

Kiranmayi Bhushi, *Farm to Fingers: The Culture and Politics of Food in Contemporary India*

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Three decades have passed since the first major anthropological and historical inquiries into South Asian foodways, which include R. S. Khare's *The Eternal Food: Gastronomic Ideas and Experiences of Hindus and Buddhists* (1992); Francis Zimmerman's *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats: An Ecological Theme in Hindu Medicine* (1987); K. T. Achaya's *Indian Food: A Historical Companion* (1994); Paul Toomey's *Food from the Mouth of Krishna: Feast and Festivities in a North Indian Pilgrimage Centre* (1994); and Arjun Appadurai's "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India" (1998). Over the intervening years, the deepening "dual burden" of obesity and malnutrition; resurgent questions of diet, caste, and religion; and structural changes to India's agrarian economy and market systems have all continued to stoke a broader scholarly interest in questions of food on the subcontinent. Much of this emerging work has been ethnographic and sociological. Henrike Donner (2008), Manpreet Janeja (2010), Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria (2016), Harris Solomon (2016), and Hayden Kantor (2016) have all used questions of food to probe the broader dynamics of identity, migration, bodily experience, and economic transformation in contemporary India.

Kiranmayi Bhushi's rich edited collection, *Farm to Fingers: The Culture and Politics of Food in Contemporary India*, continues in the tradition of these investigations and in the spirit of another excellent edited volume, Krishnendu Ray and Tulasi Srinivas's *Curried Cultures: Globalization, Food, and South Asia* (2012). *Farm to Fingers* stems from Bhushi's undergraduate course on food and society at Delhi's Ambedkar University and her concomitant desire to produce a sociological primer on contemporary foodways in Asia. The advanced nature of many of the ensuing essays in *Farm to*

Fingers renders it a somewhat difficult collection for most undergraduates, but the anthology offers a rewarding collection of nine essays and an excellent introductory piece on questions of food, sustenance, identity, and economics, in an India where many of these issues have emerged newly at the fore of public awareness.

A first set of essays probes questions of identity. James Staples' "Appropriating the Cow: Beef and Identity Politics in Contemporary India" leverages fieldwork in coastal Andhra Pradesh to explore changing associations of beef and identity among Dalits, Christians, and Muslims in the wake of a resurgent Hindutva. Estelle Fourat's "The Making of 'Edible Animal Source Foods' and Its Contemporary Reality in Delhi" offers a structural account of "non-veg" food in Delhi, probing her informants' "cognitive categories of protein foods of animal origins" to offer a new typology of these foods (54). Sucharita Sarkar's "Diaspora Dish: Cooking, Writing, and Creating Identities in Food-Blogs" examines Indian food bloggers' complex notions of local and global audiences. An immensely rich essay by Dolly Kikon, "Eating *Akhuni* in Delhi," looks to the social life of this iconic Naga food, fermented soybean, in the context of domestic migration, offering a look at the anxieties of alimentary modernity in India.

Two conceptually connected essays offer new insight into the much-discussed epidemic of obesity in contemporary India. Ishita Dey's "Health, Standardization, and 'Bengali' Sweets" unpacks questions of standardization and health in *kom mishit*, lower-calorie Bengali sweets. Her account of bench science in the laboratory of the celebrated Calcutta sweet maker K. C. Das looks at the ways in which questions of "microbiopolitics" come to gloss, in scientific terms, an emerging language of consumer health. Anjali Bhatia's "Treating Children, Feeding Junk Food: An Inquiry into a Middle-Class Project" looks at the contradictory postures of middle-class parents seeking to "reward" children who perform well in school with meals and play at McDonald's, alongside new anxieties about junk food itself.

A third set of essays offers complementary insight into the changing nature of public provision in India. Sanjay Sharma's "Measuring Hunger: Debates on an 'Adequate' Diet in Colonial North India" looks at bureaucratic debates over famine relief in the wake of the 1837–38 famine in the Doab region, while Deepankar Basu and Debarshi Das's "Managing Food: India's Experience with the Public Distribution System" offers a succinct account of this system's changing functioning and efficacy. Radha Gopalan's "Food Sovereignty: The Future of Food" puts the Indian experience in global context, showing how subcontinental movements for food sovereignty might square in broader plans to feed 9.1 billion people by 2050.

These essays cover a wide range of conceptual and empirical terrain, but *Farm to Fingers* offers a rich survey into the varied approaches to questions of food in contemporary India and is a rich resource for the many scholars now delving deeply into interlinked questions of identity, economics, and politics at a transformative moment.

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