

FOOD IS AN EMOTION: A READING ON HOW FOOD INFLUENCE OUR MIND IN THE NOVEL ‘LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE’ BY LAURA ESQUIVEL

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ABSTRACT--*Food had been an integral part of human life. For decades we human beings are insane for food and we lives for food. For some food means to explore the taste and for some is to explore the culture and the deep connection between food and our emotions. The varieties of taste and ingredients make each food unique from each other. From the biblical era of Adam and Eve food, i.e., apple which became a symbol of sin has been an essential role in the world. So, food plays both positive and negative roles in the lives of humans. In the novel ‘Like Water for Chocolate’ by Laura Esquivel the twelve recipe instalment play a vital role in expressing the protagonist’s emotion, for instance emotions like anger, suffocation, love and pain. Thus the novel becomes a remarkable narration of emotion overflowing through food.*

KEYWORDS--*Like Water for Chocolate, Laura Esquivel, Food and mind, food and feminism.*

I. INTRODUCTION

“What we think generates emotions, but so does what we eat” *Montse Bradford*

One of the most notable characteristics of Mexicans is their food culture which is unique as well as ancient. Each recipe has a connection to their tradition, culture and family. The cooking is also considered to be an investment for the social relationships. They have a complicated recipe as these are related to the country’s social structures. For the Mexicans, food means an emotion whether it is a homemade daily meal or festivals. Each and every festival for them is connected with food, for instance the Day of the Dead festival where they set out food in alters and believed that the dead relatives will visit and have the food.

Food always teaches that whatever we consume and what we feel for it is a by product of cook’s feeling or emotion. The whole preparation of food i.e., from the sound of cutting of vegetables to aroma and sizzling sound of the dish is magically transformed as a peaceful feeling in our mind. In the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989) Laura Esquivel conveys this connection between the food and emotion. Thus the food becomes a medium especially in world of women to express the feelings and emotions which are suppressed by the society. The novel is itself is a twelve instalments of recipes and medicinal tips for each month and each of these twelve instalments carries an emotional memories of the protagonist, Tita De la Garza. Therefore, the food becomes a timeline for the novel.

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II. OBJECTIVE

The paper brings us the study of food and mind in the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel. It shows that food always find its way in controlling our emotion. The novel consists of twelve recipe instalments for twelve months. Each chapter starts with recipe which is a collection of memories of the protagonist. The paper also analyse how the protagonist is expressing her emotions through her culinary skills, even though she had been trapped in the four walls of kitchen. Thus, kitchen and her cooking become a tool for inner desires and her voice.

III. HYPOTHESIS

Mexican culture is known for its food and tradition. Laura Esquivel, Mexican writer, through the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* has given a vivid picture of her food culture and tradition. The novel is written in cook book form with twelve recipes for each month. These are not mere recipes but memories and tradition that had been passed down from generation to generation. Food is not just for the taste but also bring out a feeling in our mind. For centuries women is trapped in the kitchen and it is their world, but in the novel, Esquivel makes this as an act of liberation. When we cook with love and affection, this emotion is transferred to the people who consume it. Just like the protagonist in the novel, Tita De le Garza, she cooks with her emotion. For Tita, food acts a medium to express her emotion and feeling that had been suppressed in her mind for years. Therefore, food is always cooked with invisible ingredients such as love, passion, sorrow, hatred, and so on, which can only be seen after eating.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Feminist Food Studies comprises the use of food as a lens to explore and voice the social injustice. It analyse concerns of women and girls and different relationships that we have with food. An intersectional feminist food studies is a way of understanding the social injustices and sustain in the social, historical, cultural, political and economical contexts around the food. It gave attention towards the social inequalities of oppression and food practice.

Esquivel often explained the relationship between food and woman. She made cooking as a medium for women to express her own emotions. Through the cooking she voices the injustices done for the sake of a tradition, she also uses cooking as a love making between the protagonist and her lover. She also explores the Mexican food culture and this effect the day to day life of her character.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Food as a medium to express Emotion in our Mind

It was very pleasant to savor itsaroma, for smells have the power to evoke the past, bringing back sound and even other smells thathave no match in the present. *Laura Esquivel*

Esquivel strikingly display the Mexican food culture in the novel. From recipes like Christmas rolls, Quail in Rose Petal Sauce, Oxtail soup to recipe to make Matches, Esquivel gives equal importance to every recipe.

Esquivel in the novel focus the life of Tita, how her desires and emotions are suppressed by her mother, Mama Elena. For instance, she desire to get married to love of her life, Pedro but as rigid follower of tradition, her mother denied this as per tradition the younger daughter should look after her mother in her old age. Even though we can see Tita didn't express her frustration or her dismay verbally, these were expressed through her cooking. Hence, the novelist opens each chapter with recipes which is a memory of Tita.

Tita from the birth to her death is in the company of food and the four walls of the kitchen became her tool to express her emotion that was repressed by the society. Tita was born on a kitchen table in the company of cooking and smell of it. While Mama Elena and her other two daughters lack the skill in cooking.

Tita was so sensitive to onions, any time they were being chopped, they say she would just cry and cry; when she was still in my great-grandmother's belly her sobs were so loud that even Nacha, the cook, who was half-deaf, could hear them easily. Once her wailing got so violent that it brought on an early labour. And before my great grandmother could let out a word or even a whimper, Tita made her entrance into this world, prematurely, right there on the kitchen table amid the smell of simmering noodle soup, thyme, bay leaves and coriander, steamed milk, garlic and, of course, onion.(Esquivel 9)

Tita's cooking controls the emotion as well as the lives of the people living in the household. When Pedro decided to get married to Tita's sister, Rosaura so that he can be near to his love, Tita, Mama Elena as a punishment for feigning a headache to avoid her sister's engagement, she gave the charge of all the preparation to Tita. The preparation of food consists of its flavour and texture with bunch of emotions of Tita. Hence, these emotions are transferred the people who consume it. Tita through the seasoning of her cooking present her emotion of disappointment, longing or even her inner active thoughts. During the preparation of wedding cake for her sister's marriage with Pedro, Tita overflow her sorrow to it and one single drop of her tear falls into the icing. With the first bite of the cake guests in the wedding were carried out by sorrow suddenly everyone began to cry. Everyone was wailing over the lost love, even Mama Elena, who didn't shed any tear during her husband's death, was silently began to sob. Another incident that sketch Tita's power of emotion through food is the recipe of Quail in Rose Petal which was a turning point in the life of Gertrudis.

Nacha's, the cook, whom Tita consider as her mother, death had caused great loss to Tita. So, Pedro gifted her with bunch of Roses to Tita but their conversation was stopped by Mama Elena and ordered her to get rid of the Roses. Tita clasped the roses to her chest so tightly that it was combined with her blood and she uses this to make the Quail. With this combination and Tita's sensual passion and love towards Pedro, Tita prepared this. Esquivel explains this scene as Tita had dissolved herself to this Quail. The recipe was greatly affected to Gertrudis. She began to feel hot and sweaty and was feeling a rush sexual desire and she ran away from the ranch with the Captain Juan Alejandrez, whom she saw in the village. This act of running away is considered as liberation of Gertrudis from the norms and tradition of their mother. Though Gertrudis was in the brothel, she later joined army as a soldier. Thus Tita in a way helped her sister in her path of liberation and thus Gertrudis transformed herself to an independent woman from a gentle and soft rose. Here, the cut that Tita received from the thrones on roses, which made her bleed, can be considered as the bleeding of her heart over her love. Therefore this recipe is not only dedicated to her sister's liberation but also as a medium to cope up with this emotional pain.

According to the author, Food is a medium to enrich our mind as well as the body. Through the element of comfort food, Esquivel bring out the connection between Nacha and Tita as well as Tita and Roberto. Here, she

uses the breast milk as comfort food or that provide a sense of home. One of the unexpected happiness in Tita's life is the birth of her nephew, Roberto (son of Pedro and Rosaura). Mama Elena didn't able to feed Tita because of the grief of her late husband as her milk dried up. Thus, Nacha, the cook took up this duty and feed Tita. Because of this we find throughout the novel that Nacha and Tita had that mother-daughter relationship which lacked in Mama Elena and Tita, thus Mama Elena was always indifferent towards Tita. Likewise Rosaura too didn't able to feed her child as she was unable to produce the milk and thus, Tita began to feed him with love and nourishment just like Nacha did with infant Tita. Rosaura, thus, began to distant from caring her own child. But when Mama Elena sent Rosaura and family to San Antonio, to detach Tita and Pedro, Roberto's life cost the most. He was separated from the mother-like figure, Tita which weakens the health of Roberto, which lead to his death. It was when Tita was preparing the sausage she heard this news. Tita out of anger attack Mama Elena verbally which in turned caused Mama Elena to beat her. The sausage after a week was swarming with worms. This shows that the food channel the emotion of disappointment and anger of Tita as she indifferently prepared it. This incident caused Mama Elena to put Tita in a madhouse. But Doctor John, an American Doctor didn't put her there but give a place in his house. Even there she was lost in the grief of her late nephew as the breast milk that she feed to him has created a maternal bond within them. Because of her sorrow, she found every food tasteless and bland. It was only after having the oxtail soup of Chenchu, Tita regained her senses: About three months ago, after tasting a spoonful of Soup that Chenchu had made and brought to Dr John Brown's House, Tita had returned to her sense. (Esquivel 113)

This was mainly because of the love that contained in the soup, which made Dr John realise that food has the ability to transform into medicinal use. Later on the Ranch was attacked and Mama Elena was paralysed. Tita, thus, looked after her. As Mama Elena's mind was full of cruel thoughts, her taste also become like that, she always tastes the food bitter. Soon with all the bitterness and hatred Mama Elena dies.

The skill and passion for cooking is passed on generation and generations. Tita's culinary passion was passed on to Pedro's second child, Esperanza. Because of Rosaura's poor health, she was unable to look after her daughter. Tita once again has the duty of looking after the child. But because of fear of the death of Roberto and her condition after that, she didn't feed her niece with her breast milk but with gruels and pea. She was always in the company of Tita and kitchen. Pedro and Tita had become the advocate of Esperanza, they were always objected Rosaura's decision of the tradition that younger daughter should look after her mother. With the death of Rosaura, Esperanza and Alex Brown, son of Dr John got married. During the wedding Tita prepares Chillies in walnut sauce, which brings out a sensual pleasure to everyone. Food in *Like Water for Chocolate* is metaphor for ones emotion and feeling in their mind. This becomes a symbol for Tita's rebellion against the family tradition, a way of expressing love, a symbol of eternal connection between two souls.

VI. ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

For centuries women are being subjugated in the kitchen and they are forced by others to be silent. They have been taught that the only job they can do is cooking and looking after the family. But here Esquivel made cooking as a voice of their desires, feeling and power. Esquivel portrait her protagonist, Tita as someone who converts her

cooking as her voice, that shouts her emotions and thoughts going through her mind. For Tita Food was an emotion that one way or another liberates the soul.

VII. CONCLUSION

We all are dazzled with intense emotion in our mind. One way or other, food becomes the fire that we need to survive. Tita had been suppressed by her mother, the society and her own self consciousness. But the food becomes a medium to express her repressed feeling, whether it is love for Pedro or indifferent towards her mother. Her presence in the kitchen, according to Esquivel is not mere submission but it literary cause an action. Esquivel uses onion, the quail in rose petals and the cream fritters to reveal the expressions of love and rebellion. Even the mere heat involved in the cooking is used to express the intense emotions of Tita. Esquivel through the novel explains that food is not only for the nourishment of human body but also it serves a channel to transmit emotions in our mind. Esquivel, thus, through the novel *Like Water for Chocolate* shows Cooking and Food as a symbol of love, emotion, feeling, relationship and power of women to express their suppressed voice

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