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Coolitude Culinary Memory as Cultural Expression Among Indentures a Gastrocolonial Approach in Khal Torabully's Selected Poems

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ABSTRACT

The present research study focuses on how food can be interpreted as a sort of indentured resistance in Khal Torabully's selected poems. The idea of Gastrocolonial is used as analysis of the various manifestations of food memories, spices, and markets as symbols of cultural continuity for Indian indentured laborers. The poems suggest the historical interrelationship between slavery, indenture and colonial trading networks. It highlights the subjective lives of migrants that transcended the Kala Pani. It provides a way of archiving identities that are facing displacement and cultural erasure. Tamarind, saffron, cumin, coriander, salt, roots and stoves become strong emblems in negotiating loss, exile and belonging by the indentured subject. The study finds a gaze at sites of gastrocolonialism in such poems reveals the redirection of the agency of agricultural goods. Also shows how eating acts as a form of resistance to colonization, to the exploitation of human labor. In conclusion, Torabully re-imagines the erased past of indentured communities and by re-invoking food in relation to these histories reveals and celebrates the diasporic, inter-cultural, memory and taste of resistance.

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Introduction

Indian indentured labour is considered as one of the most significant yet an understated aspect of colonial history. With the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century and the development of the plantation economies of the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Africa and Pacific Ocean the indenture system came into being by the Europeans. Thousands of Indians have been brought as laborers to sugar, tea and other plantations and have been treated in many instances as slaves. While indenture had legal parameters that distinguished it from slavery, both put forward the same use of displacement, exploitation and commodified labor based on racialism. The overpowering narratives of history have for a long time been overlooking the life of indentured workers as new ways of approach to historical and cultural recovery. Chamorro poet, scholar and activist, Craig Santos Perez gave the idea gastrocolonialism in reference to the impact of colonialism on the food system of indigenous people's land of the Pacific Hawaii and Guam. The concept of gastrocolonialism explains how far the colonial and corporate food system replicated the traditional food system with the exclusion of people's culture and its dietary dependence with health disparities.

It is this historical silence that is interrogated in the literary and cultural approach of Coolitude. Coolitude is an idea developed by the Indo-Mauritius poet and theorist Khal Torabully on the concerns of claiming back the voices, memories and identities of the indentured laborers. Coolitude is an assault on the derogatory colonial designation coolie, and a mapping of it as a place of resistance and cultural affirmation. Torabully does not take on a Eurocentric approach to vitro that focuses on migrants merely as casualties of colonialism and examines rather their cultural creativity, resilience and how they have created new identities in diasporic spaces. His poetry celebrates the cultural exchanges that resulted in a context of migration and displacement, and of the inter-twined histories of African enslavement and Indian indenture. In Torabully's poems one of the most interesting aspects is his use of many images related to food, spices, cooking memories, markets and agricultural products. These can be discussed using the perspective of a gastrocolonialism which considers the food, power, cultural identity and labour relations of colonialism. Sugar, spices, tea and coffee were basic staples in the colonial economies and their production and distribution. While in the meantime, those bodies working the drudgery that produces these products were exploited, pushed around, sacrificed and shifted. Here food is more, the representation of colonial histories, is a political and cultural symbol.

Food is also a repository of memory. Food acts as a means of cultural survival in Torabully's collection *Cargo Hold of Stars:Coolitude* such as "Define Me Please", "Malabar", "I Want to Go to the Grand Bazaar" and "Do You Know the Tale". The appropriation of culinary words, such as tamarind, saffron, cumin and coriander, roots, salt and stoves, and other biological terms articulate a relationship to homeland and ancestry during ruptures from migration. These symbols point to the various ways the poets mark the ways in which displaced communities resisted forces of language, space and social structure and held on to fragments of identity. The commensal function of food becomes a means of resisting the erasure and amelioration of indentured subjects into colonial and a re-creation of their belonging.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the aspect of gastrocolonialism and food as resistance in Torabully's selected poems. It elaborates on the importance of food memory in the work of the poet that challenges the colonial discourses and keeps the history of the indentured groups alive through a discourse of literary devices such as metaphors, symbols, imagery, repetition, personification and allusion. The study assumes that food is used as a real cultural and political discourse that Torabully uses to express migrations, exile, resilience and in general, the act of identity formation.

Literature Review

Food studies and the food-colonialism relationship can be considered important areas of research in postcolonial theory, food studies, cultural studies and anthropology. It is now more recognized that the power of colonization was exercised, not only by legislating the control of food systems, agricultural economics, but also by consumption and food habits. Here, gastrocolonialism has been approached as a model to help dissect the food as an object of power and the food as a space for opposition and resistance. This idea was further consolidated by the very impactful article "Fighting Gastrocolonialism in Indigenous Pacific Writing", by Paloma Fresno-Calleja. Drawing on Indigenous Pacific writers, Fresno-Calleja examines the strategies used to challenge the western system of food and the cultural and economic lenses that refract Indigenous foods. She contends that gastrocolonialism doesn't just involve the ingestion of food, but involves larger issues of identity, cultural survival and political resistance as well.

The concept of 'Gastrocolonialism' was also developed by Sophie Chao in her article "Gastrocolonialism: The Intersections of Race, Food and Development in West Papual".Chao delves in this book into the processes whereby the development initiatives by the State and agribusiness are polluting the food systems of the indigenous peoples of West Papua, the Marind people. She argues that gastrocolonialism is, using the prism of racialized development discourses to further support the marginalization and minimization of the indigenous food practice and way in favor of industrial agricultural and imported food regimes. As a foodie and professor of political and geographical information, Chao argues that declining "food ways" is hand-in-hand with land dispossession, an affected environment, and indigenous rights violations. Her work allows her to express how food is tied to one's cultural beliefs and practices, territoriality and political sovereignty.

Many scholars have suggested that gastrocolonialism is not just reserved for colonialism but also for the processes of globalization, multinational food companies and present-day policies of development. In the present moment, local agriculture and traditional methods of cooking are pushed to the sidelines and uniform worldwide, as well as global approaches to food are encouraged. These processes generally result in food sovereignty of marginalised and Indigenous populations being curtailed and a loss of culinary diversity. Gastrocolonialism therefore serves as a valuable lens to look at the aspect of power on the production, distribution and consumption of food.

Such a notion has also been a focus of research on settler colonialism. Food history scholars working on food and settler societies argue that food is a key part to colonial identity and territorial settler's appropriation. *Going Native? Settler Colonialism and Food* addresses settler enclosure and appropriation of indigenous worlds of food, and how these strategies are ways of displacing Indigenous peoples. One chapter is dedicated to 'settler gastrocolonialism' to show how gastrocolonies can be replicated to maintain colonial relations of power. The studies reveal that often food preparation and eating is linked to a sense of belonging, identity and cultural authority. In literature, the gastrocolonial concept is relevant as a context in which to view the food in postcolonial texts. Literary researchers claim that the representation of food is frequently used as symbolic language by writers to deal with migratory and expulsive experiences, cultural memory, resistance and identity construction, amongst other issues.

This schema is particularly pertinent with the work of Khal Torabully, attempting to restore through his own work the experience of the Indian indentured labourers shipped from the colonial globe after the abolition of Slavery in the creation of the concept of Coolitude. Though the most important sources of research on the poet Torabully are migration, diaspora, hybridity and memory are the major considerations, his poetry has numerous references to spices, markets, food and farming. Food is used as both a site and an act of cultural caring and as a countermeasure of defying colonial erasure in the poems "Define Me Please," "Malabar," "I Want to Go to the Grand Bazaar," and "Do You Know the Tale." Symbols that bind the displaced communities to the homeland are the tamarind tree, saffron, cumin, coriander, salt, roots and stoves all of which are geographic and cultural.

Research Gap:

Research on gastrocolonialism mainly focuses on the present day food policies and Indigenous communities in the Pacific region. Among Perez, Fresno-Calleja and Chao, the foods share an importance as a place of resistance, domination. Limited research, however, has been carried out to observe how innovations of gastrocolonialism can be put when faced with the literary representations of Indian indenture and Coolitude. The yoking of food and the memory of food, as well as resistance-that's what indentured to Torabully's poetry has been relatively overlooked. The space is used to initiate the discussion for understanding cultural and diasporic peoples' ways of living in a living survival manner through culinary representation. Hence, within the framework of the present study it will be classed as such contribution by merely mentioning the problem of gastrocolonialism with respect to Coolitude and indenture studies.

Research Methodology:

The qualitative research methodology is catered in the present research which solely focuses on textual analysis by applying the theoretical framework. It explores food imagery in Torabully's poems and food as symbolic of diasporic identity, as providing alternative archival memory, as resistant to the colonial systems of labor commodification and of the work of agriculture. The methodology adds to the previous studies as it brings together Indian indentured labourers and their experience in gastrocolonial theory which is beyond the ambit of the Indigenous food sovereignty debates.

Analysis

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Khal Torabully is an Indo-Mauritian poet, filmmaker and cultural theorist, best known for his development of the concept of Coolitude that seeks to recover the histories of the Indian indentured labourers throughout the colonial diaspora. His work examines hybridity, cultural resilience, memory, identity and migration as experiences of indenture in the context of postcolonial and diasporic histories.

In poem "Define Me Please," Khal Torabully challenges the colonial category of the indentured worker and uncovers the mutilating aspect of the so-called coolie.The speaker redefines the self across a set of discontinuous statements that reject the colonial discourse's reductive possibilities of defining identity and that utilize fragmented memories of food, trade, migration and cultural birthright that are offered as possible construction options. They used food words in the poem to dramatize and retain history which would otherwise be forgotten. Food becomes through the gastrocolonial lens not only a source of nourishment, but a space to house memories and an agent of resistance to colonialism, which disenfranchised workers and farm products alike. The poem starts off with a provocative question

Define me please:

What's a Coolie? (Torabully, line 1-2)

An implied rhetorical query which immediately calls into question a colonial definition, or one that is based on colonial construct. Historically the term "coolie" was a derogatory term which had been used to render the indentured labourers as an anonymous labour force. Thus, when the speaker makes a request to have a definition, they reveal the instability of the term and of the subject who speaks and induce the reader to reconsider the subject of the indenture. The question also provides a glimpse of the workings of colonial power in terms of language. The use of names thus became a way of controlling the community that was made up of many different communities. The speaker's negating this definition is an act of resistance. He rejects the colonization discourse by starting to present himself. This challenge carries on with the following lines:

One with a noose round his neck
denied the deck's cool lee side? (Torabully, line 3-4)

The "noose" images immediately conjure up a feeling of violence, coercion and death. While many of the indentured workers were presented as a contractual labour system. Torabully emphasizes that the system of indenture was a coercive system in which many migrated. The noose represents the unfreedom of the colonies system of labor. At the same time the term "cool lee side" underlines the synesthetic qualities frequently attributed to the word coolie in the same way as punning on the word draws attention to the hypocrisy of colonialism. The claim seems to be for comfort and shelter from the sun, but for the labourer this is a privileged space which he cannot access. Irony shows the differences between the situations of the people in plantation societies and of the people on colonial ships. Even prior to it entering the colonies, the indentured body is infected with exclusion. Then a list of identities is presented by the speaker:

I am Lascar, Malabar,
Madras tamarind from bazaars,
Telugu with tell-tails for you.
Cruel Marathi mother or Chamar (Torabully, line 5-8)

These lines place some arguments that do not allow for a single definition but bring together a mosaic of identities. Colonial authorities disregarded the diversity of the region, the result of which is reflected in the enumeration in terms of ethnic, linguistic and regional groups. The use of listing is one such literary resource that is enlisted in Torabully's efforts to stave off homogenization. Every one of the terms has its own enticing story to tell displaying a particular cultural history and showing the complexness of the indentured experience. Whereas from the point of view gastrocolonialism is particularly relevant. Tamarind isn't just a fruit or a spice. It is a world of culture that is brought across oceans in it. Food is given identity and stays on after the uprooting. The metaphor makes the speaker into a product of the kitchen thus connects the body to the world of free movement of things in the times of colonialist capitalism. The path of trade and of fickle, free-labor workers that crisscrossed the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic led to Tamarind. A comparison which brings to light how the economies of the colonies were put under the dispatches of goods and human beings. But there is resistance to the metaphor as well. Tamarind evokes Indian memories, domestic life and Indian cooking. Identifying with tamarind, the speaker makes this customary identification that goes beyond the identification of the colonizing power. He associates himself with tamarind used in Indian cuisine giving savory taste and simultaneously acting as healer of wounds.

Use of the word bazaar also enhances this symbolism. The bazaar is a rich pre-colonial trading, diversity and community space. It juxtaposes with the plantation, representing the discipline and the exploitation of the colonists. The existence of the bazaar, Torabully calls up the richness of the world that was once there, but before displacement. Food, spices, and markets enable and

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symbolize continuity and belonging. The poem continues:

Whichever you like, I'm an Indian Black,
guinea pig, from Port Louis to Port-of-Spain
to replace mighty Zanzibar slaves (Torabully, line 9-11)

In these lines, there is an exposure of how race is an integral part of the economic and social logic that underlies the concept of indenture. An 'Indian Black', the term implies that some category of "Indian" is undermining a rigid racial system and pointing to the fact that there were common shared experiences of oppression between the enslaved Africans and the indentured Indians as well. Torabully's Coolitude would go so far as to emphasize just this intersection, to foster connections and not divisions between slavery and indenture. A metaphor that objectifies the speaker is 'guinea pig', which was used to refer to people who work as guinea pigs in the colonial society. The indentured worker turns into an item, rather than another individual. The image suggests scientific experiments and commodification of migrant workers, representing the attitude of colonial governments towards managing and using migrant labor. Geographical mentions of Port Louis, Port-of-Spain, plot the path of indenture throughout the colonial world. These ports become in-between places and places of movement. They depict the transfer of labourers from one colony to another in the shape of commodities, in response to economic needs. The term "mighty Zanzibar slaves" obviously makes the linkage between indenture and slavery apparent. Indenture itself, is not a new system of plantation labour but rather a reworked form of slavery to ensure the functioning of plantation economies following emancipation. Here, the process of colonization is especially pronounced, as the production of plantations continued to be based on the control of labour in the sugar and other export crops. Humans were transformed into the major players of a food economy at a universal level.

Here are some of the most emotionally touching moments from the poem:

For memory, my only langouti, a loincloth,
my language, purloined by the sea (Torabully, line 12-13)

In these lines dramatization is emphasized regarding all losses of migration. The langouti conveys the idea of the few belongings the migrant has. Rehearsal of a past heritage is all that's left, the only thing that can save him from being completely ethnically washed out. The metaphor both calls attention to poverty and indicates resistance and resilience. Memory remains even though there's no material possessions anymore. The sea is given human qualities and attributes by calling it a thief of his language. The marine environment becomes an active place of the fragmentation of culture. Through the process of displacement language, one of the most critical aspects of identity has been lost. However, the picture denotes the linguistic changes that the many indentured communities went through, and their descendants became less definite in ancestral languages. But, even if a person cannot use language, it's not uncommon to find memories of food. Language of food, spices and recipes are all still sharing culture from one generation to the next. Food then becomes another form of language to articulate identities.

The food memory link is the central principle to gastrocolonial resistance. There was no way to completely remove embodied cultural practices from a colonial system that was able to control labor, movement and language. Remembering now took the form of cooking and eating. Traditional flavors and condiments like tamarind, spices, brought homeland through gustatory experience even as words changed. Food is thus a counter-archive for what got lost in the archives.It is evident that the speaker requests recognition for what he is saying in the following lines:

If you recognize me, please
call me proxy slave,
strawman or stand-in (Torabully, line 14-16)

The terms stand as reminders of the ambivalent status of labourers who were indentured. An alternative, the term "proxy slave" is significant as it reflects the history of the slave system, a system that has its roots in the indenture system. The distinctions in legal structures were inconsequential, but both systems were based on the exploitation of racialized labor. The speaker acknowledges that formerly plantation economies which used enslaved Africans as a substitute labor force used indentured workers. Strawman is another disposable metaphor. The straw figure is empty and flat and has no individual characteristics. Labourers were often made abstractions in colonial discourse, with no zeal to reveal their stories or their cultural identities. The speaker re-enacts these labels and thereby reveals the dehumanizing effects of these labels, while at the same time taking back the control to tell his own story.

In the end the poem has some great images:

kapok from fields or ocean vertebrae.
But know that my sabre of blood
has uprooted me to the core (Torabully, line 17-19)

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Kapok conjures up ideas of natural material and with tropical climates and trade. The comparison also makes the speaker correspond with goods that find their way into colonial circuits. By imagining the ocean as “ocean vertebrae,” in every respect it is a structure that reaches out to link remote places. This metaphor is to imply that migration is now ingrained in the speaker's body. The last image of “sabre of blood”, is giving an element of impactful metaphor with trauma. The sabre represents violence, break-up and displacement. Blood highlights the idea of children's inheritance and length of life. Together they indicate a deep cutting into the culture of the speaker by the process of colonizing migration. The use of the word uprooting here implies that people may be made to be uprooted from their natural habitat like with the crops, for economic reasons people are moved like crops are for colonial needs.The poem illustrates the fact that although contract, ship, and plantations are at the heart of the story of the indenture, they are not the only way to comprehend it. It needs to be experienced through the sense of taste and remembrance of food as well. Culinary terms are used to symbolize survival, Torabully restores the humanity of the indentured labourer, and undermines the colonial discourses that tended to reduce him to a “coolie.”

In “Malabar,” Khal Torabully looks at the psychological and cultural disintegration of the indentured laborers, who, in crossing the “Kala Pani,” became a people without country, a language, and a community. The speaker seems to be creating an identity out from bits and pieces. This fragmentation was the common historical feature of migrants who had their migration to colonies tied up in indenture, which also severed their ties with homeland.

Malabar, me the spar
me mound of dirt
me of salt, me of flesh (Torabully, line 1-3)

The mere term ‘Malabar' is loaded with seismic historical and cultural connotations. It is the name given to the Malabar Coast of South India, and the Coast is known for its spices, seafaring and cultural influence. In a colonial setting, though, the term “Malabar” was sometimes the term used for labourers who were from the south of India but not necessarily from Malabar (Kerala). Torabully not only repossesses the term but also makes its complexity evident. The speaker's identity is located at a place, yet the place is one of memory. Dirt is a symbol of the homeland and of labor. It reminds people of the ground from which they are ripped, and of plantations in which to toil. This image is especially pertinent for gastrocolonialism as it relies on the growth of agriculture and production in the economy of the colonies. The worker's connections to the land are what matter most to his existence. However, the image also suggests a sense of displacement. Dirt can be transported from one place to another and stereotypical colonial indentured servants were shipped across the oceans, as per monetary demand.

Salinity is used as a potent symbol in the entire poem. Salt can be literally used as a basic ingredient in food and life. It is used for preserving food, adding flavour and prosperity to lives. The symbol, though, affects several levels at a time. Salt as an analogy of the sea, that indentured migrants must cross, to connect food and migration. The sea that lies between laborer and homeland permeates him. Salt symbolizes tears, suffering and grief as well. The speaker turns into an exile body. Salt is a gastrocolonial discourse, in which salt shows there's a close connection between food and colonization. Maritime trade routes provided the backbone for colonial trade routes and the same trade routes were used for shippers of laborers. This means a reminder of displacement through a substance which preserves food remains. The picture illustrates that culinary symbols can have traumatic and migratory histories in them.

The modifiers “me of flesh” further elucidate the theme of embodiment in the poem. Flesh symbolizes bodily presence, weakness and working. The colonial plantation incorporated the value of human bodies. The indentured laborer was considered mainly a source of labor power and not a whole-hearted human being. This image, by Torabully, reveals the basic substance of colonial exploitation. “Salt” and “flesh” are strikingly presented as a contrast of sensations. They jointly imply a body nurtured and disciplined, by the joys of eating as well as by the pains of suffering. You can't separate the labourer from the historical forces that have impeded upon his body. This is another layer in Torabully's fragmentation. Lascars originally meant ‘sailors from South Asia’ and, by extension, other countries of the Indian Ocean world. The speaker's use of the term “worn-out lascar soul” is a way of linking himself not only to the history of the seas, but to the history of migration, of seaborne labour. Movement and displacement make the soul exhausted itself.

“Quarter Malay, third malaise” is word play to explain the state of cultural and psychological fragmentation. The speaker speaks in the knowledge that he is made of many influences the hybrid identities created by colonial migration. Alongside the hybridity though is “malaise” a feeling of discomfort, unease and “otherness.” The pun implies that cultural mixture are also the product of histories of forcedness and displacement and that they are

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creative. Hybridity is part and parcel to diasporic identities as seen from Coolitude. For Torabully, identity is far from set and safe. Rather, the speaker represents more than one history, more than one culture. The blending and adapting are the processes that are common in food culture as well. Diasporic cuisines mix components, methods, and traditions from various areas into a new manner of cultural expression. This culinary hybridity is symbolized by the disjointed identity in the poem.

The poem then starts to focus on scenes of destruction."Broken" is repeated to highlight the toll migration exacts on the bodies and minds of migrants. The laborers' body and identity have been fractured by being in flight. Everything is broken the way it is portrayed in the image with "cross beams of sky", even the sky seems like it is fractured. This fragmentation reflects the breakup that occurred when crossing the Kala Pani, which resulted in the break-up of traditional social, religious and family life. Voluntary movement, and economic opportunity, is a common way that the colonial era has been depicted and represented with regards to indenture. Torabully contests this narrative in focusing on the corporeal impacts of relocating. This imagery also aligns with gastrocolonialism, as labourers' movements were an indelible part of the creation and processing of plantation products. Other agricultural products such as sugar, tea, rely on the transport and exploitation of labor. The broken body thus serves as a writing and a symbol for the unseen humans of colonial food economies.

The following lines fulfil the theme of alienation. In Mauritian Creole culture, a "moutaille" is of mixed descent. The concept of this word becomes a tool for Torabully to recognize the impacts of cultural change because of migration and settlement. The speaker is projecting into a new identity, but this new identity is called "undone." This construction of an identity is accompanied by its destruction. This paradox is emblematic of the paradox that is Coolitude's. As diasporic subjects they create new cultural forms and undergo loss of the previously existing identities. Gestures of negotiation of this tension often revolve around food traditions. Evidence of connections to the past and adaptability to new settings are found in recipes and culinary practices. Food then becomes the medium that can be used to reassemble their fragmented identities.

Alliteration of "malady" and "maligned Malayalam" helps to establish a connection between being mentally ill and being socially and culturally excluded. Malayalam, the language of the Malabar region, turns into the endangered sign of heritage. Continuity of languages was often disrupted by mutual influences from colonial migration. Over generations many descendants of the indentured labourers lost their ability to speak the ancestral languages well. This loss, as Torabully frames it, is a "cultural injury." It's not that the language is forgotten, it's "maligned", which implies a devaluation and marginalization process. But language may deteriorate and food remains in good shape. Selections of tradition in the cuisines may remain alive regardless of the decrease in language expertise. Recipes, spices and cooking techniques have become alternatives to other forms of cultural transmission. Food keeps the homeland alive despite the loss of language. Food becomes a symbol for cultural memory when other forms of identity are under threat.

The use of the word 'me' emphasizes the speaker's loneliness. The meaning of "left to rot" invokes images of decay and decomposition. This image is relevant for a gastrocolonial context since it inverts the preservative action of food. Salt was a previous representation of preservation and continuity. In this place, rot is the cultural erosion and abandonment. The opposing concept of preservation and decay are seen to represent the central tension of the poem. Displacement in the colonies can lead to a loss of identity, language and memory. Memory is the final invocation, which makes remembrance a means of survival. All that remains is the memory of homeland and of heritage.

For Khal Torabully, in "I Want to Go to the Grand Bazaar," the medium of food can lead the indentured subject to his lost homeland and can be a means of resisting colonial erasure. This poem, as opposed to the previous poems which center on the disassembled identity, and dislodging or displacement, emphasizes the imagery of eating and understanding by senses. The speaker's yearning for a place to "go back to" the "grand bazaar" is not just a desire for a physical place but calls for a cultural world where no colonization took place through migration. Torabully creates a gastronomic archive to hold memories of home by referring to saffron, cumin, thyme, coriander, roots and spices. How food acts as a means of resistance in terms of protecting cultural identity, even when one's geographic surroundings are gone, is illustrated in the poem.

The bazaar is a repository of cultural memory and talk of community. Traditionally, the bazaar was a place where goods, narratives, languages and traditions were freely available. They symbolised diversity and interaction, and not the inflexible economic system of colonial plantations. The bazaar is a place of memory for the

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indentured laborers and parts of 'the home country' are retrieved here. Returning is like looking for cultural belonging as the desire of the speaker shows. All the plantation system did was pull them away from all that was new and strange, and memory holds on to the bazaar as identity and continuity.

I want to go to the grand bazaar
to seek at last the saffron of shadows

o refrain from your refrain
the hoist of spices clears the remains (Torabully, line 1-4)

Saffron is one of the most valuable and the most culturally important spices from the South Asian country. First means traditional, spiritual, festive and heritage. But Torabully does not visualize saffron. It's a metaphor that implies that there's no going back to the homeland. All that is left are shadows, traces and memories. But saffron still stands as a sign of continuity of culture. In its shadowy frame, it retains a link with traditions of ancestral times. Colonial commodification is countered by a gastrocolonial perspective, which looks towards saffron as a counter symbol. The speaker explores how saffron can invoke memories and asserts its need to become more than a mere economic resource as it was for the colonialists. Spice is no longer part of the commerce of the empire, now part of the emotional world of the displaced subject, and his cultural world. By this changeover food is a means by which resistance to colonized notions of value is fought. Refrains are normally linked with songs and chants, and with collective memory. Within the frame of Coolitude, the repetition could be deconstructed to embody traditional customs amongst the different indentured populations. The refrain is incantation to not forget.

The word 'hoist' denotes movement and it denotes the transportation of spices. Spices have always been transported from their source by sea via trade routes which also enlivened colonial expansion. However, it is different in the case of spices which "clear the remains" as if it were a mode of circulation. This is a personification which gives spices a healing effect. Thus, Food is an archive. Commonly, the historical record of labourers under indentures does not document their experiences, but spices enact the cultural memory, which is experienced in the sensory. Smell and taste bring the speaker back to histories from the past which you can never quite forget. This image illustrates that foodways are one way in which identities are maintained, even in the wake of displacement.

cries of cumin: cries my journey's route
cries of thyme: cries my future
cries of coriander corpses awaiting return (Torabully, line 7-9)

Cumin, thyme and coriander no longer passively participate in the preparation of food, but now bear witness to history. They suffer in crying as they relate to migration and exile. Each of the spices is a metaphor for one aspect of the indentured experience. The "cries of cumin" are related with the trip of the speaker. An ingredient of common usage in South Asian cuisine, cumin becomes a symbol of migration itself. The "cries of thyme" is a present with the future, a future that has uncertainties and adaptations. Traditions in the kitchen serve to bring continuity to the indentured laborer's future, despite this displacement.

Coriander usually is associated with nourishment and domesticity, but Torabully makes it associated with corpses. But what this image depicts is that there's a human bucking history behind the spice, behind the movement of the commodities. Corpses awaiting are the symbol for migrants that died away from their homeland before reaching. Torabully therefore unveils the human toll of colonial trade networks, using these images. The term "roots" is suggested in many different layers. It's about food roots that are cooked in the kitchen and ancestral roots from the aspects of homeland and identity. Colonial displacement has broken ties between the speaker and his heritage, creating an anxiety there. The "terrified dreams" seem to be an insight into the psychological impact of migration, and "hell" is the suffering faced under indenture. But there are roots amongst this suffering. They are still a lingering thought of the speaker and hold memories of origin. Such resilience and persistence are the sustainability of cultural identity. While colonies can tear people out from their homes, they cannot completely sever roots in the memory and in culinary tradition.

The bazaar turns into a symbolic space, and spices themselves into living archives, where identity lives on and histories exist that do not have representation in colonial narratives. The poem asserts the re-appropriation of the commodity foodstuff and its re-centrality as an emotional and cultural aspect of gastronomy, as a platform tool of survival in the experience of indenture.

In "Do You Know the Tale" explores the tale of a single indentured labourer through whose life Khal Torabully depicts the effects of colonial dispossession, across the sea journeys of migration, and cultural alienation. The man in the poem is a member of the East India Trading Company, which is immediately a pointer to the history of colonial trade in general. As in images of salt, seas,

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wounds, shipwrecks, lagoons and domestic items of food preparation, Torabully illustrates the relationship between memory and exile of the indentured subject. Asking a rhetorical question in the beginning of the poem:

Do you know the tale
of the lonesome man
in the East India Trading Company? (Torabully, line 1-3)

It immediately opens an oral story telling tradition. The question has the potential to draw in readers since there is a feeling that the experiences of the indentured labourers have been ignored or forgotten. There is an isolation and alienation which is expressed in the syllable "lonesome man". Instead of being illustrated as a hero of the times, he is shown as a person who is characterized by loneliness and alienation.The fact that the East India Trading Company is mentioned is of great importance. The company represents the extensive trading networks that were responsible for the spice trade, tea trade, textile trade and other trade goods flowing around the world. It is also symbolic of the economic arrangements which helped in the expansion of colonies and migration of labour. It is the allusion that brings the labourer's story into relation with other frameworks of imperial trade. Gastrocolonialism is now seen to be not solely reliant on the commodities on which a food economy relies, but also on the migration and exploitation of people. Then, the speaker goes on to explain how the man's body looks.

The conception of "salt-pond pores" carries on the migrations and memories of salt as a recurrent image throughout Torabully's work. Salt has a twofold meaning. It is an essential component of life and food storage but is also reminiscent of the oceans of indentured labourers. On his body, the salt marks themselves, with his skin the embodiment of the diaspora's migration. Now there is no longer any exile; exile has become a part of him. Intimacy of body and history is repetitions by a sensory imagery. It is easy to see how the marine experiences in which he participated affected his person. In the image Torabully illustrates how colonial migration leaves traces on the body of the human being. The archive is the body itself, archive of displacement.This is a metaphor that gives voice to the labourer to become an "almanac". An almanac is a book, traditionally used to document mainly the agricultural cycle ploughing, sowing, harvest, etc. Torabully adds that the speaker continues to carry knowledge that he has gained in exile by comparing it to an almanac.

There are important gastrocolonial implications of the metaphor too. The plantation was central to the agricultural economy, and to food production. Torabully symbolically appropriates knowledge which attempted to be manipulated by system of Colonialism by connecting the voice with an almanac. The labourer is transformed into a man who guards and safeguards alternate histories, histories that are out of the pages of official colonial documents. The expression "dalo of his wound" revivifies the wound and is especially notable. The use of "Dalo" a root grown food commonly eaten in many of the colonial plantation areas adds a little food tidbit to the poem. Torabully is the fusion between food and suffering through a connection of food and a wound. The image infers that the experience of migration has become confined to the labourer and is now a part of him. Trauma, like roots, grows under the surface and continues to have an impact on his consciousness. Often here food is linked to pain, bearing witness to the presence of colonial histories in everyday cultural practices.

The "streets of lost waves" gives an impression of a dreamlike environment of recollections and realities. The image represents the disorientation of migrants' confusions of living in between several cultural worlds. The term "china divans" is suggestive of another aspect of trade and cultural exchange. The lane of silk was once a distinctively travel path of Chinese products through which imperial trade routes ran and thus became synonymous with global trade. The presence of such objects indicates how during colonial economy, the domestic spaces get penetrated. But the worker makes these things imported by him his world. This act mirrors the strategies of diasporic peoples to reinvent peoples' identities out of what is at their disposal. The poem then resumes the topic of the pain of the body.

The word "brands" has connotations for violence and possession. Originally, branding was done as a way of indicating the ownership of land, such as human land. Here, the marker of the labourer's flesh is associated with its migratory and colonial past. The "only shipwreck" is a metaphor for the loss of hope and expectations of migration. Many colonial accounts often suggested to people that it was a chance for them to attain upward mobility. Torabully, sees migration as shipwreck. The image shows psychological effects brought about by uprooting and exile.The last lines turn to an image which is associated with life at home:

To ignite the dawn
of crystal cries
this loner
sells iron stoves
in the paved courtyard of lagoons (Torabully, line 20-24)

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For one thing, the iron stove is an important symbol in the poem. A stove is linked to the preparation of the food, nourishment and cooking. It is a symbol of continuity, family and cultural tradition. As part of gastrocolonialism the stove is a space of resistance as the displaced community can continue to practice and remember eating. The fragmentation and loss of the laborer is there, but he's still part of food culture by means of the stove. Cultural preservation through cooking. Food rituals and cuisine allow migrants to re-create home in the "other place" that they find themselves in. It is a stove then that signifies survival in these circumstances of being uprooted. The other associated image is that of stoves for sale. The labourer doesn't simply use the stove but shares a means by which others can continue to use the cultural practice. With his image he becomes a keeper of the tribe's memory symbolically. Food traditions are a way of passing on from generation to generation, despite migration and disruption of colonial times. The poem shows that one cannot separate the history of indenture from the history of commerce and food production. The economic life of colonies was based not only on commodities but also on the labourers, however, official discourses tended to recall the former and forget the latter. Torabully humanizes those blotted out by colonial history by foregrounding the lonely migrant and focusing his solitary journey on culinary and domestic images.

Conclusion

Coolitude is an effective poetic means of depicting their experiences of the Indian indentured labourers as done by Khal Torabully in Chutney Poems. The chosen poems reveal the capacity of food also to be a kind of force for displaced peoples, one that can also serve as a vehicle for sense of memory, identity and 'historical consciousness'. Torabully's use of food images leads to an oppositional discourse, resisting the erasure and the marginalization so associated with the image of the colonized. An analysis of the poems reveals that the gastrocolonialism operates in the poems in the form of colonial appropriation negro servitude of food and labour. The importation of laborers was made from across the seas as plantation workers and became involved in the production of agriculture and imperial trade. But Torabully also shows how food traditions helped migrants to keep in touch with what they left behind geographically and culturally. Culinary memory comes up as a means of supplanting other history that cannot be found in history or perhaps has never existed. As a whole, Torabully demonstrates the cultural and persisting quality of foods and their relationship to identity constructing, survival, and resistance among worldwide indentured peoples and their foods, as well as the 'tastes, memories, and traditions' these foods represent and help preserve.

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