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**Food for Thought:  
 A Critical Inquiry into Food, Gender and Language**

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**ABSTRACT**

Society is as society does. The culture of a region is an extensive manifestation of the mindset of the individuals residing in it. One's ideas and beliefs are reflected in their behaviour and furthermore, their behaviour assumes the eventual collective identity of a cultural ground. These aspects can be noticed even in the most mundane parts of their life such as their understanding of certain bodily gestures, their approach towards using language and their perception of their surroundings. Ironically, one of the key aspects of this inclusive formulation of one's cultural identity is also one of the most often neglected aspects of the daily life – food. Hence, gastrocriticism emphasises upon a critical inquiry and an interdisciplinary approach towards food, culture, language, literature and society.

The paper aims to focus on food as being an inherent part of the culture in the Indian subcontinent. Food in terms of being gendered as either masculine, feminine or neuter in different Indian languages and consequently being associated with different functions in daily life is a concept highlighted in the paper. For example, tea is perceived as a female entity in Bhavnagar, Gujarat in reference to its quality of being the nurturer and beginner of life (a day only truly begins with a cup of tea along with breakfast) to the townsfolk, whereas, it is addressed as a male entity in the language of urban Rajkot, 150 kilometres away from Bhavnagar, for its property of revitalising men at (and after) work. Moreover, the role of different genders while cooking, both at home and professionally, is another important aspect in the paper. Food also plays a prominent role in the lives of individuals and shapes the media narrative of the contemporary age, throwing light on its culture and lifestyle. Thus, food being a harbinger of life, an ingrained feature of culture, a shaper of identity and an indisputable part of language and is focused upon in the paper.

**Key words:** food, gender, men, women, cook

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