

ISSN-0976-8165



# THE CRITERION

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL IN ENGLISH

Bi-Monthly Peer-Reviewed eJournal

**VOL. 15 ISSUE-3 JUNE 2024**

**15 YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS**

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ISSN 2278-9529

**Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal**  
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## Food and Clothing as Cultural Metaphors in Select Diasporic Fictions

**Poorva Gulati**

PhD Research Scholar,  
University School of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University.

**&**

**Shubhangi**

M.A. Student  
University School of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12671520>

**Article History:** Submitted-03/06/2024, Revised-20/06/2024, Accepted-22/06/2024, Published-30/06/2024.

### **Abstract:**

For immigrants, food and clothing are powerful symbols of connection to their cultural roots, serving as tangible reminders of home and identity. Traditional recipes and culinary practices become motifs for immigrants to maintain a connection to their cuisine, find comfort and preserve their heritage. This connection also serves as a bridge between their past and present, allowing them to maintain ties with their homeland. India is a land where spices are not just ingredients; they are an integral part of its cultural, historical, and culinary heritage. Immigrants can delve into the rich tapestry of flavours, aromas, and colours that define Indian cuisine. Clothing serves as a marker of identity for immigrants and is a way to honour their heritage, navigate their sense of belonging and express cultural pride. Clothes including *sarees*, turban and *dupattas* make a statement about their identity, values, and roots, contributing to the rich tapestry of diversity in their new land. The paper attempts to analyse Shauna Singh Baldwin's three short stories— "Rawalpindi 1919," "Montreal 1962," "Devika" and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* to analyse the significance of food and clothes in the formation of culture and how immigrants diversely use food and clothes to retain their lost culture, to resist and to assimilate into the new culture of the foreign land. The paper will explore food and clothing as cultural signifiers that signify rootedness and rootlessness simultaneously, territory and deterritorialized community culture, insiders and outsiders, and the homeland and the host land. These binaries coalesce into the diasporic space—an in-between space of contestation, disjuncture, and difference.

**Keywords: Immigrants, Food, Clothes, Culture, Metaphor, Assimilation, Resistance, Contestation, Interaction with ‘other’, diaspora.**

Shauna Singh Baldwin is a diaspora writer, born in Montreal, Canada, to Sikh parents of Indian ancestry. From 1991-1994, she served as an independent radio producer hosting “Sunno!” (Listen), “the Eastern-Indian-American Radio show where cultural identity was explored beyond ethnic boundaries.” Baldwin is widely acknowledged in Canada and worldwide for her works, which keenly capture the challenges and loyalties experienced by individuals navigating different cultures in today’s modern world. Her writing explores themes of identity, culture, and immigration, often drawing from her personal experiences and historical contexts related to South Asia and the diaspora. Her collection of fifteen short stories, *English Lessons and the Other Stories*, published in 1996, received the 1996 Friends of American Writers Award which explores the themes of courage and adaptability necessary to maintain an Indian identity while living in an English-speaking country. Praised for its rich storytelling and nuanced portrayal of characters navigating life's complexities, Baldwin's stories depict Indian women's lives from 1919 to the present, spanning India, Canada, and North America. Her narratives often delve into the immigrant experiences, family dynamics, and the clash of traditions in the modern world. The first story in the collection “Rawalpindi 1919” reflects a mother's concern about her child’s health and Sikh identity in a foreign land. The story “Montreal 1962” explores the value of wearing a turban in a foreign country where a wife grapples with the cultural values attributed to her husband’s turban and resists assimilation. Despite her husband Ratan’s resistance, she endeavours to maintain her Indian identity by dressing in traditional attire and cooking Indian food. Devika struggles to preserve her identity amidst pressures to adopt Western culture. Throughout these narratives, clothing and food serve as cultural metaphors in diasporic narratives signifying the struggle of assimilation and resistance against a new cultural identity in a foreign land.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian American author known for her fiction, specializing in novels, short stories, and poetry that often explore themes of immigration, identity, and the Indian American hybrid experience. She is acclaimed for works like *The Mistress of Spices*, *The Palace of Illusions*, and *Sister of My Heart*. In 1996, she won an American Book Award for her first short story collection, *Arranged Marriage*. Divakaruni's writing style is characterised by themes of magic realism, vivid imagery, lyrical prose, deep emotional resonance, and even dreams. She has a gift for crafting intricate narratives that blend elements of Indian mythology and culture with modern themes and experiences. Her prose is

often poetic, and she pays great attention to detail, bringing her settings and characters to life with rich descriptions. Divakaruni's writing often explores complex relationships and inner conflicts, making her work engaging and thought-provoking. *The Mistress of Spices* was published in 1997 and tells the story of Tilo, a girl trained in the magic of spices who becomes the Mistress of Spices. She uses her powers to help her customers with their problems but faces consequences when she falls in love. Themes of love, duty, and the power of tradition are explored in the novel.

Diasporic literature refers to writings by authors who are displaced from their homeland and now reside in a different country and culture due to various reasons such as war, economic opportunities and education. It often explores themes of identity, belonging, displacement, and cultural hybridity. This genre encompasses a diverse range of voices and experiences, reflecting the complexities of migration and the formation of new cultural identities. Writers such as Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and many others, have explored the complexities faced by Indian immigrants living between two or more cultures. They grapple with questions of identity, belonging, and cultural hybridity. Writers often depict the challenges of adjusting to a new environment while maintaining ties to their roots, touching upon themes of nostalgia, alienation, and the search for identity. Through their narratives, diasporic writers offer insights into the human condition, emphasizing universal themes of love, loss, resilience, and the quest for belonging. Their works serve as a bridge between different cultures, fostering empathy, understanding, and appreciation for the richness of diversity in the global community.

A crucial component of cultural identity is traditional cuisine. The food itself, along with related cooking methods and social mores, serves as a link to one's historical and cultural origins and preserves a remembrance of the past. Food is considered a part of the cultural heritage passed down through the generations as a way of life. Essential components of cultural legacy include customary cooking techniques, table manners, and recipes that symbolise the ideals and worldviews of many communities. Food becomes a means of reconnecting with one's cultural heritage and finding a sense of belonging in a foreign land.

Clothing also serves as a bridge to one's cultural traditions. More than just pieces of fabric sewn together for protection, the clothes we wear serve as symbols of our culture and identity. Communities have utilized clothing for generations to express solidarity, commemorate significant occasions, and convey social standing, among many other purposes. In diasporic literature, food and clothing often serve as powerful cultural metaphors,  
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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030>

symbolizing identity, heritage, and the complexities of assimilation. Food represents cultural traditions, family ties, and the comforts of home, while clothing signifies cultural identity, social status, and the negotiation of belonging in a new environment. Authors use these metaphors to explore themes such as nostalgia, cultural preservation, and the challenges of cultural adaptation. Food and clothing serve as rich and evocative metaphors in diasporic literature, allowing authors to delve into the complexities of cultural identity and the experiences of diasporic communities in a globalized world.

Food, in simple terms, means any nourishing substance consumed by human beings to sustain life, provide energy, and promote growth. Though the term ‘food’ seems easily definable on the surface, it carries many cultural connotations, especially in the context of diasporic literature. The paper aims to explore the multivalence of food to understand cultural hybridity in *The Mistress of Spices* and to examine the tradition of Indian diasporic food writing. By focusing on the culinary discourses in the novel, the paper accentuates how Indian women employ their culinary strategies and ingenuity, yielding to the cultural expression of Indianness which is significant in the process of nation-making. People moving to other parts of the world often carry a lot of spices and *masalas* to stock them up for months. Despite moving to a foreign land, people find it hard to survive without the spices unique to their homeland. These spices carry the richness of India. Divakaruni vividly portrays her native Bengali culture, and its rich traditions, customs, and practices in most of her novels. Most South Asian diasporic writers include references to the native food and consider it as an intrinsic part of their ethnic culture and a piece of their culture and heritage that they can easily carry with them to the new country.

In contemporary literature, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni provides a new dimension of food. She educates readers about the issues faced by Indian immigrants and exposes their culture to readers around large globe. Food is used to convey the culture, seamlessly integrating into the narrative. Divakaruni’s *The Mistress of Spices* is a rich and enchanting food narrative that weaves together magical realism, cultural importance, and the healing power of spices. She presents food from a different perspective; in the novel ‘food’ represents the authenticity of India. Spices have been used by the Indians for over 3000 years, as recorded in the Sanskrit texts. The diversity of spices is found in different regions of India, from the fiery red chilli peppers of Andhra Pradesh to the fragrant cardamom of Kerala. Spices

of India symbolise the nation's authenticity, encapsulating centuries of tradition, culture, and heritage, reflecting the diverse landscapes, climates, and cultures across the country.

In the novel, an immigrant woman named Tilo serves as the protagonist, possessing magical powers that grant her inner strength in a foreign land due to her mastery of a diverse array of exotic spices. With the aid of these spices, she can heal people and bring them out of their crisis. Set against the backdrop of an Indian community in Oakland, California, the narrative also incorporates elements of magic realism, where spices are personified and imbued with transformative powers capable of bringing about profound changes in individuals.

Each spice is attributed with human qualities and possesses distinct power and personalities almost as if they were characters themselves. Cinnamon with its warmth, symbolizes love and passion, turmeric represents healing; chili peppers embody fiery emotions, and so on. The spices become part of Tilo's life and the lives of other characters she comes across in the course of the novel. As Tilo makes magical spice blends for her clients, the narrative probes deeper into the properties of each spice creating a sensory experience that immerses readers in the exquisite artistry of culinary storytelling. Spices are metaphors for immigrants' identities, reflecting cultural transition, interracial tensions, double consciousness, and social emptiness as potent symbols of hybrid identity. Tilo's shop becomes a cultural hybrid space of assimilation and association where people from various backgrounds and ethnicities throng to receive solace, guidance, and healing. It functions as a microcosm of a hybrid transnational space—a place that embodies collective aspirations amidst a global cultural flux. This space becomes a contested terrain where agency intersects with globally defined possibilities.

The spices become metaphors for individuals to preserve their cultural roots amidst change. However, for Tilo, the box of spices is like Pandora's Box; opening it without adhering to strict rules can lead to chaos and destruction. Tilo conforms to the rules attached to the spices because she understands that failing to do so, the mistress of spices does not listen to what they say to her, she would be doomed forever. The magic of spices is awakened only by oral incantations by the healer. Spices possessing charms and magical power are considered artefacts of dark art and sorcery, traditionally dealt with by the Orientals. In this context, spices protect the community from racism and cultural hegemony, empowering them to embrace the new culture. Diverse cultures have rituals and traditions centred around food, such as holiday feasts, religious ceremonies, and family gatherings. These rituals not only strengthen social

bonds but also reinforce cultural values and beliefs. In the novel, the first spice chapter is titled “Turmeric,” designated for Sunday—a day symbolizing light and auspiciousness, “when light drips fat and buttered coloured into the bins to be soaked up glowing when you pray to the nine planted for love and luck” (Divakaruni 13). It is also named *halud* which means yellow, the colour of daybreak and conch-shell sound. “Turmeric the preserver, keeping foods safe in a land of heat and hunger. Turmeric the auspicious spice, placed on the head of newborns for luck, sprinkled over coconuts at *pujas*, rubbed into the borders of wedding *saris*” (Divakaruni 13). Turmeric is depicted as a preserver, ensuring food safety in a land of heat and scarcity. It holds auspicious properties symbolizing rebirth and renewal.

The name “Tilo” itself is symbolic, derived from one of her chosen spices, sesame or *til*, symbolizing nourishment. She proclaims, “I will be Tilottama, the essence of *til*, the life-giver, restorer of health and hope” (Divakaruni 42). Tilo’s identity is not just influenced by the spices but intricately tied to them. Born with these abilities, she is known as ‘The Mistress of Spices’ and names her shop ‘Spice *Bazaar*.’ Her mastery over spices extends beyond culinary expertise to the ability to evoke emotions in people and heal them of physical ailments. Every spice in the narrative has its origin and growth. The spices are an integral element in cooking, which adds flavour to the cuisine, enhances the taste, and provides some medicinal benefits. In the novel, spices breathe life not only into the protagonist Tilo but also into other customers who visit her store. As the narrative unfolds, she gets her first customer Haroun, a Kashmiri Muslim who has come to America and works as a taxi driver for his living. Haroun finds it very difficult to escape his traumatic past and recounts a time when a fight broke out and tourists stopped coming to Srinagar, where he and his father and grandfather row their *shikara* and reminisce about the days when “One-year money is so good we line the seats with red silk” (Divakaruni 26). To overcome his sorrows, he visits Tilo to relieve himself from those haunted memories. Tilo applies Sandalwood powder, *chandani*, known for its power to ease painful memories, on his palms and instructs him to rub it in. Initially sceptical of its potency, Haroun eventually feels the effects as the *chandani* melts into his skin, prompting him to ask, “What I was saying?” (Divakaruni 27). Tilo reminds him that he wants to know his fortune, using her mystical power to encourage him and says, “It looks good, very good. Great things will happen to you in this new land, this America. Riches and happiness and maybe even love, a beautiful woman with dark lotus flower eyes” (Divakaruni 27).

The use of Food as a metaphor by the writer shows how powerful Indian spices are and how they can cure the unseen wounds in the immigrant's heart. The food as a motif serves as a multifaceted symbol representing cultural heritage, generational dynamics, assimilation, adaptation, and individual identity. Writers incorporate food as a cultural nexus depicting characters navigating identity, belonging, cultural conflict, and dual behaviour. Food serves as a symbolic bridge connecting cultures and generations, fostering understanding and a sense of belonging in the diasporic context.

As the novel continues, another character who is introduced by Divakaruni is Jagjit which means world conqueror, who comes with his mother to the store and partly hides behind his mother and plays with her *dupatta*. He faces difficulty in school due to his lack of English proficiency relegated to the last row by his teacher. Jagjit, belonging to a Sikh family, wears a turban, which holds great cultural and religious value and symbolizes identity and honour, that the kids at school make fun of, and "in the playground, they try to pull it off his head, green turban the colour of parrot's breast. They dangle the cloth from their fingertips and laugh at his long, uncut hair and push him down" (Divakaruni 38). This reflects how even a small child of ten faces discrimination among the students because of his culture, leading to low self-esteem in a new land. Tilo brings up some *barfi* which has spices like clove, cardamom, and cinnamon to help Jagjit. Crushed clove and cardamom are used to freshen his breath, as Tilo explains:

Cardamom which I scatter tonight on the wind for you. North wind carrying them to open your teacher's unseeing. And also sweet pungent clove, *lavang*, spice of compassion. So your mother of a sudden looking up from the washboard, pushing tired hair from her face, "Jaggi beta, tell me what happened," will hold you in her soapsud arms. (Divakaruni 34)

In subsequent chapters, the writer reveals how Jagjit's life changes when he again visits Tilo's store and with full confidence he says, "Nobody messes with me no more. I got friends" (Divakaruni 120). Tilo, with the help of magical spices, aids individuals in overcoming their challenges and finding happiness. She also offers him a tonic made with an elixir of *manjistha* to cool the blood and purify it. Additionally, she gives him a bag of *laddus*, *besan*, and rock sugar, for protection. Food is the universal language that binds all irrespective of caste, creed, and colour, she has in her hands the ability to curb other difficulties that immigrants might experience: "I will split once again tonight *kalo jire* seeds for all who have suffered from



America. For all of them especially Haroun, who is hurting inside me, whose name each time I say it pulls my chest in two” (Divakaruni 173). Her special powers allow her to help diasporic Indians that enter her shop while the remaining others “must go elsewhere for their need” (Divakaruni 68).

Food plays a central role in both the plot and the thematic exploration in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Mistress of Spices*. Tilo, a mistress of spices, uses them to help people by prescribing spices that address their emotional needs. Each spice holds symbolic significance, representing various emotions, desires, and aspects of life. Through the use of spices, Divakaruni explores themes of love, longing, belonging, and the human condition. Food acts as a cultural bridge, connecting characters to their heritage and traditions, while also reflecting the complexities of diasporic identity. In the novel, food is not merely sustenance but a powerful tool for emotional and spiritual transformation. Each spice she uses represents a different aspect of the human experience, such as turmeric for protection, saffron for love, and cumin evokes memory. Food is more than sustenance; it embodies a rich tapestry of cultural narratives, memories, and identities, allowing immigrants to connect with their heritage and share it meaningfully with others. Food, beyond its sustenance, carries profound metaphorical weight in our lives, offering a rich tapestry of meanings that reflect our human experience. From the raw ingredients to the final dish, every aspect of food parallels the journey of existence, resonating with themes of growth, connection, and transformation. The clothes one wears act as a medium of communication, conveying information about identity, occupation, social status, aesthetic values, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. Clothing can serve as a marker of identity for immigrants. The act can be a way to honour their heritage, navigate their sense of belonging and express cultural pride. Clothes are intertwined with culture as they reflect traditions and beliefs, they serve as a visible expression of culture, embodying values, history, and identity, and often serve as a means of preserving and celebrating cultural heritage.

In Baldwin’s short story “Rawalpindi 1919,” Sarup, who has gone to England to study and his mother in India are worried about Sarup’s identity in the white people’s land and how her son will cope with the new people’s culture. Sarup’s mother is concerned that her son’s identity is retained through the turban as it is a marker of the Sikh family. The Turban signifies religious values, ethnicity and beliefs and it is a composite motif and a symbol connecting individuals to their roots and ancestors. For Sikhs, the turban holds immense significance, representing a feeling unmatched by any other piece of clothing. In India, Sarup’s mother

contemplates her son's individuality in a new cultural environment, ensuring he carries enough turbans for his journey to "Inglaand." The narrator states, "She would be sure he had enough turbans to last two months on the boat and three years in 'Inglaand'. Some silk ones—oh, the brightest colours— So the *Angrez* would know he came from a bold Sikh clan" (Baldwin 10). The turban for the child acts as armour, as it is a symbol of strength and bravery. The silk turban represents the embodiment of Sikh teachings, the love of the Guru and the dogma of doing good deeds. Sarup's mother doesn't wish or want her son to lose the rituals, customs, and roots of their religion and wants her son to represent himself as a proud Sikh among foreign people. The short story "Montreal 1984," echoes the idea about the importance of the turban that holds traditional values. Many immigrants move to foreign countries like Canada for opportunities and growth, instances like the one depicted in "Montreal 1962" challenge this notion. In "Montreal 1962" the conventional idea is disillusioned as the husband is denied a job based on his appearance, with the condition that he must remove his turban and cut his hair short. The husband says, "I could have the job if I take off my turban and cut my hair short" (Baldwin 151). Such demands from white employers enforce immigrants to compromise their cultural identities, hindering the establishment of their individuality in foreign lands.

Human clothing serves as a reflection of one's identity. In an imaginary conversation between husband and wife, the emotional depth unfolds as the wife, a proud Sikh, refuses to let her husband compromise his long hair for the job as she says, "And so, my love, I will not let you cut your strong rope of hair and go without a turban into this land of strangers" (Baldwin, "Montreal 1962" 151). This sacred connection between a husband and wife portrays resilience in maintaining their roots and identities amidst challenges in a foreign land. The very human appearance tells the world more about our diversity and our beauty, it showcases human solidarity amid diversity. The couple is connected to their roots, and they don't embrace new cultures for the sake of being one of them leading to estrangement and rejection making them self-independent in the strange land. Apart from the turban, other clothing motifs resonate with cultural significance, *Saree* is one of them. The wife's interaction with a dry-cleaning woman who held her wedding *saree* like a dishrag as she asked her, "Is it a bed sheet?" The wife said, "No", "Curtains?" "No" (Baldwin 13). The incident accentuates the misunderstandings and mockery faced by Indian attire and culture.

Silk *sarees* have been an integral part of India symbolizing elegance and tradition but also hold profound cultural and emotional importance. Wearing a silk *saree* on her wedding

day allows a bride to pay homage to cultural roots and preserve traditions passed down through generations. One has to adjust to the host culture which requires learning and adopting new rules and norms, which should be according to an individual's needs and choices rather than forced upon them. Assimilation in a host nation always becomes difficult for immigrants to get familiar with the new trends as some are ready to assimilate themselves but few want to be attached to their traditional beliefs, customs, and ideologies. Myriad values, social norms and traditions in Canada may be very different from beliefs about 'how things should be' in the country where individuals grew up. The decision to assimilate or maintain one's cultural roots should be a personal choice. In the short story "Devika," the husband, Ratan, takes an authoritarian approach by dictating his wife's attire and habits without her consent. This contrasts sharply with the supportive dynamic seen in "Montreal 1962," where the husband and wife mutually preserve their cultural identities through their clothing choices. The examples provided showcase the complexities immigrants face in balancing heritage and adaptation to new cultural environments. Ratan invites Peter Kendall to dinner while arranging things for the same, Baldwin highlights the pretence and fabrication to be part of the wide canon

"As he pressed the remote door-opener to enter the dark cave of the underground garage, he decided Devika must wear a dress. And pantyhose, and nose ring" (Baldwin, "Devika" 154). Ratan didn't even ask her wife whether she wanted to wear Western clothes as he directly "decided" what she would wear.

Ratan forces his wife to change her clothing and cooking habits to suit the modern world they reside in. "He took in her silk *salwar Kameez*" (Baldwin 155). Ratan said, "You need to buy some Canadian clothes, Devika. Try a skirt and blouse—it might suit you" (Baldwin 155). Ratan has fully embraced the Canadian lifestyle, even buying a barbecue for the balcony, drapes-curtains and a dinner set to impress Mr Kendall. However, when he asks Devika to dress like a Canadian woman, she deflects the topic. Devika's story poignantly portrays the struggle of immigrants trying to create a home that feels loving, peaceful, and respectful of their individuality and freedom amidst cultural amnesia. Devika, the protagonist, reflects on the suffering of migration, and she feels alienated and shrouded with a sense of hopelessness. In one incident, her *dupatta* gets caught in the door of the car, leading to an accident. The white policeman took her statement wherein she said, "My *dupatta* was caught in the door," (Baldwin, "Devika" 168). The policeman wrote, "Scarf... caught... in... passenger... door" (168). She tried to point out the mistake made by the policeman who

understood the *dupatta* to be a scarf. The policeman then asks her, “How do you spell that?” (Baldwin 168) wherein she replies by emphasizing “D-U-P-A-T-T-A” (168). Canadians lack awareness and vocabulary about Indian clothes and their significance in the lives of Indians. They were unaware of the attributes and sacredness associated with the clothes; they were even disrespectful towards the significance accorded by Indians through their attires. Devika tries to explain to the policeman that, “A *dupatta* is more, so much more than a scarf. It is a woman's modesty, her goodness, to be protected, cherished by her husband” (Baldwin, “Devika” 42). Devika grapples with the clash between her heritage and the Western culture she encounters in Canada. The narrative delves into her struggles with assimilation, familiar expectations, and finding a balance between her roots and the new environment.

In diaspora literature, clothing often serves as a potent symbol of cultural identity, memory, and the complexities of belonging in a new land. The narrative unfolds in ways where clothing is portrayed as a cultural marker in diaspora literature which is like a symbol of cultural continuity. Clothing patterns from the homeland can serve as a tangible reminder of one's roots and cultural heritage. The characterisation in the short story cherishes traditional garments passed down through generations, finding solace and connection in wearing them even in a foreign land. Negotiation of identity is the pertinent attribute felt by the immigrants in diasporic literature as they often grapple with their identity when they navigate between multiple cultural worlds. The clothing choices can become a site of negotiation, as individuals decide how much to embrace or modify their cultural attire to fit in with the dominant culture or assert their heritage identity. Narratives highlighting double consciousness and amnesia depict clothing as a form of resistance against assimilation and cultural erasure. Characters may defiantly wear traditional attire as a way to assert their cultural pride and resist pressures to conform to the norms of the host society. Clothes serve as a marker of otherness, subjecting diasporic individuals to stereotypes and discrimination based on their appearance. Women in particular may feel scrutinized or exoticized for their traditional attire, highlighting the challenges of belonging in a society that views them as outsiders.

This paper explores cultural metaphors in selected fiction by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Shauna Singh Baldwin. Both authors use concrete elements such as food and clothing to reveal connotative meanings. Food and clothing are powerful symbols of a connection to their cultural roots, serving as tangible reminders of home and identity. Immigrants often maintain a connection to their cuisine, finding comfort and preserving their

heritage; traditional recipes and culinary practices serve as a bridge between their past and present, allowing them to maintain a connection with their homeland. Similarly, clothing serves as a marker of identity, allowing immigrants to honour their heritage, navigate their sense of belonging, and express cultural pride.

Chitra Banerjee Divakauni beautifully uses the metaphor of “food” in *The Mistress of Spices*, where food symbolises a profound connection to one's roots, memories, and emotions. The protagonist, Tilo, uses spices with magical properties to help her customers, but she also discovers the complexities of human desires and the consequences of intervening with fate. Authentic spices transcend culinary roles, becoming symbols of cultural heritage, identity, and transformation. Each spice in the narrative represents different facets of human experience and emotion. Shauna Singh Baldwin employs “clothing” as a cultural metaphor in her works. Traditional attire reflects cultural heritage and values; for instance, the *saree* in Indian culture signifies not just clothing but also cultural pride and heritage. Clothing also plays a crucial role in expressing individual identity and resistance. For example, within the Sikh community, a turban signifies identity without words, serving as a symbol of empowerment and resistance in foreign land.

Both writers illustrate how seemingly ordinary elements like food and clothing can hold profound cultural significance, glorifying one's identity in unfamiliar territories. Divakaruni uses magic realism to depict the mystical power of authentic Indian spices which heal the hidden wounds of Indian immigrants facing difficulties abroad. In contrast, Baldwin employs elements of realism to showcase how traditional clothes like *saree*, *dupatta*, and turban preserve cultural identity among immigrants, fostering a fearless embrace of self amidst cultural diversity. Food and clothing thus intertwine with culture within the diasporic context in particular, for immigrants, clothing and food represent a community's identity, history, and customs and act as potent cultural metaphors. Passed down through generations, food represents culinary heritage, while clothing signifies both traditional attire and adaptations to a new environment. These symbols support diasporic communities in navigating the challenges of cultural preservation and assimilation while maintaining ties to their homeland.

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