies are further reflected as we adopt the principles of privileging subaltern perspectives that have typically been marginalised into narrative silences (Guha, 1982). Through a study of Dalit culinary practices, Patole chronicles a form of cultural resistance in which agency is utilised in the spaces of oppression without open defiance.

Dalit kitchens transform cooking into a ritual of resistance. By preparing and consuming foods deemed 'impure' by upper-caste standards, Dalit communities reclaim agency over their food choices. This defiance challenges caste-based food hierarchies and asserts Dalits' right to cultural self-expression through their culinary traditions. This is extremely important in circumstances in which food choices are controlled by the caste hierarchies that consider certain foods 'pure' or 'impure'. Instead, Dalit kitchens that choose to prepare traditional foods that are sidelined or even deemed unsavoury from the standpoint of the upper castes, like meat (especially beef), are building a form of resistance to the caste-based dietary restrictions (Natrajan, 2020).

C. Infra Politics and Dietary Resistance

The kitchen becomes a space of resistance in the same way as Scott refers to 'infra politics,' which is the subtle means of resistance by marginalised groups that those with power ignore (Scott, 1990). Evidently, in *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada*, Patole explains how making and consuming the foods that are deemed "polluted" by upper castes in Marathwada, Maharashtra, is an infra-political act to fight against Brahminical rules of food preparation and eating. The act of reclaiming food choices within Dalit Kitchens highlights the resilience of the poor and marginalised groups, asserting access to economic resources denied under hierarchies. 'Beyond sustenance,' he says, 'cooking beef in the Dalit kitchen is a radical assertion of who we are' (Patole, 2024, p. 33). This public consumption directly challenges the Brahminical purity-pollution binary and Hindu nationalist vegetarianism.

This culinary decision is significant not only because it rejects dietary rules but also because it serves to make Dalits an example of community strength. Preparing these ingredients as perfect solutions makes eating such meals a loaded statement against practices of exclusion maintained by the upper castes. It empowers Dalits to cook in a social area, free of shame or fear, and celebrate their culinary heritage as they seek to strengthen their collective identity and history.

Additionally, culinary resistance can be viewed as one of the broader social movements of Dalit communities for the reassertion of their identities (Guru, 2009). In the case of Dalits, asserting control over food practice is not only about challenging the dietary restrictions but also subverting the social division of labour and determining who belongs where in their society. More so in today's day and age, when food is still an explosive political issue entangled with identity and wherewithal to acquire power.

D. Critique of Caste Food Hierarchies

Patole's observations popularised the idea that food was the nominal indicator of social stratification and problematised the caste system. He states, "To reject the Brahminical food code is to reject the ideology that seeks to define and diminish us" (p. 45). He continues that these are choices that exist as symbols. This dovetails with Gopal Guru's argument that caste subordination is maintained using food hierarchies linking Dalit modes of alimentation with impurity (Guru, 2009). Cooked food is the theoretical basis on which we understand Dalit kitchens as sites for subverting these social hierarchies through alternative culinary practices (Guru, 2009).

This critique of dietary choices, in turn, implicates something wider than individual dietary choices: a critique of the logic that assigns societal value based on what one chooses to consume through our mouths. Food becomes a battleground in many ways for identifying who one is within a system that is set up for communal marginalisation. Dalits reclaim their

right to choose what they eat and challenge the defining of their worth by ideologies attempting to narrow their value to diet by refusing to adhere to Brahminical standards.

E. Culinary Nationalism and Marginalisation

This discussion also draws on the theoretical framework of culinary nationalism, exploring how food is employed to construct national identities, but through a lens that excludes outlying communities, including marginalised populations. James and Mathew (2018) are lively scholars to argue for the nationalist elevation of vegetarianism, which marginalised the Dalit and other non-vegetarian food traditions to link it with the ideas of the caste structure. Patole challenges this culinary nationalism by documenting persistent Dalit food practices that refuse to assimilate to upper caste norms. Dalit kitchens provide a culinary heritage (Patole, 2024) that resists homogenisation through food rituals and recipes.

However, culinary nationalism does not assign singularity to food; it linearises food towards one conclusive narrative of food – the food promoted is food that fits within upper-caste values, and many food traditions across low-caste spaces are erased. In addition, this narrative removes Dalit contributions to Indian cuisine but also helps reinforce stereotypes that being a vegetarian is superior or 'pure' compared to consuming meat, which is inferior and 'impure.' Patole's work, through foregrounding Dalit culinary traditions, becomes a vital counter-narrative that celebrates diversity over conformity.

In addition, this text is not simply resistance but creating spaces where Dalit food culture can exist without fear of judgment and exclusion. Patole documents recipes, rituals, and practices particular to Dalit kitchens, adding to a growing body of literature that attempts to reclaim and celebrate these traditions and make Dalits a part of the more prominent Indian culinary and cultural heritage.

F. Gendered Dimensions in Culinary Practices

At this point, the discussion takes on a critically profound aspect of the gendered dimensions of Dalit kitchens. Patole emphasises women's significant role in sustaining and transmitting these culinary traditions: According to him, Dalit women have historically been the guardians of our food culture (p. 60). An example would be Vaishali Wankhede's argument that food is how Dalit women routinely articulate symbolic resistance to intersecting oppressions (Wankhede, 2020). They resist caste and patriarchal expectations by deciding what and how food will be prepared and selecting ingredients with cultural value.

As such, the kitchen is a place where women have agency while being inside oppressive systems. Besides maintaining a culinary practice, women care about testing new ways to synthesise current realities and pay tribute to ancestral knowledge. They also occupy the dual role of custodians of cultural identity and family recipes.

Moreover, besides establishing its impact on women working in the domestic spaces, cooking is linked to other social movements associated with women and women's struggle for gender equality in Dalit caste communities (Wankhede & Gawande, 2021). If women claim culinary practices, they also subvert the patriarchal constrictions of being confined to their roles.

G. Testimonio as a Narrative Strategy

This work also embodies elements of the testimonial genre, facilitating an attempt to protect marginalised voices via the personal narrative in a social context. Testimonio is an epistemology of experiences possessing individual stories labelled 'collective struggles' (Gupta, 2006). *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada* is another cobbled-together collection of personal narratives and cultural observations that recounts a tale of a collective Dalit experience.

Patole can hook readers into the personal lives of the Dalit community with testimonials, a narrative strategy. As he discusses these narratives, he portrays how culinary practices constitute identity and are also acts of resistance to systemic oppression. It intertwines the stories to display resilience and conveys how much we need to protect our cultural heritage.

Personal experience is helpful in the discussion of caste and cuisine since it helps readers who do not have that experience understand the ground reality. These concepts, such as testimonials, should be used to humanise the subject for the readers, leading to the development of a sense of belongingness towards fellow humans amongst them.

H. Incorporation of Saint Literature

Patole draws on saint literature—using references to spiritual teachings from popular Marathi saints—to see food in the light of the caste-molded socio-religious context. Using Dalit holy men Eknath and Chokhamaela as examples, Patole (2024) shows how religious texts mock caste-inspired dietary customs and praise Dalit experiences. For instance, Patole references Chokhamaela's poignant reflections on consuming leftover food rejected by others: We eat the food others have tasted and let go. "Yet we are allowed to worship Lord Vitthal," said Patole.

Saint literature is thereby reframed not as a religious practice but as an act of cultural reclaiming. The examples of saints such as Chokhamaela and Namdev, just like other saints, contributed to spirituality and, at the same time, became historical figures against the casteist imposition of food norms with the view to giving equality (Kumar & Jadhav, 2019). In appealing to these saintly understandings, Patole articulates the spiritually meaningful nature of Dalit kitchens and counters acts of caste hierarchy that have already been prevalent for years.

Further, it references saint literature, bringing up the continuity of ongoing but silenced fights for the dignity of the lower caste and present diffusions to reclaim their agency through culinary practice. How spiritual teachings can inspire

resistance movements and create a structure to understand complex connections between belief, identification, and cultures is highlighted.

I. Documentation of Culinary Heritage

Last, but not least, Patole carefully chronicles traditional Dalit recipes with the relevant directions and cultural takes on them. They not only use ingredients marked impure according to the tastes of upper castes but also embody resilience through being resourceful with what they have—a necessary part of survival strategies used by marginalised communities who cannot afford those ingredients (Jadhav, 2022).

For example, his descriptions showcase how Dalit kitchens rely on available resources while maintaining cultural integrity. "Some Dalit kitchens are utilising what is available, transforming it with the knowledge that has been passed down through generations," says Patole. It reflects necessity rather than luxury, a hallmark characteristic of many lower-caste lifestyles.

The documentation process itself serves multiple purposes: It aims to preserve culinary heritage at risk of being lost to modernisation, challenge dominant narratives of purity, and create pride among community members in a composite nation for what they bring to India's much more diverse gastronomic landscape, and celebrate the imagination bound within constrained circumstances.

Recipes, in addition, as recorded in Patole's work illustrate how systems of food production, often based on local agrarian practices, developed in tandem with the locus of social agency exercised by and among the individuals involved at various nodes along the supply chain, and particularly the women, whose labour extends from growing the food to preparing the food to eating the food.

Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada works as an intervention in the way we understand Indian food culture and its subaltern context. It shows us how by replacing discourses of transformative possibility contained in such prejudices, which are rarely infected by injurious movements seeking to deny them the space they desire simply because of categories they inherited like birthright! Patole's oeuvre makes manifest quotidian acts performed in the kitchens of Marathwada (as sites of resistance and resilience) while striating processes that dominate narratives of how we become 'us' and what broader socio-political developments remain central to shaping modern India.

This study contributes significantly to larger discussions around the very issue of intersectionality across multiple axes, including development issue closely intertwined directly with issues about caste discrimination faced as a collective community passed down through many generations until now; it lays out all those often quite poorly reconciled questions, highlighting how this dynamic goes into overdrive emphasising how much defining acceptable/cause unknown ways, ironically quite interestingly carries implicitly much greater emphasis place regain power – it is not either/or so much perspective but both contexts essential reveal hidden power relations transforming spaceure culture through food.

V. CONCLUSION

Focusing on the *Dalit kitchens of Marathwada*, the research investigates the culinary practices of subaltern resistance through the theoretical frameworks of subaltern studies, culinary nationalism, and intersectionality that enable food to be a vehicle for political disobedience and cultural assertion in the region. Moving this kitchen into the politically overcharged risk zone, Shahu Patole employs his signature ethnographic documentation to challenge caste hierarchies and assert the reclamation of the marginalised identities. Culinary practices like these call for systemic interventions, such as social protection and safety nets for vulnerable communities, to address caste-based and economic marginalisation. Eating and cooking food is an act that is not mundane or mechanical. Instead, it is an act of resistance rooted in history, community, and culture.

Dalit kitchens subvert the Brahminical purity-pollution binary by appropriating foods deemed unclean by upper-caste codes, such as beef. Patole's work records how these culinary practices contend with caste ideologies, turning the kitchen into a site of cultural assertion and resistance. This shows how the kitchen can be a counter-hegemonic space where Dalit values for autonomy and dignity come into being. It is not mere rebellion against so-called dietary laws but a battle to take back their culture and history, a declaration of their ongoing resistance to century upon century of institutional oppression.

These kitchens articulate forcefully the notion of infra politics — the term James Scott uses to designate those subtle everyday acts of defiance. These everyday microscopic wars are within us all. For impoverished people, cooking and consuming 'impure' or 'polluted food' is not a matter of nutrition but rather a radical statement of identity. The Dalit people create solidarity and resilience as part of a shared cultural legacy through these acts. Celebrating the consumption of foods historically banned as taboo, Dalit kitchens use them to dismantle the structures of caste discrimination and reassert their place in India's socio-cultural landscape.

This work also identifies the ways Dalit women transform these spaces. Dalit women have adopted the kitchen as a site for empowerment, and the kitchen is dominantly practised by both caste and gender. Their lives are complicated because of the patriarchal nature of their role as custodians and innovators of culinary traditions and the agency they possess within oppressive structures. Dalit women find a way to control food (and its preparation) in food preparation, and by including culturally unique ingredients, they resist intersectional oppression and help maintain cultural identity. Gender dynamics are relevant here only insofar as they operate within the broadest anti-caste resistance path.

In addition, the research critiques a notion of culinary nationalism whereby vegetarianism is made an emblem of identity, denouncing the Indian food culture but deleting the practices of Dalit and regional food cultures. This thesis works to challenge the homogenisation of Indian cuisine and the exclusionary narratives that affirm upper-caste dominance through a focus on Dalit culinary practices. However, Patole's work does more than that: it celebrates the diversity of the Dalit food traditions and claims them as an integral part of India's cultural heritage.

Moreover, Patole's recourse to saint literature employs past and present kinds of resistance. The research links Dalit culinary resistance to a long tradition of defying caste hierarchies. It also calls up figures like *Chokhamela* and *Namdev*, who challenged casteist practices. This research presents the connections between food as a site of cultural and spiritual reclamation and how food and the collective identity and resistance of people and animals are promoted, sustained, and increased.

The documentation of Dalit culinary practices serves multiple purposes: By preserving a threatened cultural heritage, challenging dominant narratives of purity and pollution, and by creating pride among Dalit communities in their unique traditions, it serves many purposes. Patole documents the erasure of Brahminical ideologies by documenting the erasure of the histories he documents. Preservation is a form of resistance that will allow future generations to enjoy this rich culinary heritage.

After analysing the text of *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada*, one can firmly believe that Dalit kitchens function in a dual sense of resistance and reclamation. However, they are not just mere traditional kitchens: places of sustenance; they are locations of identity, agency, and solidarity negotiated and asserted against the oppressive. Not bound by caste, these kitchens do not subscribe to culinary nationalism and do not adhere to patriarchal norms, making them symbols of the resilience of transformation far too rare in our present times. This study foregrounds the everyday acts in these kitchens to understand better how marginalised communities resist the systemic exclusion they face. It is essential to underscore the richness of the marginalised voice in Indian food culture and to celebrate that diversity as a testament to its richness.

To sum up, one may argue that resistance does not have to be big or obvious; it can be as simple as cooking and eating, which often carries deep symbolic meaning. Reclaiming ownership over their food is a way Dalit communities reject the dominant definitions and denigration of themselves and reassert their rightful place in India's socio-cultural scene. These acts from the Dalit kitchens make them subaltern sites of resistance and essential sites from which one can understand how caste, culture, and identity intersect in contemporary India.

This study incorporated a text from Maharashtra that speaks of identity assertion through celebrating culinary heritage. A comparative analysis of this text with texts from other regions of the country or the world can be undertaken for future research. This will give the text a place in the lore of a new culture when compared and analysed with a text from other cultures. This could also reveal variations in resistance strategies and shared cultural practices. This work can also be studied as a seminal text that intersects with works about other marginal communities. Such an investigation of food practices among other oppressed groups, such as tribal or ethnic minorities, will help us identify broader patterns of culinary resistance. One may also study the impact of globalisation and modernisation on Dalit kitchens. A study can be undertaken to analyse how globalisation and modernisation may influence Dalit culinary traditions and whether these changes dilute or enhance resistance. Longitudinal analysis and gender analysis of the topic can be considered for policy making to give a sustainable and holistic approach to the subaltern entities of the world in general and India in particular.

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