



## Foodscape and Ideological Space: A Postcolonial Critique of Cultural Contestations in the Pakistani Anglophone Literature

Rao Aisha Sadiq

PhD Scholar National College of Business Administration & Economics, (Alhamra University) Multan Sub-Campus

[raoaishasadiq1@gmail.com](mailto:raoaishasadiq1@gmail.com)

Prof. Dr. Zia Ahmad

Adjunct Faculty National College of Business Administration & Economics, (Alhamra University) Multan Sub-Campus

### ABSTRACT

*Foodscapes in Pakistani Anglophone literature are ideological spaces where postcolonial cultural contestations are enacted, negotiated, and resisted, and these contestations are complicated by cultural hybridity in diasporic contexts and the complexities of modern Pakistani society. This study presents a postcolonial critique of cultural contestations in Pakistani Anglophone literature by examining foodscapes as ideological spaces. The study argues that food in Pakistani Anglophone literature is a politicized medium to negotiate colonial histories, class stratification, gender, religious belonging and diasporic conditions. It examines the contestation and reconfiguration of power relations between the global and the local, tradition and modernity, assimilation and resistance through culinary practices. In this study My Son the Fanatic (1999) by Hanif Kureishi, Kitchens (1985) by Toufiq Raffat and Tariq Rehman's The Doll (1990) have been studied. Theoretically the study is grounded on gastropoetics and postcolonialism, conceptually it takes insights from Homi K. Bhabha's: The Location of Culture, Sidney Mintz's Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History and Carole Counihan's The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power to analyze the selected texts. The study establishes that foodscapes in these texts articulate resistance to colonial epistemologies while concurrently exposes the internal fractures within postcolonial Pakistani society by highlighting the colonial legacies, gendered labor, hybridity, class hierarchies and conflicted identities. The analysis reveals that food representations in Pakistani Anglophone literature are deeply implicated in processes of cultural hybridity and ambivalence and further reflects the unresolved negotiations as the characteristic of postcolonial and diasporic identities.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Contestations, Ideological Spaces, Colonial Histories, Hybridity, Diaspora.

### Introduction

Food is not only the biological need but also a deeply ideological practice that is embedded in culture, power relations, identity, memory and social organization. Food and culinary practices develop and mirror social hierarchies, gender norms, economic inequalities, and political histories (Mintz, 1985; Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013). Within literary texts, food is used to articulate and contest the cultural meanings. In postcolonial literary writings the presence of food is significant as it reveals the colonial histories. Colonial encounters not only established the political and economic domination but also shaped taste, dining etiquette, and culinary hierarchies. As Edward Said (1978) in Orientalism argues that colonial discourse operates on systems of representation that classify, rank, and control colonized cultures. Similarly, food, foodscapes and culinary practices become sites for colonial ideologies to continue even after political independence. In postcolonial societies the presence and

dominance of Western culinary practices and the exoticization of indigenous food reflect the internalization of colonial hierarchies of taste. Foodscapes are spatial, social, and symbolic settings where food is produced, prepared, consumed, and represented (Appadurai, 1996; Adema, 2006; Yasmeen, 1996). In literary writings, foodscapes are kitchens, dining tables, restaurants, food shops, food stalls and diasporic homes. These are the spaces where cultural values, identities, and power relations intersect. Foodscapes as "ideological landscapes" (Cosgrove, 1998) as explained by Adema (2006) reflect and exhibit the power relations and encode broader social and political meanings.

Pakistani Anglophone literature reflects the residual presence of colonial legacies and presents an ambivalent position where it details the local cultural experiences and simultaneously addresses to a global and Western, readership. Pakistani Anglophone writers utilize food and culinary practices to engage with questions of class, gender, religion, national identity and diaspora. Although, Pakistani English writings depict the cultural centrality of food, yet its ideological role has not been sufficiently theorized within literary realm. Postcolonial theory offers essential conceptual lenses for addressing this gap. Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) notions of hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence inform that postcolonial texts reflect cultural negotiations. In Pakistani Anglophone writings hybrid foodscapes expose conflict between cultural assimilation and resistance. The hybrid practices reveal the ambivalent nature of postcoloniality marked by modernity and attachment to tradition. Sidney Mintz's (1986) argues that food is essentially tangled with colonial economies, class formation, and global capitalism and symbol of class privilege and deprivation. Carole Counihan (1999) foregrounds the relationship between food, gender and power and contends that women's identities are constructed through their domestic roles where kitchens serve as crucial ideological sites and gendered spaces.

Contextualized with reference to foodscapes and ideological contestations, the study takes up the following research question for the postcolonial critique

1. How do foodscapes in Pakistani Anglophone literature function as ideological spaces through which postcolonial cultural contestations are constructed and negotiated?
2. How do the culinary practices in selected Pakistani Anglophone texts reveal hybridity, ambivalence and resistance within postcolonial and diasporic contexts?

This study applies postcolonial theoretical insights to observe foodscapes as ideological spaces in selected Pakistani English literary texts. Taufiq Rafat's poem Kitchen, Tariq Rahman's The Doll and Hanif Kureishi's My Son the Fanatic are the primary sources of data. The selected texts span national and diasporic contexts and serve as fertile ground to examine how food mediates cultural contestations within and beyond Pakistan. The analysis claims that in Pakistani Anglophone literature foodscapes serve as ideological sites and represent postcolonial cultural contestations. The study further contends hybridity complicates these contestations by producing ambivalent identities that resist fixed categorizations of tradition and modernity.

### **Literature Review:**

Food, culture and literature together develop interdisciplinary nexus. In literary texts food has been conceptualized as a socially and ideologically charged practice. The review of critical sources for the study include: Foodscapes and ideology, postcolonial theory and Pakistani Anglophone literature.

Appadurai's (1996) contends that culture is fluid and deterritorialized and globalization creates disjunctive cultural flows or what he termed as "scapes" which cause hybridity,

cultural conflicts, negotiation and contestations. His (1981) study claims that foodscapes and cuisine are constructed, recipes are symbolic of cultural identity and culinary practices reveal class distinctions and power relations which suggest that they are ideologically charged. Within postcolonial milieus cuisines and foodscapes become sites of perpetuation of colonial legacies, global influences and local traditions. Mintz's (1986) debates on edible commodities in connection with colonialism, capitalism, and class formation. He maintains that power relations and economic structures regulate taste and consumption patterns. Similarly, John and Jean-Pierre Poulain's (2017) claims that food practices are socially constructed and they reflect societal ideologies. Counihan & Esterik's (2013) showcases that food choices construct social hierarchies, gender roles and identities and global capitalist economies effect local food traditions. Counihan's (1999) maintain that food and culinary practices are crucial in negotiating culturally determined gendered power relations.

Colonial domination and its cultural, ideological and epistemic consequences continue to be traced in the formerly colonized societies. Loomba's (2015) argues that colonial power structures in language, culture and everyday practices are persistent and prevalent and legacies of colonialism and its ideology are still active in shaping contemporary society, identities, power dynamics and modes of knowledge production. Said's (1978) establishes that colonial discourses project legitimatized imperial supremacy and biased representation of postcolonial societies. Postcolonial literary texts carry the burden of this discursive hierarchy. Western gastronomies and table etiquettes stand for modernity and elitism while indigenous culinary practices are reduced to be traditional or backward. Bhabha's (1994) presents shift in postcolonial theory by introducing the concept of hybridity that is the result of colonial encounters and exposes the instability of colonial discourse and disrupts its authority. This authority is further reinforced and subverted by the concepts of mimicry and ambivalence. Hall's (1994) theorizes that cultural identity is not fixed rather it is a production that is shaped by history and displacement. Brah's (1996) maintains that the confluence of political cultural, capitalist and emotional practices define diasporic spaces which juxtapose and contest class, gender, religion, race, identities and ethnicity.

Studies on Pakistani Anglophone literature examine issues of identity, history, and cultural contestation. Cilano's (2013) presents a critical overview of Pakistani English novels engagement with nation's historical transformations, partition, authoritarian rule, post-9/11 tensions and challenges and cultural identity in an era of globalization and situates Pakistani Anglophone novels within broader postcolonial debates. Kanwal & Aslam's (2018) traces continuities and ruptures in post-1947 Pakistani Anglophone literature, identity conflicts, cultural negotiations and highlights how Pakistani writers challenge stereotypes, contest cultural authority and articulate socio-political realities. Shamsie's (2025) discusses the performance and negotiation of postcolonial identities in Pakistani Anglophone literature with particular focus on diasporic experiences, historical memory, and cultural hybridity.

### **Theoretical Framework and Research Method**

The theoretical support for the development of the argument of study is drawn from the interdisciplinary convergence of postcolonial studies and gastropoetics with particular focus on food and foodscapes as ideological sites. Within the broader perspectives of postcolonial theory, Bhabha's notions of hybridity, mimicry ambivalence and cultural negotiation have been adopted as the primary guiding principles for the theoretical framing of this study. Bhabha's postcolonial interpolation centers the liminal spaces where cultural meanings are incessantly produced, contested, and transformed. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha

theorizes hybridity that undermines the authority of colonial discourse by exposing its inherent incompleteness and ambivalence. Bhabha's theorization informs the ideological tensions rooted in everyday cultural practices. Within this framework, food emerges as a material and symbolic approach through which ambivalent relationships with colonial modernity are articulated and contested. The indigenous culinary practices and traditions and Westernized consumption patterns characterize what Bhabha designates as the "third space" (p.28) where cultural authority is negotiated. This postcolonial perspective is complemented by Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (1985) critique of food and power where he argues that food consumption and taste are culturally shaped practices that are historically influenced by colonialism, imperial enterprises, capitalism, and class divides. Mintz's ideas conceptualize foodscapes as sites where colonial legacies of class privilege, economic inequality and cultural hierarchy are reproduced and contested. This framework is further strengthened by Carole Counihan's *The Anthropology of Food and Body* (1999) which contends that culinary practices are implicated in the formation of gender identities and social hierarchies. She argues that domestic culinary labor reinforce patriarchal ideological norms. Counihan's emphasis on the symbolic and social dimensions of food provides a critical lens for examining kitchens, dining spaces, and culinary routines in literary texts. Her arguments develop the rationale to probe foodscapes as ideological spaces where gendered beliefs, subaltern labor, and cultural continuity are negotiated.

The study is qualitative and adopts textual analysis method. The analysis continues from specific descriptive details related to food toward larger discursive patterns that reveal cultural contestations. The selected texts Taufiq Rafat's *Kitchen*, *The Doll* by Tariq Rahman, and Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* have been analyzed which reflect and negotiate postcolonial realities. Food-related scenes, descriptions, metaphors, and practices have been observed as sites where ideological tensions concerning class, gender, religion, and cultural belonging become visible. The analysis is guided by the above outlined theoretical framework and ensures that textual reading is grounded in established critical discourse while remaining attentive to the specificity of Pakistani Anglophone literature.

### Textual Analysis

Hanif Kureishi in *My Son the Fanatic* inculcates food and foodscapes as ideological sites which contest and negotiate postcolonial identity and power dynamics. By foregrounding the food Kureishi enacts colonial acculturation and diasporic anxiety. The restaurant scene is significant in respect to colonial assimilation and cultural compliance. "Parvez couldn't deny that he loved crispy bacon smothered with mushrooms and mustard and sandwiched between slices of fried bread. In fact he ate this for breakfast every morning." (Kureishi, 1999, p.104). Parvez's liking and preference for bacon is reflective of Bhabha's "colonial mimicry" that is colonized subjects' desire to adopt the culture of dominant society. Pork is forbidden in Islamic dietary law but Parvez's consumption of it on regular basis depicts it as an act of assimilation into Western modern culture. While according to Mintz (1985) food preferences are rooted in historical power relations. As pork is a symbol of colonial food and dominant British culture Kureishi through Parvez's acceptance of it exhibits his ideological submission. Parvez's continual insistence on cooking and eating pork reflects that food carries ideological pressure. "Ali then reminded Parvez that he had ordered his own wife to cook pork sausages, saying to her, 'You're not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in'. (Kureishi, 1999, p.104). This statement relates with Appadurai's (1981) notion of gastro-politics as food is a source of identity and power negotiation. Parvez through his dietary habits coercively

implements and internalizes Western colonial modernity in his household. Food serves as a phenomenon of acculturation by perpetuating colonial hierarchies even in postcolonial diasporic contexts while simultaneously Ali's resentment, objection and refusal to alcohol, pork and western ways highlight counter-discursive practice and ideological rupture. Ali's words: 'Don't you know it's wrong to drink alcohol?' (Kureishi, 1999, p.103) mark what Ashcroft et al.'s (1995) calls as resistance which is central to postcolonial subjectivity. Unlike Parvez's mimetic acquiescence, Ali's counter-discourse on food and anti-western civilization remarks depict his ideological resistance and maintenance of Islamic identity. Ali's constant inspection of Parvez's eating and drinking deepens the ideological conflict: "Each time Parvez took a drink, the boy winced, or made a fastidious face as an accompaniment." (Kureishi, 1999, p.103). Here food and foodscape form a moral battlefield and contested ideological space. For Parvez it is freedom and pleasure to drink alcohol and eat pork while for Ali it is moral decay and cultural betrayal. In the text food catalyzes the breakdown of father-son relationship. Traditionally, the dining table is a place of communalism but here it serves to mirror the collapses intergenerational conflicts. Parvez's dietary habits reflect colonial-modern framework, while Ali's rejection of that framework or ideology depicts his attitude of globalized Islamic resistance. As Parvez chooses restaurant to talk on the crucial matter so this foodscape becomes what Pratt (1992) calls as "contact zones". For Parvez, the restaurant is a space of validation and a place where he can perform in Bhabha's (1994) term "colonial mimicry". Here, in diasporic context restaurant is a foodscape of assimilation, survival and execution of colonial modernity. Restaurant offers public gaze and the visibility converts dining into an ideological performance. Ali's rejection of western practices critiques Western culture and consumer capitalism. In the play restaurant as a foodscape instead of creating synthesis intensifies polarization where Parvez embodies compromised hybridity while Ali fundamentalist resistance. The play contains references of coffee house that in Europe historically functioned for sociability and now in postcolonial societies mark metropolitan modernity. Parvez visits "coffee shop"( Kureishi, 1999, p.101) with Bettina that signifies liberal modernity and Western urban culture and Parvez's pragmatic secularism.

Meena Bazaar in Tariq Rahman's short story The Doll (1990) is an embodiment of an exceedingly politicized foodscape while revealing colonial hierarchy, class power, and symbolic violence. Rahman portrayed the Meena Bazar as a festive occasion but the food and culinary practices produced deep-rooted postcolonial inequalities and operate ideologically. The carnivalesque foodscape with excessive food create uneven power structures that characterize postcolonial societies. The text is loaded with food imagery and one such food item is ice cream. "The ice cream stall was almost besieged by children. It was fresh handmade ice cream and they had it only once in the year on this occasion." (Rahman, 2024, p.650). According to Mintz (1985) the sugary food items are luxury commodities and they highlight the political economy of taste. For the poor village children like Fatma, ice cream means access to a world of privilege that is dominated by the military elites. As the Meena Bazar is organized by Military at Military Academy it reinforces the colonial-era class distinctions that are continued in postcolonial institutions like the military academy. Food also symbolizes the index of power. Rahman presents a stark contrast as Fatma's father "... a waiter in the canteen, passed by and furtively sneaked a hot kebab into her hand" (Rahman, 2024, p.654) while officer's child Naureen threw "half-eaten chocolates to pigeons" (p.654). The text also presents hybrid food culture by situating western beverage with native food items such as "hot kebabs"(p.650), "chaat" (Rahman, 2024, p.650) and "ice-cold Coca Cola"

(Rahman, 2024, p.650). Bhabha's (1994) notion of the Third Space supports this hybridity but it is accessible mainly to the elites as the officers' families adopt it by choice. The coexistence of Coke with indigenous food marks ideological contestation within foodscapes.

Coca-Cola serves as a powerful ideological signifier. Its presence within the indigenous foodscape signifies the permeation of global capitalist modernity into native postcolonial space generating a site of cultural contestation. "There was the seductive novelty of ice-cold Coca Cola a new drink which had taken the market by storm and was imported from Rawalpindi on this occasion" (Rahman, 2024, p.650). It's a metaphor for cultural imperialism. Coca-Cola embodies Appadurai's (1996) notion of global cultural flow through "ideoscapes" and "financescapes" that are crucial in reshaping the tastes and desires of locals. Rahman describes Coca-Cola as "seductive novelty" which means that the imported global commodities manufacture desire and sensation in postcolonial subjects. It stands for colonial residue and as a product that symbolizes the ideology of Western taste, modernity and capitalism and its drinking is a marker of global hegemonic culture. Rahman juxtaposition of Coca-Cola with indigenous foods reveals the framing of coke as modern and desirable and also reflects Mintz's (1985) stance that colonial economies devalue the local products or local food items while becoming a status symbol. Here, the foodscape carries an ideological hierarchy that privileges Western merchandises over local culinary traditions. Mentioned in the text that it is imported "from Rawalpindi" it already restricts access and aligns with what Counihan's (1999) stresses as food marks social differentiation and here it highlights postcolonial class stratification. Hence, Meena Bazar in Rahman's short fiction functions as a postcolonial foodscape where the presence and dominance of Coke symbolizes global capitalist power, class privilege, and ideological dominance, which transform consumption into a site of cultural contestation.

Raffat in his poem Kitchens presents kitchen as a foodscape where he articulates cultural memory, ideological shifts, and postcolonial contestations. By contrasting pre modern kitchen with modern Westernized kitchen Raffat exposes how colonial modernity reshapes everyday spaces and social relations of the colonized subjects. The poem opens with "Kitchens were places / We grew up in" (Raffat, 1985, p.44) which places kitchen as a social institution that is crucial to identity formation and in Counihan's (1999) sense food spaces shape and form social bonds and cultural memory. The spatial openness of kitchen as "High-roofed, spacious" (Raffat, 1985, p.44) is symbolical to a social order where no strict hierarchy exists and the imagery of smell and sound "With the pungency / Of smoke and spices" (Raffat, 1985, p.44) connects food to memory. Mintz (1985) accentuates this argument as taste and smell recall past that is once resistant to colonial homogenization. The pre modern or pre cultural shift kitchen was open for "Discussions / Centered on primaries / Births, deaths, marriages, / Crops" (Raffat, 1985, p.44) and as a foodscape it reinforced culturality that was undermined due to colonial modernity. Kitchens like many other Postcolonial literary texts projects and highlights the gendered nature and women's silent labor in domestic foodscapes. "Mother presided, / Contributing only / Her presence, busy / Ladling, ladling" (Raffat, 1985, p.44) frames an understated female figure mother whose authority is limited to her repetitive domestic tasks yet her culinary labor is a source of fulfilling the basic necessity of life. Cooking is a cultural duty that is traditionally associated with women. From Spivak's (1988) theorization the mere presiding and presence situates her as a silent subaltern subject besides being the center of household and depicts the postcolonial and patriarchal silencing. Her presence and performance in the kitchen and foodscape is the embodiment of patriarchal

ideology of confinement. The gendered silencing is obvious in the shift of traditional kitchen to the modern kitchen and there is absolute absence of maternal or female figure which highlights the postcolonial construction of gender roles. Rafat's poem provides a futile ground for a postcolonial critique of the way colonial modernity generates patriarchal silencing and limited representation. The intrusion of modernity in foodscapes brings postcolonial ruptures and erodes cultural and familial intimacy. The "Stainless homogeneity" symbolizes Western modernity while the "wink" suggests that the colonized are aware of their loss. The spatial designs of modern kitchens have collapsed the cultural significance of kitchen and stripped these foodscapes of emotional intimacy by perpetuating ideological violence of modernity. The final line of the poem presents the sharpest critique: "Everything is clean / As a hospital." (Raffat, 1985, p.44). The hospital like cleanliness is a metaphor for cultural death.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the selected texts conducted under the light of theoretical postulates addresses the research questions and validates the conclusion. The analysis establishes that foodscapes in Pakistani Anglophone literature are deliberately projected to communicate ideological positions and cultural negotiations formed by colonial and postcolonial histories. Foodscapes including kitchens, restaurants, coffee shops and carnivals serve as sites where culture, traditions and identities are performed, negotiated and contested. The study finds that these foodscapes uncover and challenge dominant colonial and neo-colonial discourses that legitimize power through narratives of progress, modernity, and civility. The Westernized consumption, hospital like domestic spaces and global capitalized commodities carry ideological weight and reinforce class hierarchies, gendered silencing, and cultural distancing. The analysis unsettles the logic of colonial superiority and modernity. Moreover, the analysis also highlights the silenced and erased presence of female subalterns within domestic spaces. Hence, it is evident that Pakistani Anglophone literature prescribes foodscapes as ideological sites through which cultural contestations are enacted. The postcolonial critique of these texts foregrounds the pertinacity of colonial legacies while at the same time articulates possibilities for cultural continuity and resistance.

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