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GENDER PERFORMANCE ON THE REINVIGORATION VIA FOOD

Dr. M. John Suganya¹, B.Priyanga², Harish Sachin. V³**Article History:** Received: 01.02.2023

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Abstract

The present article examines the role of gender in reinvigoration via food. It explores the interpersonal effects and regulation of emotion of food offerings. Food is a universal language. In reviewing the literature, the novel *Peaches for Monsieur Le Curé* by Joanne Harris's female characters are portrayed as reinvigorating the life of others and fostering multicultural harmony in the village through food offerings. The role of production and distribution of food centers around the performance of a female character namely, Vianne Rocher uses her chocolate and peach jam to develop an amicable settlement in the dispute lives of Lansquenet Sous Tannes. The underlying mechanism of empathetic emotion regulation (EER), the performance of Vianne Rocher's food offering becomes a means to increase positive affect for both recipient and provider. Similarly, the Muslim community's Iftar celebrations, which honor Islamic culinary practices, highlight the domestic work done by women in the preparation of meals. These women's attention to food preparation and offerings reflects their concern or expression of their religious views, as well as their concern for family members and friends and their hospitality toward guests. In the novel, the family of Djerba's women making Iftar foods and offering them to strangers facilitates social benefits such as harmony in the cultural mosaic. The study investigates through the eyes of Hamburg et al, on the theory of the role of food in emotional regulation. The focus address: 1. Gender performance in the kitchen, 2. The aspects of performance that reinvigorate the lives done by women through food offerings. Food consumption and the offering of comfort food by women shape an optimistic multicultural environment. In addition to it, blend in culture is made possible through the field of Gastronomy in Richard. C Morais' *The Hundred-Foot Journey*. Furthermore, the article explores how Madame Mallory's acceptance towards other culture has benefitted a cook from Mumbai to get a Michelin star. It also studies how women play a major role in reinvigorating change in the life of men. *The Hundred-Foot Journey* portrays how preconceived notion creates a way for the cultural gap, it also gives reason for the assimilation of French and Indian culture through its characters. Furthermore, it deals with the character madame Mallory and her journey from being a tyrant hotelier to a completely different person with the help of food. Eating food together changes the perspective of the French woman's intolerance towards Indian cuisine and the Indian chef. Food is used as an object for change in the psyche of madame Mallory. And also, Monsieur Leblanc plays a major role in her rebirth towards accepting other cultures not withholding barriers like cuisine, language and the class system.

Keywords: Assimilation, Culture gap, Cultural mosaic, Cultural pluralism, Culture shock, EER, Emotional regulation, Gender performance, Gender roles, Iftar, Interpersonal, Reinvigorate, Reinvigoration.

¹Associate Professor, Department of English, PSG College of Arts & Science, suganyajohn@gmail.com

² Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English, PSG College of Arts & Science, Priyanga19977@gmail.com

³Research scholar (Ph.D), Department of English, PSG College of Arts & Science, harishsachinv@gmail.com

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Introduction

Food is an essential requirement for the sustainability of living beings. Food represents a nutrient substance that provides the energy for the function of the body, but apart from it, food represents a medium between body and mind. It is one of the physiological needs in human life. Food is considered as a universal language, because it doesn't require any structure or format to understand the language. It purely involves the appetite. A person can get acquainted with other cultures by tasting the food. Food tasting and eating/consumption stem from the food preparation and serving/offering to the recipient by the provider. The act of food offering builds a sense of togetherness; it promotes bonding between the provider and the recipient. So, the food offering is allied with emotional regulation throughout the lifespan.

The article conceptualizes offering food resources as a support behavior for the increase of interpersonal closeness. Additionally, the article focuses on the consequences of food offerings. The novel *Peaches for Monsieur le Curé* by Joanne Harris is taken for a study, about the food offerings as a support behavior to soothe self and others. In the food offering, the provider plays a vital role. Therefore, without a provider, the manoeuvre of food offerings is not possible. If the provider is not present in a situation, the action only contains self-serving and consumption. Therefore, the performance of the provider does not take place. So, for the study of the consequence of food offerings, it is obligatory to investigate the provider involved in the offering of food. The novel taken for the study focuses on the part of the provider and the repercussion of its events. The major part of the novel's focal point is women's action of food offering aims to attenuate the dissonance and expand the positive affect of harmony.

Additionally, the article acknowledges culture can co-exist even with all the differences like cuisine, language, and class structure in society. It also focuses on the cause of the culture gap and the reason for blending in cultures. This sets the reason for cultural pluralism is made possible in a society of prejudices.

Glimpse on the Authors:

The author of *Peaches for Monsieur Le Curé* is Joanne Michele Sylvie Harris, she was born in Barnsley in 1964. She has written twenty novels, two short stories, a novella, and three cookery books. She received her education in modern and mediaeval languages at Cambridge. She also spent her fifteen years as a teacher. She holds the prestigious position of the Chair of the Society of Authors (SOA), and a member of the Board of the Author's Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS). Joanne Harris's books are published in over 50 countries. She has honorary doctorates in literature from the University of Sheffield and Huddersfield. Her novel *Chocolat*, was made into a film and was nominated for an Oscar award ("About Joanne Harris").

Author and writer Richard C. Morais are of Canadian and American descent. He has written three books, including *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, an international best-seller that DreamWorks has turned into a movie. *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, debut book, was released by Harper Collins in India in 2008. It takes place in Lumière, a town that Morais' was modelled after Agari, a Swiss mountain village that Morais had visited when he was younger. 'The Hundred-Foot Journey', a movie starring Helen Mirren and Om Puri, was released in 2014 by Steven Spielberg and Oprah Winfrey. It has been a New York Times and international bestseller. Mr. Morais has uniquely won three awards and six nominations at the Business Journalist of The Year Awards, the only competition in the world where the best U.S. and British business journalists competed directly in a single event. His literary works, meanwhile, were semi-finalists in the William Faulkner Creative Writing Competition and short-listed for Britain's Ian St. James Award. Mr. Morais was named the 2015 Citizen Diplomat of the Year - the highest honour granted by Global Ties U.S. a private-public partnership sponsored by the U.S. State Department - for promoting cross-cultural understanding in all of his literary work.

Compendium of the Novels

Peaches for Monsieur le Curé is the sequel to *The Lollipop Shoes*. The novel *Chocolat*, followed by its sequel *The Lollipop Shoes* and thirdly, *Peaches for Monsieur Le Curé*.

Joanne Harris vividly pictures the characters of Vianne Rocher, Rosette and Anouk returning to Lansquenet Sous Tannes. The tale starts after four years of Vianne being in Paris and eight years of being away from Lansquenet Sous Tannes. The plot revolves around the conflicts between two communities, Meghrebins and the Catholic community. The exchange of food by women between these communities promotes multicultural harmony.

The storyline begins in Paris, Vianne Rocher, Anouk and Rosette are living on a houseboat with Roux. Out of blue, Vianne Rocher receives a letter from Luc, the letter contains a note from Armande written by herself before her death. The letter implies Vainne's return to Lansquenet Sous Tannes. She feels that, the request is from beyond the grave to refuse. So, she arrives at the village and stays in Armande's old house with Anouk and Rosette. Armande's grandson Luc welcomes Vianne Rocher with fresh croissants and pains au chocolat.

Vianne finds the notable changes in the village, the immigrants' presence under the collective name of Meghrebins, staying across the river. The Meghrebins belong to the Muslim community, so there arises friction over traditional values among the natives of Lansquenet sous Tannes, who belong to the Catholic community. Vianne learns that, the efforts of the villagers to welcome the immigrants are successful through food offerings. Caro Clairmont invites Meghrebins' women for coffee and tea with the intention to promote entente cordial. Josephine Muscat buys piles of sweet pastries for the cafe from the Djerba family and repays them with plants and wine. Similar to the above offerings, Vianne as mentioned in Armande's letter takes care of peaches and distributes them to everyone in the village. She feels that, food is the only shared language, and tries to share peaches and peach jams to maintain friendship and acceptance among Meghrebins. Likewise, the Meghrebins offer mint tea and halwa, to welcome Vianne as a new guest in the village, which was prepared for Iftar by the women in the house.

On the other hand, Reynaud fails in his efforts to welcome the immigrants. He has been accused of firing the Muslim girl's school and being on the verge of losing his parish to a

new priest. As being in dire straits, Reynaud seeks help from Vianne Rocher.

Vianne discovers and eventually learns that, Ines Bencharki's influence on traditional values among the women in the village. Ines along with a child Du'a, is the victim of the arson attack. The misunderstanding of Meghrebins led Karim Bencharki and a few men to mysteriously attack Reynaud and prison him in a cellar. Out of empathy, Sonia, the wife of Karim offers food to Reynaud without the notice of others. In the meantime, Vianne unveils the secrecy behind Ines's stubbornness in influencing the Meghrebins to follow the religious custom of wearing the niqab. Ines's childhood abuse sets the reason for her devotion to the niqab. In addition to it, she makes Sonia admit to the locals about her relation to the arson incident. Sonia's act of firing the school is her envy of Ines, because she falsely believes her husband and Ines are in an affair. Finally, Vianne helps Reynaud to get out of the criticism.

After the release of Reynaud from the cellar, there has been a stream of visitors from the village. Everyone brought gifts, especially food to Reynaud as a sign of care. The plot of the novel, comes to an end by Vianne rewards a peach stone to Reynaud from Armande's garden as a symbol of healthy and long life ("Peaches for Monsieur le Cure summary Joanne Harris").

The other selected novel for the study is, *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, the protagonist Mallory is an old woman who acts pretty stiff. When the readers are first introduced to Mallory, it's through a creepy window on the top floor of Le Saule Pleureur. she was bred in the best of French taste and tradition and has used her hard work to make quite a name for herself with her little inn. Madame Mallory seems to be a tyrant in the beginning of the novel. Although she appears to have an iron hold on her life, if pressed, she completely crumbles. She can be compared to an eggshell, looks hard outside but breaks down easily. Her motive is intimidation, so as soon as the Hajis arrive at Lumière, she is there to play the snobbish French counterpoint to their loud curry-eating ways. This novel is not only the bildungsroman of Hassan Haji, but also that of Madame Mallory. She transforms herself

throughout the novel and becomes solely responsible for Hassan's Career and success.

Mallory's daily routine begins by messing with Hassan's family. Her career is at the verge of extinction. she only has two Michelin stars, and hasn't received her third, which would make her the best chef. The Inability to succeed in getting her third star and the new headache of Hassan family restaurant made her crazy. It began not when the competitive 'Maison Mumbai' was started but when she realizes the natural talent in Hassan after eating his food. This tug of war goes beyond the limit when Mallory pushes Hassan into the stove. After Henri Leblanc made her do the pilgrimage, she starts helping Hassan reach his potential. Toward the end of the book where Hassan remembers having tea with her, and this moment reveals how human Mallory really is. She says:

"I am not very good with words, but I would like to tell you that somewhere in life I lost my way, and I believe you were sent to me, perhaps by my beloved father, so that I could be restored to the world. And I thank you for this. You have made me understand that good taste is not the birth right of snobs, but a gift from God sometimes found in the most unlikely of places and in the unlikeliest of people." (Morais 170)

This moment exemplifies the change that happened way back when in Lumière, in the freezing church making it crystal clear that beneath a cold exterior, Mallory is a warm human being with a conscience and even a heart.

Empathetic Emotion Regulation

In the article "Food for Love: The Role of Food Offering in Empathetic Emotion Regulation", Hamburg et al. explain the process of food offering through a tree diagram. The food item is used as a regulatory tool, which increases the positive affect and reduces the negative affect. Food is used to regulate own emotions, likewise, emotional regulation is also possible through the offer of food to others. Hamburg et al., proposed that the mechanism of Empathetic Emotion Regulation (EER) is responsible for the food offering. EER system is considered as an interpersonal regulation system, in which empathetic response over another person and using food as a regulation tool aims to achieve the regulation of emotion within the provider and the targeted receiver (Hamburg et al.).

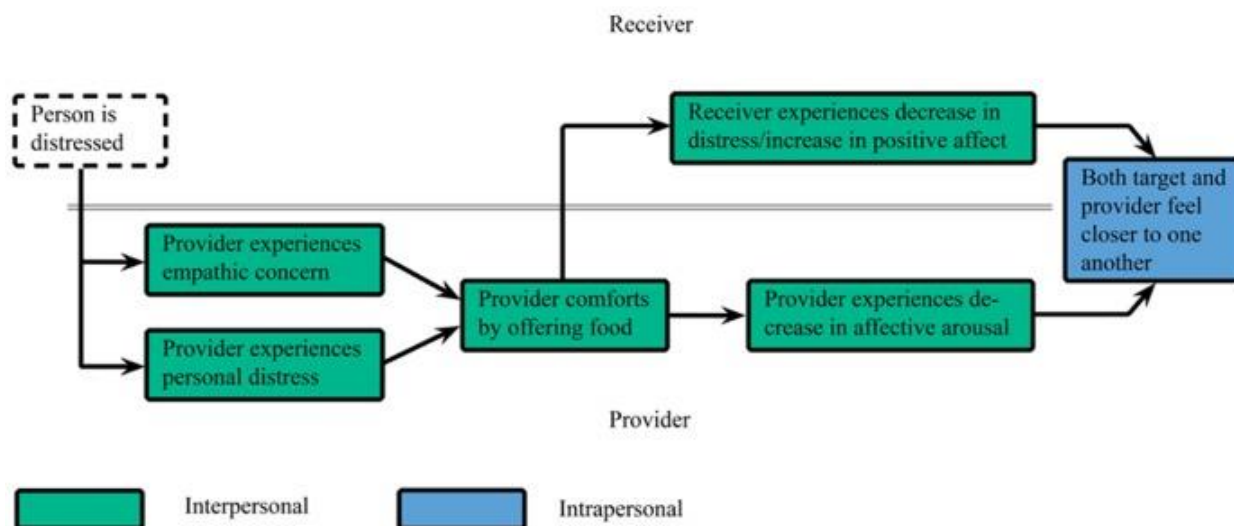


Fig. 1. Hamburg et al. *Example of Empathetic Emotion Regulation by Food Offering*, *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Empathy is the ability to understand and react to the other's emotional suffering. This emotional reaction of the provider motivates to regulate the distressed person by providing a feeling of compassion. The empathetic

concern of a person leads to showing and exhibiting support behavior. This type of behavior makes the person imagine the situation and place themselves in the distressing situation. These led to distress in an

empathetic concerned person. Therefore, helping behavior diminishes the receiver's support in need, and the provider also no longer faces the receiver in a distressing situation. Both parties are benefited through helping behavior. The main focus of support behavior is, which tool is used by an empathetic concerned person to provide the helping behavior. The article uses food as a medium for supporting behavior and helps to acknowledge that food offering is used as a tool for overcoming distress.

For example, witnessing a partner's disappointment of not getting a long sought-after promotion, may trigger feelings of both personal distress and empathic concern, which may motivate EER through food offering of cookies. As a consequence, the partner's negative affect may lessen and positive affect may increase, due to a combination of physiological effects and positive past associations with cookies (Hamburg et al.)

So, the past association exists between the provider and the receiver with the cookies and the social interactions involved in it, leading to provide the feeling of support among the partners. This results in an increased feeling of interpersonal closeness (Hamburg et al.).

Women's Reinvigoration Via EER of Food Offering

The following are examples of the notions on the role of women in culinary arts from 467 BC and 21st century is as follows;

In an online website entitled, "Women's place is in the home" - the meaning and origin of this phrase", Martin mentions Aeschylus wrote in 467 BC about women as "Let women stay home and hold their peace" (Martin). Similarly, in the song, "You'll find me in the studio and not in the kitchen", Lily Allen, the pop artist sings in her recent album "Hard out Here ("Hard out Here").

In regard to the above examples, the concept of cooking and the kitchen always evolved in relation to women. Judith Butler put across the idea of gender is a socially constructed notion. Judith Butler believes that gender "is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" ("Judith Butler Biography, Gender Trouble, and Facts"). She stressed that, gender is assigned to a person through the deed. Thus,

cooking is a gender-neutral deed, but it is evident from the above examples from 467 BC to the 21st century, that the socially constructed notion lies in cooking with women from earlier to this contemporary century.

The stereotypical notion of women and the kitchen always hold a diminished perspective over the space of a productive economy. The Chef, activist, and restaurateur Alice Waters says, "When you see women in the kitchen you think it's a domestic thing and when you see men you think it's a creative thing. That's what we need to change" (Stuart). Therefore, the field of vision over women in the kitchen has to project in terms of reinvigoration. In applying the theory of EER in the novel *Peaches for Monsieur le Curé*, it is possible to perceive that women involved in food offerings lead to reinvigorating the life of others.

The offering of food is one of the direct ways to satisfy the basic need of another person while conveying a myriad of social meanings. The offered food is digested and entails psychological and physiological properties (Hamburg et al.). Throughout the novel, women character's express their empathetic concern by offering different kinds of foods to others. In the novel, the character Caro Clairmont serves beverages and holds a meeting as a sign of welcoming the immigrant Meghrebins. This shows that the provider expresses her empathetic concern over the newcomers into the village. As a housewife, Caro Clairmont tries to offer neighborliness by offering a type of food item. "Caro Clairmont holding coffee mornings for the mothers and their children, all in the name of entente cordiale, as if she were a social worker from Paris instead of a little housewife from the provinces..."(Harris 60). "Caro used to invite a group of them to her house for tea" (Harris 84). Food offering to a stranger establishes initial contact and strengthens the bonds in a close relationship (Van Schaik and V Jaeggi 2137). Furthermore, immigrants face psychological distress and self-rated physical stress, which is impacted by the migration (Wallace and Torres). So, Caro Clairmont's action of offering food and having interpersonal communication helps in reducing the psychological distress of immigrants and increases interpersonal closeness.

Similarly, Luc welcomes Vianne Rocher and her children by giving fresh croissants and pain au chocolat as a generous sociability. This expresses the hospitality towards the newcomers. “Luc grinned and handed out fresh croissants and pains au chocolat. ‘Since it’s my fault you’re here,’ he said, ‘feel free to stay as long as you want. Grand-mere would have liked that’” (Harris 82). Luc feels that, Vianne has traveled long from Paris to Lansquenet Sous Tannes because of his letter. This led to feelings of distress in Luc. So, as a welcoming gesture, he brings comfort foods for the guest. This expression builds friendliness between the provider and the recipient. The offering of food to newcomers also aids in social inclusion and engagement (Mensah and Yusuf 12).

Vianne shares one of her memories with Maya about her livelihood in Tangier. Maya is the granddaughter of Omi. She remarks food and recipes were the only sources of communication among the natives in Tangier. She and her mother are outsiders of Tangier and her wordings express that, they were unable to communicate their language.

My mother and I once lived in Tangier. A vibrant place in so many ways; filled with contradictions. I’ve always used food and recipes as a means to understanding those around me; and sometimes, in a place like Tangier, food is the only shared language (Harris 93).

So, the only source was the exchange of food for the interpersonal relationship. And, food becomes a facilitator for building a social bond. Moreover, food offering strengthens the bond and also works as a facilitator for other forms of support (Hamburg et al.). In this case, food becomes a medium for the provider and recipient’s sociability and promotes multicultural harmony.

Vianne’s visit to Al -Djerba’s family exhibits the offering of food to extend the hand of friendship. Fathima al – Djerba serves halwa chebakia and mint tea as a sign of greeting in a friendly way. she also packs and gives some of the Iftar foods to Vianne. The Moroccan cooking is passed to Vianne Rocher, which manifests cultural blending “‘I make the very best halwa chebakia, with mint tea, or qamar – el – deen - you can take some home to your family’” (Harris 115). The offering of food to

Vianne promotes closeness and helps to open up about her chocolaterie to Al – Djerba family. This shows that comfort foods and reward foods increase positive affect. Omi al-Djerba against the feeling of Vianne as a stranger, she asks for chocolate as a reward in return. The exchange of food and offering of food motivates interpersonal closeness “‘Whatever the constraints of language, culture or geography, food crosses over all boundaries. To offer food is to extend the hand of friendship; to accept is to be accepted into the most closed of communities’” (Harris 115).

The character Alyssa is a suicidal person in the novel. She was saved by Reynaud and stays as a guest in Vianne’s house rather than going to her house. Alyssa attempts suicide because she was in love with her sister’s husband and finds unable to overcome her emotions with him. She realizes her misconduct behavior but finds it difficult to control her affection towards Karim. This led to her attempt at suicide. Vianne offers a chocolate drink to Alyssa on the day of her suicidal attempt. This offering of food showcases Vianne’s care toward Alyssa, because the hot chocolate drink with cardamom and lavender, valerian has the physical property of getting good sleep. Hot chocolate drinks are one of the physical comfort foods, these are described as comforting in texture and temperature e.g., hot soup (Hamburg et al.). The offering of comfort food supports interpersonal relationships.

The relationship between Josephine and Mehdi al-Djerba’s offerings of food elicits interpersonal affinity. Mehdi – al – Djerba provides piles of sweet pastries for Josephine’s café. In return, Josephine repays them with dozens of bottles of wine, but perceiving the fondness, she rewards geraniums for windowsills. Food offering in this situation showcases the altruistic nature of the provider and receiver’s aim to construct the interpersonal relationship. The provider and receiver don’t expect in return for offering the food. Purely, the offering of food is based on affection. The food offering can be used to show affection for loved ones, express hospitality, and signal comfort (Hamburg et al.). Here, the members of Meghrebins and the Catholic community shares unconditional affection towards one another through food offering.

The production and serving of peach jam to the neighborhood by Vianne indicate her efforts toward interpersonal relationships. Armande's peach tree was utilized by Vianne by making peach jam. The production and offering of peach jam help with sociability. This is expressed through Vianne's words, "Still, there is one house, I know, where I am not a stranger. Perhaps because of the peaches, ..." (Harris 264). On the other hand, after Reynaud's captive, everyone from the village brought their offerings, especially food. This reflects the helping tendency towards the loved one or stranger. Especially, Vianne's hot chocolate indicates the comfort food for the distressed person. In addition to it, she rewards Reynaud with a peach stone symbolizing happiness in life and peace with health. It is evident that, the above-mentioned women characters reinvigorate the life of others through empathetic emotional regulation.

Madame Mallory's Journey Toward Reinvigoration in *The Hundred-Foot Journey*

Culture is dynamic in nature. Different ethnic groups and people come together to form a culture. People tend to accept certain traits and oppose certain practices. When people of different cultures live together, cuisine develops a tendency to make them understand each other's cultures. One such event is what the further focus is dependent on.

This study further focuses on the perspective of the Multicultural journey of culinary arts in Richard C. Morais's "*The Hundred-Foot Journey*". The Texts examines how the hundred-foot distance between a new Indian kitchen and a traditional French one can represent the gulf between different cultures and desires. A testament to the inevitability of destiny, this is a fable for the ages. It is one of the charming, endearing novels by Richard C. Morais.

Morais' intention to highlight the significance of cultural pluralism is shown by the novel's capacity to allow Hassan's family and the Mallory restaurant to come together and form a symbiotic relationship. At first, Madame Mallory's personality is very sharp and prickly, her French snobbery serving to counteract the Hajis' exuberance and excitement at living somewhere new. Hassan becoming the rising star in the food world also

gives the moderately-successful Mallory a pause, Morais is using this to demonstrate the fundamental fears that the upper classes have about immigrant populations, the fear of surpassing them and achieving what they could not: "the intense pain of realizing that there are those in the world who simply are greater than we are, surpassing us, in some profound way, in our accomplishments" (Morais 153).

The themes of unity and solidarity between cultures would be nothing without the universal constant of food, which is a primary motif throughout the novel. Food and the experience of cooking and eating, become transformative for a variety of characters in the book. Hassan's cold sandwich, despite being seemingly unpalatable, is unlike anything he has ever tasted, which leads him to gain an interest in European cuisine. Furthermore, the restaurant he creates with Papa (Maison Mumbai) is a mix of French and Indian word - 'maison' in French for 'house,' while Mumbai is a city in India.

These steps parallel the novel's quest to bring the French and Indian characters closer together in solidarity, friendship, and love. Even Hassan enjoys this with the French restaurant's overbearing chef: "over the following years, Verdun and I definitely established a deep and abiding professional respect for each other, even, I would say, one of real affection" (Morais 174). This coming together of people through food and the art of cooking, regardless of (and even because of) their differences in culture, is integral to the cultural pluralism at the heart of Morais' novel.

When Madame Mallory visits a foie gras farm, she begins to reverberate her interactions with other people and perspective regarding life. A duck is released by its owner since it has shown "more kindness than a human being" by rearing other ducklings as its own (Morais115). In freeing that goose, it is stated that kindness is a type of liberation from the agony of life, which gave Madame Mallory the realization that how kindness towards people could change the perspective of life.

Hassan on the other hand is dedicated to acquiring knowledge and skills. He constantly watches and absorbs whatever is done on the other side of the fence. His desire to learn is

the reason that made Madame Mallory to enter 'Maison Mumbai' and take Hassan under her wing. Even though Mallory pushed Hassan into a burning stove at the beginning of the novel, Hassan forgives her. The idea of consuming food from each other's culture promotes trust and cooperation is the base of the novel. Hassan's approach toward women was rusty after encountering the death of his mother, but still he opens himself towards Madame Mallory by accepting her to be his mentor. She is seen as a resemblance to his mother. The characteristics of teaching dishes were similar for both the women in his life.

Hunger plays a major role in the novel. It is the source of inspiration for Hassan to aspire more for himself and his family beyond his needs. The hunger that flows through generations in the haji family gives Hassan the hunger to gain a Michelin star. The Hunger to learn things new about French cuisine and the hunger in knowing Madame Mallory made way for Hassan to build himself.

Conclusion

The characters in the novel use food to soothe self and others. The women's character such as Vianne uses her comfort foods such as, hot chocolate drinks, peach jam, and stone to comfort the distressed person. Al- Djerba family shares their Iftar foods with Vianne, and Josephine's offerings with Mehdi – al – Djerba showcase the blending of culture with foods. Caro Clairmont's tea and coffee offerings help in entente cordiale. The EER motivated women's offering of food promotes the multicultural harmony between Meghrebins and the catholic community. It is evident that, the women characters present in the novel *Peaches for Monsieur Le Curé*, reinvigorate the life of others through empathetic emotional regulation. Additionally, the food is also used to bridge cultural and societal gaps between two different groups of people in an uplifting way. The cultural gap among people explains the clash between the classes and their preconceived notions toward other cultures. Furthermore, the cultural differences and treatment of class in Morais' novel *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, paves way for readers to examine the harsh realities of the immigrant experiences. After becoming closely associated with them, the alleged fear

of immigrants was altered. Understanding both cultures apart from their differences made Madame Mallory realize that people with talent can come from any ethnicity. Hassan's life is the classic rags-to-riches tale, spiced up with a tremendous love for the culinary arts and committed to the idea that, no matter our cultural differences, we can still be united at the table.

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