CHAPTER SIX

The Industrial Kitchen: A Site of Gendered Reconfigurations

"*LIKE OTHER THINGS*

they say a kitchen too

means many things

but for this girl

this kitchen is her house

this that and every house

even the house of the burial"

(*Girl in the Kitchen* by Vaidehi, translated from the *Kannada* by A.K. Ramanujan).

The above lines have been taken from a poem that speaks, in implicit ways about the institutionalization of the kitchen and its oppressive nature which has trapped women, across ages into captivity. It borders on a "fantasy of escape" (Raja and Thieme 2007, x) and resonates with a perpetual longing to get away from the shackles of domesticated labour and breathe an air of freedom. But the *kitchen* is her home and her place of burial as well from where there is no escape. The poem echoes with a sense of hopelessness and a resignation to a brutal, preordained fate which encapsulates one of many features of the

domestic kitchen which is "labour." And as Deshpande argues, this labour is often propagated in the language of love and care, sanctified by the image of the goddess *Annapurna* in a bid to amicably convince women of their "ideal" role within a family system (Deshpande 2007). And the narratives explored in this study, have revealed and confirmed that the industrial kitchen, which is of course a site that reflects a profession emerging out of individual choice, nonetheless displays varying degrees of oppression, often camouflaged in the language of professional grooming and expertise. Taking the exploration of the narratives, this chapter reflects on the nature of the industrial kitchen in terms of the relationship between space and gender, in an academic endeavour to understand the act of cooking set against the collapsing binary of the private versus the public.

This research has traversed multiple routes, in terms of readings to arrive at an understanding of women and work in the culinary terrain, within the framework of gender and space. Beginning with a review of literature which has detailed description of the works that have been done in this field, spanning a range of disciplines like Anthropology, Human Geography, Literature and History to name a few, the chapter has brought out the various themes that have contributed towards the study of food. Having said that, it has also shed light on how this terrain remains to be explored as well. To begin with, there is no available literature that has documented the discipline of Hotel Management Studies. This research was an attempt, in part, to create a historical trajectory of the discipline through sources such as hotel industry reports and the narratives, both faculty members and chefs. Although this research is not a documentation of the growth and development of the discipline, tracing its development

was important to get a fair sense of the field in which are located the chefs of the study. Despite the limitations set by the lack of academic work on the discipline, the research was able to contextualize the chefs in a time frame and within a discipline that developed out of a need to cater to a revenue generating market, namely the hospitality industry. The third chapter, therefore, has been an endeavour to not only contextualize the study; but also to reflect upon the various influences that have shaped the period within which are located the lives of the women chefs. The fourth and fifth chapters which deal with the two most prominent themes that emerged out of the narratives such as, harassment and work-life balance, have showcased the lived reality of women chefs which does not quite match with the images projected on television food-shows. These chapters put together have helped reflect and theorise on the nature of women and work, in an endeavour to examine the relationship between space and gender through a feminist critical lens.

What is Space?

For Human Geographers, the concept of *space* has often been understood or explored by distinguishing it from the concept of *place* where they have disputed the "geographical notion" that *place* is but a "set of coordinates on a map" usually defined and marked by a boundary (McDowell 1999, 4). Massey opines that *space* is related to "simultaneity and multiplicity;" while *place* leans more towards "the context of positionality" (Massey 1994 , 1). Massey argues that the twin concepts of *space* and *place* are quite "mobile" where the meaning changes based on contexts and issues (*ibid.*). Going by the works of Ardener (1993), Massey (1994), McDowell (1999), *space* appears to be more abstract while *place* seems more inclined towards the temporal. For this study, the focus has been

on the aspect of *space* as visible in the industrial kitchens, its relation with gender in the context of the profession of culinary and the myriad implications. Taking a cue from Massey's observation that space can be connected towards the element of "simultaneity" it can lead to an acceptance of an understanding that space does not operate in vacuum; rather is a product of social relations and inter-relations. It keeps getting configured and reconfigured according to social inter-relations, which is what makes it fluid as opposed to being a static entity. And Ardener affirms this observation by writing that "social formations" are not interconnected in a unitary direction of "cause and effect;" rather are inextricably entwined in a sort of "cumulative interdependence" (Ardener 1993, 2).

One of the fundamental categories of interrogation to understand the manufacturing of space is *gender*. Citing the argument of Moore (1988), McDowell writes that gender can be viewed from two perspectives such as "a symbolic construction" or a "social relationship" and these two are "mutually constituted" (McDowell 1999 , 7). While she argues that there is no universal image of the feminine, other than perhaps that of the "Virgin Mary," the construction of gender is culturally processed which varies through time, belief systems and spaces (*id*., 8). And this study has dealt with the manner in which gender and space constitute one another within the domain of the industrial kitchen.

How is Gender Constructed and Understood in the Industrial Kitchen?

Massey cites an example of her days when she used to visit town and on her way was a football field which she recollects as a site that was literally "given over to boys" (Massey 1994, 185). In other words, the women or girls were conspicuous by their

absence. She could never bring herself to actually go to those fields because she felt like a "space invader" (*ibid.*). However, she did allow herself to visit other places which were also marked by the heavy presence of men; but what it did to her was to make her conscious of her own "conventional subordination" (*ibid.*). Within this context she asserts that space is always gendered and the gendering of space is formulated through the ways in which gender is culturally constructed and understood in a given space (*id.*, 186).

The narratives have articulated the lived reality of the professional lives of the women in the industrial kitchens. Two of the most dominant themes that have emerged through the interviews which could be considered as valid reasons contributing towards the poor number of women inside the kitchens are harassment and the problematic work-life balance. Both the chapters have revealed how the industrial kitchens are a site that manufactures toxic masculinities through a systematic perpetuation of oppression conducted through varying degrees of harassment, ranging from sexual harassment, physical violence and discrimination in recruitment practices; it has showcased the subtle ways in which men create a masculine space for themselves through social interactions and recreations; the narratives have further unearthed the demanding nature of the job which gets exacerbated by sexist and stereotypical conceptions about women by male colleagues creating an air of hostility, generating stress, which further makes it difficult, if not impossible to maintain a healthy work-life balance. These two pertinent strains that have emerged out of the narratives have pointed towards the direction of unequal power relations which is instrumental in making the space of the industrial kitchen highly gendered. In other words, it would be fair to state that there exists an *asymmetry* of power which is completely manufactured through the manner in which gender is constructed

and understood in the industrial kitchens, thereby, attributing in some measure towards the paucity of women in the professional culinary world.

The insights gathered through the narratives have shed light on the manner in which space inside the industrial kitchen gets gendered, mostly leaning towards the masculine side. What must be understood here is the mould in which masculinity is cast. As the narratives revealed, the masculinity as it exists inside the industrial kitchens is one which is significantly marked by aggression. It is therefore, not just the numerical strength of men inside the kitchens that make it masculine but the nature in which it manifests through deliberate means of subordination and male dominance like harassment, gender stereotyping, discrimination in hiring, and social exclusion, among a host of others as discussed in detail in the previous two chapters. It would be legitimate to say that the industrial kitchens almost appear to be a space where women are made to feel like "space invaders," as Massey had described about her experience of public spaces dominated by men (Massey 1994, 185). On similar lines, Rodgers has written a paper where she compares women's location in a male-dominated space such as the British House of Commons to the location of women in the *Iatmul* culture in New Guinea (Rodgers 1993, 46). This example is not about drawing parallels but rather to showcase how Rodgers, citing the works of Bateson (1967), reveals the making of space as masculine through minute observations and mannerisms inside the House of Commons. Usually, within the *Iatmul* community, the "men's house" is marked by loud noise and anger (*id*., 47) where women are not allowed to enter. The thought of a woman ever entering such a space is referred to the phrase, "breaking of screens" (*ibid.*). If under any circumstances women are found to step inside the "men's house" then it becomes symbolic of the

"disintegration" of the community (*id.*, 48). Such a custom or norm renders women almost as pollutants where the mere presence of women could lead to disintegration! Moreover, while men's spaces are marked by noise and aggression, women's space which is usually the kitchen or the gardens are associated with nurturing, child-care and food preparation (*ibid.*). Rodgers asserts that the British House of Commons is not too different from the "men's house" in the *Iatmul* community. Even though the house is open to both men and women, there are nineteen seats occupied by women amidst a total of six hundred and thirty five seats (*id.*, 46). Apart from tracing the journey of women parliamentarians, beginning with Nancy Astor in 1919, what she writes later is of importance here. She writes about "acceptance" of women by their male counterparts inside the House of Commons. Rodgers writes that only those women have been accepted as colleagues or perhaps, considered even equals by the male politicians on the grounds of being an "honorary man" which has characteristics similar to men that ranges from thinking rationally to possessing a high threshold for drinking beer (*ibid.*). These become the markers to gauge women's success where those that display "feminine" traits such as "warmth" and "reticence" are considered not-so-successful (*ibid.*). Therefore, in order to be successful or considered successful, women have had to adopt mannerisms of aggression and ruthlessness and become "honorary men." The men's space, however, gets thrown out of balance when confronted with a pregnant or lactating colleague. And Rodgers articulates that the image of the breast-feeding parliamentarian brings two opposing forces to converge which are of the "domestic" and the "public," thereby, almost amounting to a violation of the space created for men and by men (*id.*, 55).

There are two inferences that are being drawn here. One is the manufacturing of a masculine space which is marked by explicit aggression, inside the industrial kitchen as exemplified and explored in the previous two chapters; and the other is the confrontation of the domestic and the public, or the private and the public in the act of cooking within the space of the industrial kitchen. Beginning with the first one, the field interviews have been extremely vocal in expressing the nature of the space. Like the British House of Commons, the industrial kitchens also reek of aggression and women are accepted when they are able to behave in a similar fashion which makes the lives of especially pregnant women or new mothers quite difficult. Many quit or make compromises, losing much of what they had built during the professional years till childbirth. These myriad issues bring into sharp focus the concept of gender, how it is constructed and understood inside the industrial kitchens. As McDowell has pointed out, gender is a culturally conditioned category. So each and every individual who is employed in the industrial kitchen follows a distinct set of images, symbols, and notions about gender- that is already present and therefore, influences the space as well. As Ardener points out, it is the "presence of individuals in space…determines its nature," thereby, stating that "people define space" (Ardener 1993, 3). While that is true, in the context of this research, it is also valid that the space of the kitchen simultaneously influences the people within it; thus making space and gender as two categories that condition each other. The nature of the job as showcased in the previous chapters requires hard labour and energy. Unfortunately, the normative social conditioning of gender binaries get cast into water-tight compartments of the masculine and the feminine which proves detrimental when it comes to the notion of gender equality. When the masculine gender gets typified by normative images of

physical strength and prowess, ability to perform strenuous activity often marked by an underlying element of aggression, the space of the industrial kitchen which rests on such labour, gets reconfigured into the normative mould of the masculine. It prevails as an unspoken charter that is omnipresent yet seldom challenged. It severely puts women at a disadvantage because the space gets built on the premise that hard labour is the domain of strong men from which women and less aggressive men get left out or need to become "honorary men" to be accepted in such a space.

Going by the narratives and as explored in detail in the preceding chapters, many women have tolerated pain, refused to complain about health matters, accepted insubordination from male juniors in order to prove their managerial abilities, bore the humiliation of various types of harassment in order to just survive, turned a blind eye to deliberate acts of social exclusion like tolerating sexist jokes and physical segregation in group conversations. And those who have given birth faced unsolicited advice on parenting being a woman's duty, bore the patronizing suggestions about staying at home by quitting work, accepted loss of pay due to extension of maternity leave, lost several productive years due to non-cooperation from colleagues and family alike. These real life experiences are enough to lead to this understanding that the industrial kitchens, unfortunately, lean heavily towards the growth of men at the cost of women. In other words, while gender already exists or rather predates the space of the kitchen as visible in the people who are active components of the space; it is the space itself and the nature of work it hosts that in turn influence and condition the category of gender that exists anyway. Therefore, gender gets reconfigured inside the kitchens based on people and the nature of work. Gender and space is in a "constant state of becoming," (Ranade 2007,

1519) where the reconfigurations tend to broaden gender binaries, thereby, rendering the work space less conducive for women to excel or in some cases, survive. It creates a space that reeks of a masculine hegemony which gets reproduced every single day. The narratives are indicative of the systematic manner in which gender binaries get amplified inside the kitchens, thereby, creating a social structure that favours men or creates a "particular gender-space construct"(*id.*, 1523). The point being made here is not that the industrial kitchen is a site that rejects women. Far from it; rather it projects a space which is gender neutral but a close inspection reveals a social structure that spells a masculine hegemony where women, if they have to survive and excel, must follow the statutes of the space, unwritten and unspoken but practiced every single day.

The narratives speak volumes about a "woman's place" in society or rather where a woman "belongs." Citing the callous remarks of the Mumbai Police Commissioner on the violent molestation of two young Non-Resident Indian (NRI) women on New Year's Eve in Mumbai in the posh area of *Juhu*, where he said, "*Is your wife at home safe…? That's because of our policing*…" Phadke asserts that his comments are indicative not of the efficiency of the police force but the sexist notion of the "right" place where a woman ought to be, which is the home (Phadke 2011, 48). It is the home or the private space that spells security for women which of course contradicts the documented fact that states, women face violence far more in the private space than in the public space (*id.*, 51). The sexist insistence or belief that home or the private space is the "appropriate" space for a woman stems from the notion of respectability. Taking the example of working women in Britain who due to the pressures of economic instability in the 19th century had to step out of home to work, a differentiation had to be made between "respectable women"

(essentially middle-class working women) from the "non-respectable" such as the prostitutes or sex-workers (*id.*, 24) And this was achieved through carrying "private modes of being into the public" which was articulated through "body language" clearly expressing that they "belonged" to the private sphere (*ibid.*). And this core thought of "respectability" could be one of the many reasons which prevented many of the chefs from complaining against harassment which in turn provided impunity to the perpetrators, encouraging them to indulge in further acts of harassment and violence. This cycle of violence, explicit and implicit, generates a social climate within the kitchens that legitimizes male aggression/violence, thereby, framing the space as relatively hostile to women. This systematic perpetuation of misogyny begs this question, how then do we read the "act of cooking" in a public space?

How Do We Read the Act of Cooking in the Industrial Kitchens?

In the context of Indian Hindu women, Herman writes that the role of the wife was often equated to that of a *Brahmin* priest in terms of food preparation (Herman 1998, 10). Citing the works of Fruzzetti (1982), she adds that both the Hindu wife and the *Brahmin* priest performed rituals in the act of food preparation where they had to handle two "highly charged substances and elements in Indian theology" which were *food* and *fire* (*ibid.*). This take on food preparation is laced with notions of ritualistic performance within the Hindu family setting, thereby, in a way, sanctifying the act of cooking. Deshpande supports this thought through her observation that the role of the woman in the household as someone in charge of an important task is sanctified by the generous references to *Annapurana*, the Hindu goddess of wealth (Deshpande 2007). Utsa Ray has further added another layer to this discourse, in the context of colonial Bengal that the act

of cooking was "defined in affective terms, in terms of art and educative principles"(Ray 2015, 106). The act of cooking was wired into the domestic imagination of middle-class Bengali women as something that emerged out of care, love and hygiene which is why women were barred from "cooking for profit" (*id*., 136). Further on, by closely examining a list of Bengali cookbooks, Janeja asserts that cookbooks performed the role of building the image of the ideal housewife where one of the ideals rested on the ability to prepare nutritious, wholesome meals that would nurture the health of the family members (Janeja 2010, 25).

Ray, commenting on the trend of hiring male cooks, further adds that cooking at home was a "feminine task" while professional cooking, as in the case of hired male cooks, was always a "male job"(Ray 2015, 122). She specifically asserts that cooking became highly gendered in colonial Bengal which paved the way for building the emerging middle class and one of the fundamental means to do so was through a segregation of cooking done by women and hired male cooks (*id*., 107). There was a belief, visible in dietary text books (*ibid.*) that cooking for the family rested on the twin aspects of care and hygiene which could only be done by the women who worked towards the nourishment of the family and was therefore not interested in monetary benefits. The hired cooks, a trend which became commonplace in colonial Bengal at the turn of the 20th century, were mostly employed in the new emerging men's hostels and even in large Bengali households. In the latter case, they were mostly of a helping hand, assisting the women in domestic culinary acts (*id*., 107-108). This distinction is crucial in terms of addressing the complicated issue of how the act of cooking should or can be read inside the public space of the industrial kitchens. Ray's work traces the manner in which cooking got gendered,

within the context of colonial Bengal; but what began then, is, unfortunately prevalent even today. The transaction of messages in the televised food-shows and advertisements of food products clearly has shown how the act of "home-cooking" still rests on women, in 21st century India. From selecting the best spices, cereals and pulses for a healthy diet to cooking imaginative dishes to suit the fussy palette of children, it is the figure of the "mother" that repeatedly gets played out. A fall-out of this practice is the understanding that the act of cooking is defined by the space within which it is carried out. It would therefore, mean, that within the home, it is a "feminine" act and outside of it, a "masculine" act. However, such an understanding makes the task quite simplistic. It would, rather, be fair to state that within the domain of the industrial kitchen, the private and the public seem to collapse when women indulge in the act of cooking. Traditionally, women have been associated with the act of cooking within the private confines of the home, becoming symbols of a "domestic culture" as Ray has rightfully articulated (Ray 2015, 107). And men have always been involved in culinary acts for a fee or remuneration, thereby, making the act professional and not personal. But in the hands of the women chefs, the binaries of the private and the public, collapse. In this regard, the act of cooking is almost like Janeja's analysis of the refrigerator. She argues that the modern day refrigerator is a place of storing foods which also prevents them from getting spoilt. But what she goes on to say is that the refrigerator becomes that space where different forms of pollution and purity converge (Janeja 2010, 78). Vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, left-over food (*pakka* food) and "crudely cooked or boiled food" (*kachcha* food) where the former can easily pollute the latter, reside inside the refrigerator, thereby, challenging *Hindu* norms of purity and pollution (*id.*, 78-80). She

further adds that the refrigerator behaves in the manner of a "mediator" that "translates conventional relations" (*id*., 81). The act of cooking could be read along similar lines. When women chefs perform culinary acts in the public space of the industrial kitchens, then the act challenges the binaries of the private and the public and "translates" gender typical roles in a language of neutrality. Despite the oppression, the systematic harassment and the other multitude of challenges that women face every single day inside the industrial kitchens, when they perform the act of cooking, that act itself becomes a symbol of neutralizing gender stereotypes, thereby, recasting the act of cooking into the mould of a professional act, devoid of the problematic tags of the feminine and masculine. Throughout the study, the chapters have elucidated on how the space of the kitchen gets gendered. Yet, the very presence of women inside the industrial kitchens, albeit few in number, performing culinary acts challenges the normative binaries of spaces which leads to a collapse of the gender binaries of feminine and masculine, in spite of the myriad ways in which the space gets framed within the mould of a particular gender leading to a horizon of *feminist possibilities.*

Of Feminist Possibilities

This phrase, "Feminist Possibilities" has been borrowed from Shoba Venkatesh Ghosh's essay on a popular Bollywood movie through which she explores women's access to public spaces (Ghosh 2009, 61). There seems to be a certain air of emancipation and hope associated with this phrase, quite applicable to the lives of the women chefs of this study, which is why it has been used to title this section. This study is placed in a time marked by capitalist expansion of industries as visible, especially in the hospitality sector and faithfully depicted in this study. With the markets gradually opening up beginning with

the nineties, the hospitality industry saw the steady footprints of global hotel chains, stepping into Indian soil. Berman asserts that "modern life" is marked by a few characteristics that range from "great discoveries" to "industrialization of production" among a host of other features (Berman 1983, 15). Modernism or modernity has been explored by many intellectuals and thinkers, from Nietzsche to Marx, often captured in the literary works of Pound (1934) and Eliot (1922) among others. But if for a moment, one were to go by the words of Berman on what he believes to be some of the features of modernity, then it would be safe to say that the hotels, of which the industrial kitchens are a part, are some of the symbols of modernity. The nineties appear to be that period which ushered in an era of the new, not totally rejecting the old but discovering newer options (as visible in cable and satellite television in stark contrast to *Doordarshan*), thereby, echoing some, if not all, of the sentiments of the modern age as described by Berman. And Massey writes that within the context of space, there exist spaces that are considered "modern," chief among them being "public spaces" (Massey 1994, 233). Re-reading the works of Baudelair on his description of Paris, Massey writes that his works, full of references and descriptions of public spaces such as, "boulevards" and "cafes" are indicative of the making of "urban life" which signals the dawn of a "new era" (*ibid.*). But she immediately suggests that such symbols or spaces of "urban" and "modern" life were also gendered where "bars," "boulevards," "cafes" and "brothels" were for men alone and the women who stepped inside those spaces were for "male consumption" (*id.*, 234). She further adds that the "social spaces" that were symbolic of the cultural manifestations of modernism were the public spaces which were essentially for men (*ibid.*). Within the context of this study, the hotels with its heavy annual monetary

turnover, the fast expanding chain of boutique cafes and restaurants, the rise of the celebrity chef, the ever-changing facets of television programming, the convergence of global influences in the dining menu, could be considered as the many faces of modernity in tandem with the growth of urban life. And within this, is located the women chefs whose lives are a direct reflection of what Massey writes, "experience of modernity" (*ibid.*). This "experience" places the woman under the gaze of the "modern man," which in a way resonates with the narratives of the women in this study. While Massey argues that modernism cannot only be read along the lines of patriarchy; she adds, however, that one must take into consideration the "gendered power relations" while discussing modernity (*ibid.*) which usually circles around features or characteristics as listed by Berman, in the beginning of this section. It is at this juncture, between the symbol of modernity and the experience of it that opens up avenues of *feminist possibilities.*

The industrial kitchens, an integral, functional part of the symbols of urban modern life which are the hotels, the cafes and restaurants, is a space that resonates with an asymmetry of power, where as the narratives have shown, the women are at a visible disadvantage. The job itself is physically strenuous which demands not only hard labour but rigorous hours as well which could challenge or pose hindrance to any personal recreational time for both women and men. Moreover, the workforce, numerically leaning towards men and the stereotypical notions that widen the gender binaries, add to the stress that already exists in the kitchen but for women alone. In other words, while both women and men face work related stress, for women the stress generated is more on account of the gender based politics that play out inside the industrial kitchens. With these two pertinent features that mark the industrial kitchens, women certainly do not find

the environment to be as conducive to their growth, especially when held in comparison with their male counterparts. Having said that, the very presence of women, inside the kitchens, can lead to pathways to a space where the power relations are balanced. This is not to suggest that women working in the industrial kitchens are doing something out of the ordinary; rather, it is the manner in which they deal with the space around them that could opens doors to perhaps a more inclusive space. The act of cooking which becomes a site where the private and the public converge, also becomes an act that challenges such binaries, where cooking is considered a profession, not defined by gender. This approach is perhaps one of the ways in which the industrial kitchen, located in the symbol of urban Indian modernity, could imbibe a spirit of progressiveness, considered to be one of the staple features of modernism. The acknowledgement of the culinary as a profession has the key that could nullify the act of cooking as gendered.

While speaking in the context of breaking or collapsing binaries of the private and the public with reference to space and the act of cooking, Hirschon, writing about the relationship between Greek women and "interior" and "exterior" space, reveals how the home kitchen becomes a symbol of intersection of the outside and the inside worlds (Hirschon 1993, 76). She calls the kitchen as a "zone of transition" where products from the "outside" world are used to prepare food within the private space of the domestic kitchen for private consumption (*ibid.*). In most households, the kitchens are located in an "external" space, such as close to the "living room" and this "peripheral" location of the kitchen becomes quite ambivalent because the domesticated role of the wife as the cook merges with the use of products that are obtained from the outside world (*ibid.*). In the context of the industrial kitchens, while there is no ambiguity in terms of the physical

location of the space which is always public, what is held up for interrogation is the culinary act. Having said that, it does not mean that the culinary act is by any means ambivalent in nature. Rather, the act of cooking ought to be translated in the language of a professional act that should be gender neutral. When women become professional chefs, the culinary act becomes neither an act of transgression (if viewed in terms of space) nor does it become an act of conformity (if viewed as an act alone). Rather, they move beyond the narrow confines of gender dictated norms, opening a vast terrain of interrogation and exploration, especially within the discourse of women and work.

Analysing a documentary on women's work inside restaurant kitchens in the United States of America, titled, *Unbidden Voices* (Ellis and Parashar 1990), Mannur explores the role of women as workers who are mostly "invisible" in the discourse on restaurants and the location of food within it (Mannur 2010, 126). The documentary focuses more on the aspect of women's work through the protagonist *Manjula*, an immigrant and less on the food itself. The thirty minute film interrogates issues of "femininity," "immigrant wage-structure," and "working conditions" for immigrant women in the restaurants of United States. Mannur draws attention to one particular shot of the film where a "simmering pot of *dal*" is accompanied by the subtitles, "kitchens, sustenance, nurture, culture" (*id.*, 128). What Mannur asserts is that, for a change, the aspect of food and its related gastronomical imagery that entices the senses is replaced by the concept of women's labour, often marked by unscrupulous rigour, that go into the making of the delicious pot of *dal* (*ibid.*). For a change, food as prepared and sold in restaurants, is showcased through a language of women's unrecognized labour which often does not even get properly compensated for in terms of monetary remunerations, as voiced by

Manjula. Within the Indian context, the constant bombardment of food and its related images in print, electronic and digital media, somehow, obfuscates the labour, especially by women, that goes into the making of such enticing images. The women chefs, in their daily culinary acts inside the industrial kitchens, open up multiple gateways to explore issues of women's labour, cultural identity, and gender relations, thereby, leading to vast feminist possibilities.

Exploring New Horizons

This particular study was bound by time but has tremendous scope to explore areas that could not be tapped into. The focus of this study was on the narratives of mostly women chefs from luxury hotel chains, few were from boutique restaurants and some were faculty members of Hotel Management institutes and human resource professionals from hotels. While the interviews were the thrust of the study, several televised food-shows, from the nineties to the present were also analyzed to support and explore the narratives, given the importance of the time period, beginning with the expansion of the hospitality industry and the entry of cable and satellite television in India, at the turn of the 1990s. This study could be further explored by broadening its base to bring within its fold many other avenues related to food such as the emerging trend of boutique or concept restaurants that are bound together by a theme which could range from cuisine (within and outside of India) to type of meals (snacks only or health conscious food or confectionary only); the rapidly growing field of home chefs or caterers (mostly women) who take up home party orders such as house-warming, birthday and festival related; food based shows for digital media such as you-tube videos by both professionals and homemakers which is the current reference range for recipes; food advertising which has

reinvented itself to suit the global consumer; food travelers who are on a mission to explore places through culinary practices; and finally food writers and bloggers who are a part of an emerging and thriving business of food based publishing which covers a range of books, from travel diaries to recipes, food fiction and food art. These are some of the potential areas that, if explored, could open a range of possibilities to further the research on food, the industry it is embedded in and the lives of chefs, especially women. Due to the nature of the research which rested heavily on the lived experiences of the women chefs and the sharp focus on the theoretical aspect of women and work in the food production industry these avenues could not be explored.

Boutique/Concept Restaurants/Cafes

An entire study can be devoted to the rise of the boutique restaurants and cafes which also goby the name of concept restaurants. They are themed around either a particular cuisine which is usually not common place, based on a particular country or region within India. Cuisines like *Lebanese, Moroccan, Middle-eastern, Korean, Japanese*or closer to home such as *Parsi, Malayali, Coastal,* and at times *fusion food* which is usually a mix of varied regional culinary practices in India, are a recurring and increasing trend in today's times. It is understood that the initial footfall may not be enough to match up to investment costs; yet such restaurants are emerging in most urban spaces. Those that visit such places of dining are the ones who are willing to experiment with flavours and cuisines and often the clientele of such restaurants are quite faithful even if the numbers may never match up to other restaurants that cater to mainstream menus. And in most cases, young chefs who have had training in culinary specializations from foreign schools

are hired to run the operations of such restaurants, from sales initiatives to actual running of the kitchens, on a day-to-day basis. Most such chefs are aware of the gendered history of chefs in the Indian hotel industry and are therefore more open to make the kitchen a gender neutral space. This trend is certainly a break away from the trend that was prevalent in the nineties and exploring this would lead to better understanding of the culinary terrain.

Home Chefs/Caterers

There used to be a time when house parties, dinners, birthday parties, festival parties were often marked by the presence of caterers whose job was to take catering orders for various occasions. In other words, the dining aspect of such parties was often delegated to professional caterers who provided fancy food to grace such occasions. Today, however, there is something called the *home chef* who takes up catering orders with the promise that the food would be delicious yet nutritious and healthy. Most of these chefs are professionally trained; but some are not. And they are almost always women. One common factor that binds the home chefs is the desire to make a handsome monetary earning without having to work outside, reporting to some authority. Most of them revel in the aspect of "freedom of work" where they can work on their own terms and conditions and yet pursue a career of their choice, at the same time without compromising on their family life. Some of the interviews have also shed light on this aspect where some have revealed that for those who quit the industry due to various reasons, often return to the industry as home chefs. Their publicity is usually through word of mouth and social media and their numbers are certainly growing. What is interesting to note is that almost all happen to be women; the promise is of healthy,

nutritious yet delicious “restaurant” type of food; and the women can all pursue a career of their choice without giving up or “compromising” on their family commitments. This is an interesting trend to study because it showcases how the markets today, in the name of promoting “home-made” food have developed strategies to reinvent culinary entrepreneurship. This is another field of interrogation which would certainly add more meaning and insights to the area of women and work within the context of health, nutrition and the making of a health conscious market.

New Media/Digital Media

The trend that was started by culinary enthusiasts in the early 20th century in the form of cookbooks has undergone a rapid metamorphosis over the years. From cookbooks to television food-shows to present day youtube recipe videos and food blogs, the field has expanded drastically. This is a broad field and may be divided into the following:

- *Recipe Videos*

The mass production and availability of smart phones and the rapid spread of social media platforms like *Facebook* and *Instagram*, have taken culinary explorations to short videos that are rich in information and high on visual appeal, thereby, pushing the anchor driven food-shows to the periphery. No recipe, however, exotic, is beyond anyone to learn and follow. Many home cooks or those interested in cooking have their own youtube channels, earning fame and money. There are many sponsored programmes which showcase recipes that are easy and quick, thereby, serving as triggers of encouragement for even those wary of their culinary skills.

- *Food-Blogs*

Food blogs are another field which has transformed many a food enthusiast into a writer, often becoming trend setters with a large fan following. These bloggers often come up with surveys of restaurants and new cuisines; many are self-proclaimed food critics who rate restaurants and food which, based on their credentials, are often believed and followed by people. In fact, many well-known food bloggers who are also food critics have their columns in national dailies and lifestyle magazines. An off-shoot of the food blog is the *vlog* or the video blog where it is through the visual medium of a song-based video that a recipe and its merits are delivered to the digital audience. It is a brand new medium but one which is fast gaining momentum and was started by a musician, *Sawan Dutta* through her popular *Metronome* available on *Facebook*, *Instagram* and youtube.

- *Visual Gastronomy*

Added to this field, is the food stylist whose job is to make even a mundane, everyday food item like *dal-chawal* or rice with lentils look exotic and gastronomically appealing. This diverse field, often associated with the urban youth as observed in the sponsored advertisements, writing style and presentation, is an interesting terrain to tap into. Food-stylists are hired by leading fashion and lifestyle magazines to make dishes look visually appealing, tempting and fashionable. Most food-stylists have a background in art and photography. Often they resort to tricks like using toothpaste to showcase the whiteness of a cream instead of the actual, edible cream which may not be visually attractive; or waxing fruits to add richness to the natural colour; use unconventional items like petals, earthen buckets, and handicraft curios to place food to weave a story out of it.

- *Food-Travelers*

This was a trend started by chefs in the last decade, especially by the late *Anthony Bourdein*. A Michelin ranked chef with restaurants in NewYork and Paris, he started to travel to numerous places across the world, from Europe to India, covering places and culture through culinary practices. This set a trend and very soon there were countless others who did the same. *Ritu Dalmia* from India is one who has treaded a similar path. Many food enthusiasts have opted for this as a career. Such is the trend now that a travel based website *WorldNomads* which began as offering travel insurance, today offers scholarship for food travel, food writing and food photography through a competitive selection process, to people who clear the entry criteria. This platform has produced many food photographers and writers.

Food Advertising

And then there is the age old formula of product promotion which is print advertisement and television commercial. Although there has been an onslaught of culinary advertisement through the digital medium, traditional platforms like print and broadcast, both the mediums, nevertheless, still have a sway over target audience through advertisements and commercials. The culinary language has changed where health and fusion cooking occupy a major part of culinary lexicon. It would be interesting to study the trajectory of such advertisements and commercials to tap into the changes, thereby, gathering rich insights into the evolution of culinary language, consumer culture and the industry as well.

Politics of Vegetarianism

Another field that ought to be explored further is the field of vegetarianism. As voiced by some of the narratives, culinary schools today have contemplated on introducing "vegetarian only" courses for students who do not want to indulge in culinary practices that involve egg, poultry and meat based dishes. In that context, they have also voiced with caution how most restaurants had to change the menu card to replace the word "beef" with "water buffalo" clearly hinting at the prevailing hostile environment against the sale and consumption of beef in the country. The changes in the menu where meats have to be renamed and the introduction of vegetarian culinary courses seem to signal a politics which must thoroughly be interrogated.

These strains could interrogate issues of urban growth, the making of the cosmopolitan youth, the creation of new culinary markets, the birth of "food-porn" and gastronomical trends to garner insights on urban culture where the global and the local confront each other in a culinary journey. These fields if explored could yield insights and a more nuanced understanding of the culinary terrain as it exists in urban India, today. While these fields are possible sites of exploration for studying the culinary domain in terms of youth culture, gender, women and work and globalization, thereby, increasing and broadening the scope of research; this particular research has opened the gateway towards approaching the field.

Food or the culinary domain has been studied across disciplines to comment and theorize upon gender roles, (Appadurai 1988; Gregory 1999; Counihan 2006; Janeja 2010; Sreekumar 2011; Ray 2015; Leer 2016), representation of gender in fiction,(Lahiri 1999;

Desai 1999; Prasad 2006; Chaudhuri and Chatterjee 2011), culinary memoirs as means to connect to one's ethnic origins, (Jaber 2005; Mannur 2013), sexuality (Lupton 1996; Prosbyn 2000; Sharma 2002), middle-class values,(Janeja 2010; Sengupta 2010; Ray 2013), as a differentiator that separates the private and the public by manufacturing a "domestic culture,"(Raja and Thieme 2007;Ghosh 2009; Bhavani and Vijayasree 2010; Dasgupta; Sinha *et al.* 2011), and the attempt towards a mainstream politics of food menu (Ray 2004; Sen 2014; Gardella and Madsen 2012; Kikon 2017), through both the processes of production and consumption in Indian academic work. This thesis has tapped into that core aspect of production which has propelled an entire industry towards rapid growth where women, in spite of being responsible, have been mostly invisible. Other than the area of food and its myriad associations across disciplines, this research has larger implications in terms of gendered organizations. For instance, through Patel's (2010) work on women who work at call centers, issues of gender, space and the nature of organizations are brought into focus. Bezbaruah's (2015) work on the Indian banking sector explores the lives of women who despite being in a profession that boasts of gender equality (in comparison to other sectors) still face systematic discrimination against an organizational set-up. This research opens another pathway, that of the culinary, to explore organizations and the manner in which gender and space get reconfigured, everyday.

By bringing the lives of the women chefs from the margins to the centre, this study has rendered their voices, which were always present, audible. These voices speak of their myriad experiences which, like Pandora's Box opens a trunk full of stories that reveal the everyday misogyny that women live by in the industrial kitchens, to make a career for

themselves. Even if one were to question the voices in terms of the reality that they wish to project, it would be helpful to understand what reality means in feminist parlance. As Tharu and Lalita have articulated, in the context of women's writing in India, the term "reality" as revealed in the "real experiences" of women depicted in their literary works can be considered real if one pays attention to what the words speak (Tharu and Lalita 1993, 31). In other words, the concept of "real" relates to a certain "truth" that emerges when the "shackles of prejudice or false consciousness are thrown off" (*ibid.*). While the images of successful women chefs as projected in popular media may appear to uphold the spirit of women's empowerment, the narratives bring with it another dimension to the profession which has to be taken into consideration in order to garner a balanced and clearer picture of the culinary domain. This study has unpacked several components of the career of a chef, women chefs in particular, that produces a canvas showcasing the day-to-day experiences of women and what that means in terms of the larger context of women and work within a framework of gender and space and the apparently mundane act of cooking. This is perhaps a first step, to approach the culinary domain through women chefs in industrial kitchens in order to theorize on the vast terrain of women and work underlined by a gendering of space. This is just the beginning but an important step nonetheless, opening a fresh register of interrogation.

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