

Ethnocentrism to Cultural Relativism: A Food Journey of Hassan Haji's Family in Richard C. Morais' the Hundred-Foot Journey

Vijayakumar Selvaraj¹, Akhter Habib Shah² & A. Sathikulameen³, Huda Majeed²

¹ Department of English, B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, Vandalur, Chennai, India

² Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia.

³ Department of English, The New College, Chennai, India

Correspondence: Akhter Habib Shah, Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: ah.shah@psau.edu.sa

Received: March 13, 2024 Accepted: May 14, 2024 Online Published: June 26, 2024

doi:10.5430/wjel.v14n5p526

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n5p526>

Abstract

This paper examines the conflict faced by select characters in Richard C. Morais' *The Hundred-Foot Journey* between Indian and French food culture through the lens of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. It probes how Hassan Haji strikes a balance between two food cultures: the French culture and Indian culture meet, interact, compete and experience a collision of cultures related to ethnocentric issues from Madame Gertrude Mallory. Leaving one's cultural territory and migrating to another territory authoritatively represents one's cultural superiority. It takes time to understand the cultural practices of other ethnic groups in terms of their food and cultural contexts, which requires competence in cultural relativism. It examines three aspects of his food culture journey. To begin, it studies how Hassan Haji travels out of his home country and adapts to new food culture. Second, how he experiences blending two food cultures. Third, how well he manages, learns and adjusts to the new food culture and settles in with cultural relativism. The author portrays cross-cultural aspects of food's power through the confrontation between French haute cuisine and an Indian restaurant. Literature has enlightened readers' comprehension of many civilisations all across the world. It takes the readers on a voyage around the world without requiring them to leave their current location. Some literary works, on the other hand, combine two civilisations. These pages reflect how various cultures may reveal various facets of each other, including challenges, dreams, and secret scars shared by those who share space with them. As they learn about new cultures, they strive to maintain a balance between the two. Cross-cultural influences led the Kadam family to abandon their nativity and relocate to a new country after crossing cultural divides.

Keywords: Ethnocentrism; Cultural Relativism; Cross-cultural influence; food culture

1. Introduction

Food serves as a powerful emblem of cultural identity and represents more than mere sustenance. It represents tradition, comfort, and a sense of belonging, especially for those who find themselves far from their home. Immigrants often cling to their culinary heritage, using familiar recipes to preserve their culture and to ease the pangs of homesickness. This culinary continuity allows them to maintain connections with their roots while adapting to new environments. In Richard C. Morais' *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, the protagonist Hassan Haji's journey vividly illustrates the intersection of food and cultural adaptation, highlighting how culinary practices can bridge the gap between diverse cultures.

In terms of culture, ethnicity, and beliefs, the culinary journey is influenced by various factors. It is a voyage that rekindles human optimism and unites people. There may be regional variations in lifestyle and culinary tastes. Exotic food does, however, bring people together. Food overcomes caste, creed, and religious barriers. Everyone appreciates wonderful cuisine. Migration from one culture to another always invites various struggles to face like social, political, and economic, for survival and progress in their lives. Although it is challenging to balance one's food culture with another food culture, the problem of the intercultural power of food can be addressed to a great extent by analysing it through the lens of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. For a culinary journey through French and Indian cuisine, Richard C. Morais employs a humble Indian cook who eventually triumphs in the exclusive world of French haute cuisine. This paper traces Hassan Haji's issues related to ethnocentrism in his food culture and its impact on cultural relativism in the novel. It evaluates how he strikes a balance between two different cultures, the French culture and Indian culture, which share the same space in one cultural setup, interact for livelihood, compete to show his superiority in food culture and experience a collision of cultures related to ethnocentric issues of other characters. The journey to a new cultural territory always gives a scope of showing one's cultural superiority as food ethnocentrism and then understanding the cultural practices related to food of other ethnic groups and learning new ethnic cultural contexts which drives them close to cultural relativism.

According to Hall (1980), culture is a set of socially inherited, shared, and taught ways of life that people acquire because of their membership in social groups. The definition's main word is "social group." This view implies that distinct cultures should exist within social

groups. Furthermore, culture is a living entity. Culture is not a fixed entity. Culture tends to shift over time. When two cultures clash, cultural conflict occurs. Barker (2003). This dispute transcends cultural barriers. Intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding are at the heart of the research dilemma. To express it another way, cultural conflict occurs when cultural barriers separate individuals. Each person considers their culture a way of life. As a result, foreign cultures may appear strange and peculiar to them. Individuals' responses to cultural influences may differ. Cultural conflict, adjustment, and re-entry are all stages that people go through in different ways. J. Lewis (2002). A person may reject a new culture, feel alienated from its members, and experience mental solitude as a result. This person may exaggerate and praise the positive features of their own culture. Therefore, when confronted with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviours, a person should be able to understand the community and new culture better.

In cross-cultural relationships, people from different cultures interact in ways that acknowledge, respect, and help each other learn about each other's unique cultures. People from diverse origins can see options they had not considered before because of the restrictions or cultural prohibitions imposed by their traditions. Traditional traditions in some cultures can limit opportunity since they are perceived as "wrong" by that society. The people exposed to these new possibilities will ultimately alter due to being aware of them. In addition to being frightening, this cross-cultural friendship offers hope that new prospects will be found. A partnership poses a challenge because it eliminates the possibility of claiming that one culture represents the whole truth.

This paper examines three aspects of their food journey from ethnocentrism to cultural relativism. To begin, it studies how Hassan Haji visits and adapts to new food cultures. Second, how he lives and finds a balance between the two food cultures. Third, how well he adjusts to the latest food culture and settles in because of cultural relativism. The author portrays cross-cultural aspects of food's power through the confrontation between French haute cuisine and an Indian restaurant. Throughout history, literature has illuminated readers' understanding of many civilisations. The book takes the reader on a journey around the world without requiring them to leave their current location.

In contrast, some literary works combine two civilisations. Through their pages, you can see how different cultures can reveal beauty and mystery in each other. In addition, they reveal the dreams, challenges, and secret scars of those who share space with them. The two cultures are learning about each other and trying to establish a balance between them. After a cross-cultural influence between East and West, it was found that the Kadam family had abandoned their nativity and relocated to a new country.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What impacts do Hassan Haji's issues with his culinary cultures have on ethnocentrism in the chosen novel?
2. How does Hassan's food cultural conundrum lead to cultural relativism when he integrates into a new culture?

1.2 Problem Statement

Deeper social, cultural and motives and reasons for migrations should be addressed as growing multicultural exposures, diasporic migration, and alienation of community in societies which are bringing into inquiry the fundamental discourses on which they are grounded. Regarding the discourse of any society, the novel fundamentally establishes intercultural relationships. The way these nature novels in the form of cultural texts frame and exhibit the ethnocentric and cultural relativistic consciousness within a specific culture is significant as it is likely to have a strong impact on the way that culture deals with the other culture. An overview of cultural novels in the multicultural context reveals that ethnocentric and cultural relativistic stances are established in them. With regards to Richard C. Morais' novel *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, this research ventures into an underexplored domain which demands investigation and examination of cross-cultural aspects with references to ethnocentrism and cultural relativism.

2. Review of Literature

This section deals with the work already done in the related area of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism with a special focus on the selected novel. LeVine and Campbell stated that in 1906, the term ethnocentrism was first used by Sumner in his book *Folkways* to describe those with cultural narrowness, "ethnically centred" (p. 357) people who only adopt those culturally alike as ingroup and oppose those with different cultures as outgroups. Moreover, they understand that they, the ingroup, are exceptional to all outgroups; hence, they are the core of all races, Sumner says that those with ethnocentrism view that their "own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it" (p. 13).

Anthropologists refer to the belief that one's way of life is realistic or right as ethnocentrism. Some could only refer to it as cultural ignorance. Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture represents the best way to live. People who believe that their way of life is the most natural are said to be ethnocentric if they have not thoroughly understood other cultures. Some cultures share or overlap ideas or concepts. However, others are somewhat surprised by the cultural differences they encounter. A group of people may view another culture's way of life negatively in extreme situations. Thus, the group may try to convert the other group to their way of living and food culture.

Rather than using the cultural norms of other ethnic groups to critique the values, behaviours, and so forth of other ethnic groups, ethnocentrism is the belief that people should judge other cultures based on their values and schemas. (Neuliep, 2009). There are numerous ethnic groups and lifestyles, and as a result, there are multiple ethnic cultures. Mutual respect for one another is necessary because it is hard to claim that one ethnic culture is superior to another. But tolerance isn't enough to respect other people's ways of life. An approach to the issue of the nature and significance of values in culture is cultural relativism (Herskovits 1973, p. 14). Cultural relativism necessitates valuing the diversity of thought. But knowing the beliefs, perspectives, behaviours, and so forth of the outgroup members through their cultural settings and schema is also necessary; cultural respect through tolerance is not sufficient (Reidel, 2010).

Multiculturalism, another term for ethnic pluralism, and cultural relativism are frequently used synonymously. Globalisation and internationalisation have increased interactions between many cultures, which has resulted in a blending of various civilisations. Intercultural communication is necessary to comprehend various ethnic groups and to promote effective communication between people of different racial and cultural backgrounds. Other names for multiculturalism include "salad bowl" and "cultural mosaic" (p. 78), which denote the blending of various cultural traditions. While multiculturalism or cultural relativism claims that all different cultural ethnicities have equal rights, ethnocentrism asserts that certain cultures are superior to others (Nanda & Warms, 1998). No one is superior or more dominant. Bennett (2004) implies that ethnocentric people are less interculturally competent. Therefore, intercultural competence is required to enable intercultural dialogue to be culturally relativistic (Neuliep, Hintz, & McCroskey, 2005). Several publications have appeared in recent years documenting Richard C. Morais' *The Hundred-Foot Journey* in the following way: 1. Application of diaspora theory. 2. The importance of food in the construction of the diasporic identity. 3. Intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding in cultural conflicts. 4. Prejudice in the novel. 5. The novel's stereotypical portrayals of the Indians and the French from an Orientalism perspective, and 6. Three parameters: (a) Food as a symbol of cultural identity (b) Food as a form of connection, and (c) Food as a transgressor of barriers.

In his study, Nur Masithoh used Richard C. Morais' *The Hundred-Foot Journey* as the object and used the descriptive qualitative method and diaspora theory. The method of the study was used to analyse the data collected through dialogues, prologues, monologues, and narration in the novel. Several steps were used in collecting data, such as reading novels, identifying the data, classifying the data, and reducing the data. Based on the discussion, there were some conclusions as the result of the study. First, it was found that war, oppression, and traumatic and economic situations affected Papa's life, so he and his family had to do diaspora. Second, Papa and Hassan performed acculturation and memory of the homeland as the effects of the diaspora in the host land. He studied the novel from this perspective.

In her dissertation, Nekam Maissa explored the importance of food in the construction of the diasporic identity. Richard C. Morais' novel *The Hundred-Foot Journey* presented a rich example of the interconnectedness between food, memory, and identity construction. The novel depicts Hassan's culinary journey from Mumbai to London, Lumiere and finally to Paris and his metamorphosis and transformation from a mere local Indian cook into a famous and hybrid chef, fusing the culinary arts of both the Indian and French cuisines. Based on a set of food studies and food's relation to identity construction, this study suggests that food is the bridge through which Hassan succeeds in crossing the widening gap between the two different cultures. Besides making use of food studies, this study makes specific references to Homi Bhabha's views of hybridity, liminality, and the third space and Stuart Hall's conceptualisation of identity as a process and positioning. Applying these theorists' perspectives about identity, the analysis shows the ways the protagonist's novel, Hassan, achieves a reconciliation between the two conflicting parts of his identity to realise his sense of cultural identity. Moreover, this study scrutinises the power of memory and especially food memory in strengthening Hassan's attachment not only to his homeland but also to cooking. Memory can be used as a tool for reconstruction and transformation. As a result, Morais' novel stresses hybridity and celebrates a third space where the persistence of cultures and identities is challenged, revisited, and negotiated. Hassan can find his hybrid identity by fusing these two cultures and spaces without being caught between them. This identity enables him to inhabit a third space where he can find his hybrid identity. Therefore, this study examined how food contributes to the construction of diasporic identity.

In her study, Merina Cindy Pramiswari analysed intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding. It was aimed at students who should learn about a new culture before going abroad. Therefore, the students were prepared to face any obstacles living abroad. Literature could be seen as a reflection of culture. An example of cultural conflict that happened in literary work exists in the novel Richard Morais' *The Hundred-Foot Journey*. Thus, the researchers formulated three research problems: The cultural conflicts experienced by Hassan in the novel *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, the resolution of the cultural conflict, and the effect of cultural conflict on Hassan's life. This study employed a descriptive qualitative design that relied on a natural setting rather than a manipulated setting. By using a text-oriented approach which was primarily concerned with the question of the "materiality" of the texts. Hassan experienced eight cultural conflicts. They were about the chef's freedom to create a dish, differences in the food preparation, restaurant management, restaurant interior, differences in the ingredients' freshness, the time spent in the kitchen to be a chef, the standard of fine dining restaurant, and the various kinds of dishes. The conflict resolved that Hassan coped with the cultural conflict by being open-minded. He opened to a new culture and learned new knowledge about fine dining. As a result of the cultural conflict, Hassan spent three years in the new culture to adapt and adapt to the new culture. Therefore, Hassan's life changed. He could achieve a three-star Michelin as the highest accomplishment in the culinary world. This study analysed the novel in this way.

Henny Rohmah, Singgih Daru Kuncara and Indah Sari Lubis analysed prejudice in *The Hundred-Foot Journey* Novel. This study aimed to reveal rejections generated from prejudice that happened to Indians and to describe the behaviours of Indians when they experienced prejudice. This research used Gordon Allport's prejudice theory, and then the prejudice generated several rejections: antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack and extermination. Prejudice also generated behaviours from the victim of it, in this case, behaviours became the response. The theory of behaviour is also based on Gordon Allport which is divided into extropunitive and intropunitive behaviour. The method of this research is qualitative research with a mimetic approach. The data are narrations and dialogues that are related to prejudice and also rejections from prejudice. The data are analysed by using Allport's theory and then the process of data analysis is using Miles and Huberman's theory. The result of this research is four out of five rejections from prejudice are found in this research. There were antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, and physical attacks. Meanwhile, in this research, extropunitive was the most dominant behaviour as the response from the Indians. This study analysed the novel in this way.

In his study, Rhena Indria Haryono attempted to examine the stereotypical portrayals of the Indians and the French in Morais' *The Hundred-Foot Journey* (2010) from an Orientalism perspective since studies on this work are still limited. This study was drawn on Said's (1978) theory of Orientalism. In addition, this study also employed Little's (1966) theory of characterisation to support the analysis of the data. The finding revealed the author presents Indian and French in a contrasting way in which one was regarded as inferior and the other as superior. Furthermore, it was also found that the relationship between them was similar to the relations between the Orient and the Occident, which are argued by Said (1978) as a kind of relationship which distinguishes 'self' and 'other' that is filled with power and domination. Thus, this study focused on analysing the novel from an Orientalism perspective.

Olive Thambi analysed the novel in three parameters: (a) Food as a symbol of cultural identity (b) Food as a form of connection and (c) Food as a transcender of barriers. "Regarding the first parameter, food has always been a marker of cultural identity. People inherently desire their own food regardless of where they are. They crave their food in various forms. Food from home often becomes comfort food, easing homesickness and other frustrations. Immigrants are often seen taking their recipes to other countries to preserve their culture."

Although several studies have indicated that the novel has been analysed differently, and no attention has been given to analysing the clash between French and Indian food culture faced by Hassan Haji and his journey of experiences from Ethnocentrism to Cultural Relativism.

3. Analysis

Hassan Haji's food journey in the novel through the lens of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism is analysed in this section. It explores his passion for cooking and how a hundred feet between a new Indian kitchen and a historic French kitchen might illustrate the divide between cultures and desires. Several factors, including culture, ethnicity, and beliefs, have an impact on the culinary journey. A journey that reunites people and rekindles human optimism. Lifestyle and culinary preferences may vary from region to region. Exotic food does, however, bring people together. Food overcomes caste, creed, and religious barriers. Everyone appreciates wonderful cuisine. The book relates the story of a Mumbai family that can support itself through cooking, which leads to the opening of a new restaurant. As the restaurant gains popularity for religious reasons, the group of people grow increasingly resentful, and eventually, the Hajis' restaurant is burned down amid a mob rage, tragically taking the life of the family matriarch. The reasons for their migration are the memory of his deceased wife and the incident that has disturbed their family. The father promises to leave the country permanently. They are prepared to deal with any food culture. They travel to London, but they are unable to settle there because they have no time to get used to cultural change.

On one such occasion, a terrible, flavourless loaf of white bread is Hassan's introduction to Western culture. It's kind of the poorest example of Western cuisine, but it perfectly captures his initial feelings about leaving his own culture:

And it was on these seats that I had my first taste of England: a chilled and soggy egg-salad sandwich wrapped in a triangle of plastic. It is the bread, in particular, that I remember, the way it dissolved on my tongue. Never before had I experienced anything so determinedly tasteless, wet, and white. (2.105-106)

Even though each of these civilisations is stunning on its own, the result of mixing them is unnatural and unattractive. At least that is how it appears in this case. This is intriguing because Hassan eventually learns to live in a multicultural environment and face challenges in food culture:

Southall was the unofficial headquarters of Britain's Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi community, a flatland in the armpit of Heathrow Airport, its Broadway High Street a glittering string of Bombay jewelers, Calcutta cash-and-carries, and Balti curry houses. It was terribly disorienting, this familiar noise under the gray skies of England. (3.10)

They relocate to Lumiere and encounter difficulties there as well. This new universe has Hassan enthralled. He compares it to India's splendour despite France being very different because that is all he is familiar with:

I can still recall that wondrous first glimpse of *Le Saule Pleureur*. It was, to me, more stunning than the Taj in Bombay. [Everything fit perfectly, the very essence of understated European elegance that was so completely foreign to my own upbringing]. (4.125)

It's the grandest thing he's ever seen, in his opinion. They established an Indian eatery in Lumiere. Papa settles on a moniker for his new eatery that skilfully combines both worlds. Their residence in India is called "Mumbai," which is French for "house." It perfectly combines two cultures and claims them as its own. Papa's selection of naming restaurant reveals their readiness to accept, learn and merge with a new culture:

Maison Mumbai, written in massive gold letters on an Islamic green background, filled the entire billboard. (6.30)

Mallory owns a French restaurant that is only a hundred feet away. Mallory glares across the street at her new neighbours, while Hassan experiences for the first time European ethnocentric food challenge and prejudice toward his people. This is the beginning phase of him who tells us that he sees it repeatedly after, even though he doesn't typically discuss it with the seriousness he does here:

It was a look I would see many times again as I made my way through France in the coming years—a uniquely Gallic look of nuclear contempt for one's inferiors (6.7)

Mallory makes valiant attempts, but to no avail, to minimise their business. Even before she enters the market, the Hajis are buying the freshest food. Hassan finds Mallory's butchery ritual, which includes the priest blessing the animal being killed, to be incredibly fascinating. He doesn't intend to stray from his Islamic upbringing, but he finds the outside world to be fascinating. This ritual sends him a cultural shock and he reviews:

How could I tell him, moreover, how could I tell him that I found myself secretly and passionately wanting to be a part of this pig-butchered underworld? (6.153)

When Hassan moves in with Mallory, the cultural difference is quite unsettling for him. In contrast to the vivid, vibrant environment he is used to, it seems dark and morbid. In other words, this form of Western Christianity is completely different from what he is used to:

I was—I don't mind admitting it—completely rattled by the austere room, so Catholic and foreign to my upbringing, and a voice in my head, half-hysterical, urged me to dash back to the safety and comfort of my cheerful bedroom in Maison Mumbai. (12.4)

Mallory was persistently unsuccessful in obtaining the highly desired third Michelin star. A disagreement between Mallory and Hassan's father leads to many mishaps. Mallory shoved Hassan while he was cooking directly behind his father. Hassan is knocked to the ground, sustains burn wounds, and is quickly taken to the hospital. While Hassan is in the hospital, Mallory visits him with pastries. When she inquires about the components, she is astonished to discover that he can correctly name each one. She can recognise Hassan as a talented cook for the first time in her life at this point. Mallory's life turns around at this point. Mallory pleads with the Hajis to send Hassan as her apprentice after he has healed, feeling terrible and contrite. After much deliberation, Hassan's father decides to comply. When Hassan is allowed to cook in Mallory's kitchen for the first time, he is unconsciously influenced by both cultures and produces his distinctive mix of flavours. Hassan starts by fusing the two cultures he associates with to develop a fresh new look:

The side dishes I prepared were a mint-infused couscous, rather than the traditional butter noodles, and a cucumber-and-sour-cream salad dashed with a handful of lingonberries. I thought together they would make soothing and light counterpoints to the heavy mustard tang of the stewed hare. Of course, now, looking back, I realise the cucumber and cream was, conscious or not, inspired by raita, the yogurt-and-cucumber condiment of my homeland. (12.176)

The situation demands Hassan be open and ready to adopt new concepts in his field thanks to his experiences in varied environments. Even while he doesn't fully support Chef Mafitte's overall strategy, he can still appreciate the innovative aspects of his style:

It was logical, with my heritage, that I would be drawn to Chef Mafitte's "world cuisine", which seemed to revel in combining the most bizarre ingredients from the most exotic corners of the earth. (14.13)

Finally, he proves that Hassan is prepared to take on the culinary world by establishing himself as an expert in French cuisine. After deciding to leave behind his ailing grandmother, father, sisters, and brothers in response to a job offer from Paris, he eventually becomes one of the most renowned chefs with a three-star Michelin rating. After receiving his third star, Hassan is on his way home when he notices that the aroma of a little Indian eatery is calling to him. Even after all these years, he still considers this smell to be the most reassuring in the entire world since it brings back memories of India from a long time ago. We've said it before, but we'll say it again: You can take the boy out of India, but you can't take India out of the boy:

Could it be? But there it was, the unmistakable aroma of my youth, joyously coming down a cobblestone side passage to greet me, the smell of machli ka salan, the fish curry of home, from so long ago. (19.26)

Food is a great unifier and a crucial component of culture. Recipes that have been around for a while have been passed down through the generations. People connect and develop relationships over food. Immigrants do not sell to the citizens of their nation when they sell food abroad. As a result, they must alter their menu to accommodate different dietary needs. New flavours could be created with very slight modifications while still maintaining the dish's cultural importance. The history of lifestyle, beliefs, and rituals is reflected in what is put into the meal in addition to being a part of the culture. Hassan explains:

Papa first fell in love with her scent. When he inhaled the most seductive aroma of chapatis and rose water, he was buried in a library book (8).

Food had so brought them together. They had little idea that they would make a name for themselves in the food industry and that their son would go on to become one of the most sought-after chefs. After the fire accident involving Hassan, Mallory who had been rude to Hassan's family changes and her heart melts as she recalls her father telling her in her childhood that she had to exercise restraint in her words. When Hassan's father wholeheartedly agrees to offer Hassan as her apprentice, she sets about the work in right earnest. The journey between Hassan's restaurant and Mallory's was just a hundred feet away but when Hassan moved over, the parting was painful. Hassan's father however told him to be a Haji till the end. During the first weekend when Hassan came over to his kith and kin, he was smothered with a lot of love. It was like the old days when he was in the midst of all the fun and frolic, enjoying family jokes and savouring every moment of it. Love from his family members was showered on him through the choicest homemade food. Back in Mallory's restaurant, Hassan underwent rigorous training as her apprentice. In the midst of all this, there was one Mrs. Degenerate who also taught a heartwarming lesson to Mallory. As she was wont to, one day, Mrs. Degenerate was dressing the ducks for a special dish, when she recognised an old duck all of a sudden. This duck was no ordinary duck. It had mothered the orphaned ducklings from their mother which was shot dead by a hunter. Mrs. Degenerate said "Imagine a duck showing more kindness than a human being. I can't have that" (124). As it can be seen, kindness plays an important role in one's life. She learnt over a while that her culinary skills had to be tempered with kindness and this in turn could touch lives. Mrs. Mallory who was dreaded earlier began making inroads into people's hearts. Hassan's reputation as an apprentice to Mrs. Mallory earned him laurels and he was soon offered a very good job in Paris where he carved a niche for himself. That is where he settled ultimately having made his mark in the world. The writer depicts cross-cultural aspects with the power of food through the clash between French haute cuisine and Indian restaurant. Literature has been illuminating readers' understanding of different cultures across the world. It takes the

readers on a journey across the world without leaving their place. Some literary texts, however, take two cultures immediately. Their pages illuminate how disparate cultures can reveal the mystery and beauty in each other and make one aware of the hardships, dreams, and hidden scars that one who shares space with. This study focuses on the journey of one family who travels from East to West. They learn about new cultures and try striking a balance between the two cultures and eventually, they are successful in acclimatising to new cultures.

The cultural conflict has two effects, according to Johnson et al., (2002). For starters, cultural conflict may have a positive outcome. Cultural clashes can have a positive impact on a person's life. This occurs because the individual is capable of learning and adapting to a new culture. Second, the influence could turn destructive. This occurs as a result of cultural conflict, which causes a person to isolate and despise a new culture. As a result, the individual may become distressed and homesick. Literature can be viewed as a cultural mirror. A literary work's author can describe a nation's habits, customs, and culture. Literature work can also be viewed as a country's cultural progress. This novel is an example of cultural conflict in literary work. The novel follows Hassan, an Indian immigrant who relocates to a new country. In the new country, he has a cultural clash with Madame Malory because their cultures are so dissimilar. This book is divided into four chapters. Scribner Publishing released this book in 2010. Preparing for cultural conflict is critical because students can adapt to a new society and attain their goals by travelling overseas. Their desire to travel abroad may be hampered by cultural differences. Learning about different cultures and preparing for them through this study is just as vital as going abroad.

A conflict is a confrontation between two forces, as previously stated. In this life, there will be numerous disputes. Physiological, psychic, or cultural conflicts are all possibilities. Physical conflict happens when the opposing forces engage in physical combat or battles. When a character is unable to choose between right and wrong, psychological conflict arises. Conflict can also arise as a result of cultural differences, which is known as cultural conflict.

The chosen novel describes the cultural portrayal of family, nationality and food. It narrates the power of food in cross-cultural aspects through the clash between French haute cuisine and Indian cooking. It briefs how a hundred feet can make a big difference in someone's life. The road is a hundred feet away to connect an Indian and French family. The writer depicts the journey of the Kadam family who fall out initially when they move to England. Their "mourning was officially over. It was time for the Haji family to get on with life, to start a new chapter, to finally put behind their lost years"(59). When travelling, they sample food and search for a new home. They settle in a tiny French town in the Alps called Lumi ère and buy a huge property across from an inn called Le Saule Pleureur. They opened Maison Mumbai, which is the first Indian restaurant in their area in France.

The Kadam family experiences different cultures and finally settles down in the new culture. After reaching an unknown destination, they try to settle down and then learn a new culture. When Hassan moves into Mallory's European home, the cultural difference is quite unsettling for him. In contrast to the vibrant, colourful environment he is used to, it seems dismal and morbid. In other words, compared to what he is used to, this form of Western Christianity is entirely different:

I was—I don't mind admitting it—completely rattled by the austere room, so Catholic and foreign to my upbringing, and a voice in my head, half-hysterical, urged me to dash back to the safety and comfort of my cheerful bedroom in Maison Mumbai. (12.4)

It is an entirely new country, and continent, thousands of miles away from their homeland, Mumbai. After entering a new place, a rather unsettling spot, especially in the situation of contrasting cultures. The family of Kadams wants to introduce the tastes and flavours of Indian food culture to the West. A terrible, flavourless loaf of white bread is Hassan's introduction to Western culture. It represents how he initially feels about leaving the culture he is familiar with, even though it is kind of the poorest representation of Western cuisine. The following line is the extract from the novel to reveal his first experience of a new culture: "Never before had I experienced anything so determinedly tasteless, wet, and white". (2.105-106)

Even though each of these civilisations is stunning on its own, the result of mixing them is unnatural and unattractive. At least that is how it appears in this case. This is intriguing because Hassan eventually learns to live in a multicultural environment. These ideas are reflected in the novel:

I can still recall that wondrous first glimpse of Le Saule Pleureur. It was, to me, more stunning than the Taj in Bombay. [Everything fit perfectly, the very essence of understated European elegance that was so completely foreign to my own upbringing. (4.125)

As they decide to start this venture to make the habitat liveable, the Kadams is confronted by none other than the neighbouring Madam Mallory who owns the upscale Michelin star 'Le Saule Pleureur' which customers visit for a fine dining experience. Papa Kadam names his restaurant 'Maison Mumbai' as a reflection of his true Indian identity, even on foreign soil: "Maison Mumbai, written in massive gold letters on an Islamic green background, filled the entire billboard". (6.30)

When Mallory turns and glares at her new neighbours across the street, Hassan encounters prejudice towards his people on the part of the Europeans for the first time. He doesn't typically address it with the seriousness he does here, but he is informing us that it is something he observes frequently after the fact: "It was a look I would see many times again as I made my way through France in the coming years—a uniquely Gallic look of nuclear contempt for one's inferiors (6.7)"

Madame Mallory does not welcome the boisterous Kadam who insists on doing things his way, from the various dishes cooked up in 'Maison Mumbai' to the loud music played on loudspeakers, serving as a ghastly contrast to her more subdued, elegant restaurant ambience that serves food for the finest of palates. Mallory, who is 'French' in her sensibilities, is suspicious of the immigrant Indians across the street. Papa Kadam and Mallory reduce themselves to childlike behaviour when they usurp the market for the ingredients needed for each other's

menus on particular days. A strong, albeit misguided sense of national identity, is seen here when one of Mallory's chefs with his cronies, in an act of vandalism, spray paints the Kadam's property with slogans such as 'France for the French and sets fire to the interior. Hassan, Papa Kadam's second son and the master chef of their establishment sees the arsonists and, in an attempt, to stop them, suffers burns on his hands and legs. Hassan shares his learning experience of watching Mallory prepare an artichoke that he had not "seen a chef take such meticulous artistic care, particularly not with something as ugly as this vegetable" (71) He watches with total excitement and it inspires him to want to learn how to do it himself. He starts applying his cooking lifestyle and these experiences help him to learn about the new culture with utmost care.

The Kadam family tries to strike a balance between two different cultures. After reaching France, buying a property and trying to settle down. Papa names the new restaurant as Maison Mumbai which is "written in massive gold letters on an Islamic green background, filled the entire billboard" (73). This indicates his family's thoughts and actions towards cultural relativism and they try to integrate two cultures even in naming restaurants and he feels both East and West as homes. This incident shows that it is necessary to convert one's ethnocentric identity into cultural relativism.

An issue crops up for the Kadam family on Bastille Day. The vandalization of the Kadam's property states that they have enemies in their field and they are not welcomed on French soil. However, the writer expresses humanity through the character, Mallory, who condemns this act and dismisses her chef from work who is responsible for this new issue. Then, she undertakes to scrub off the hateful slogans to make amends. After this incident, Hassan gets an opportunity to start a relationship with Mallory's sous chef, Marguerite. He borrows books on French cuisine from her and tries to learn many things about this foreign culinary art. He tries gaining Mallory's attention with his cooking skills and getting to know that she takes in people based on the taste of the omelettes they make, and requests to make an omelette for her. Mallory decides to oblige him but should use her hands as per Hassan's instructions as Hassan's burns from the Bastille Day arson attack make it difficult for him to cook. Mallory is overwhelmed, and in the end, impressed with the young chef's omelette ingredients which comprise Indian spices, onions, cilantro and spicy peppers.

Here, one can see the shift in attitude as Mallory recognises the talent of this young immigrant Indian and decides to train him. Papa Kadam protests at first but on negotiating a decent amount of money, allows his son to work for the restaurant that is only a hundred feet away from theirs. At this point, an appreciation of one another's cultures is seen taking place in the area of language, behaviour, culinary styles and so on (Lumenick, 2014). Papa Kadam and Mallory are seen warming up to each other while relinquishing the cold-war rivalry between them. The steps in the direction of embracing a global culture as well as a global identity are apparent here.

Hassan strikes the balance between Eastern and Western food cultures. He learns to acclimatise to the new food culture in France and experiences the positive intercultural communication that takes place between him and the French Mallory and Marguerite. Hassan and Marguerite are united as a couple despite their inherent cultural differences and different birthplaces:

And it was on these seats that I had my first taste of England: a chilled and soggy egg-salad sandwich wrapped in a triangle of plastic. It is the bread, in particular, that I remember, the way it dissolved on my tongue.

The writer uses food as a metaphor to focus on the fact that it all comprises various cultural ingredients and the scope of blending two cultures. The family of Kadams wants to introduce the tastes and flavours of Indian food culture to the people of France which hints at their readiness to accept other food cultures as their testimony to cultural relativism. Hassan, having been apprenticed by Mallory moves on to Paris after getting a Michelin star for Mallory's establishment. Hassan has learnt the art of cooking in the French style which comes to him by default because of acclimatisation to the new culture. Before he moves to Paris, he feels that it was the moment when he finally grew up, because it was in that wet forest that he was able to say to himself, "Good-bye, Papa! He is off to see the world!" (159) Thus, he learns to adapt quickly to the new food culture. It ends with a change of mindset for both families to understand the importance of cultural relativism. Mallory's moral and social standards in her field are revealed to be a reflection of the cultural setting in which she was raised. Her manners and actions toward Hassan Haji and his family are a reflection of her ingrained ethnocentric mindset. Later, after getting to know them and gaining a clear understanding of their position on cultural relativism, she maintained that moral frameworks that govern relationships within various communities and cultures differ fundamentally from one another. She welcomes him and prepares him for her culinary tradition. She recognises that her actions against him were both at first incorrect and ultimately right.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, Hassan Haji's ethnocentric experiences in the new food culture and his learning curves to adapt to its new sphere of food culture with cultural integration. This study provides interesting caveats for dealing with the cultural shock of ethnocentrism. Dealing with cultural conflict necessitates first dealing with culture shock. Culture shock can be prevented by cultivating a more culturally tolerant and adaptable mindset and behaviour. A person's knowledge of another culture will improve, and he or she will be less likely to experience culture shock and cultural conflict if they cultivate a real desire to learn about another culture and create true intercultural interactions. Learning a new culture will help to avoid ethnocentrism, misunderstanding, prejudice and drive to cultural relativism. The characters as indicated in this study, will become more open-minded, tolerant, and at ease in their surroundings. A clear understanding and embracing a new culture will save them from adopting a pessimistic attitude and having unrealistic expectations.

This study could serve as a useful theoretical tool for students. Through the exploration of Hassan's ethnocentric experiences with food and subsequent cultural relativism, learners can gain a deeper understanding of Hassan's cultural dilemma as he adapts to a new culture. Cultural conflict is not just a theory; it occurs in the real world as well. For future researchers, this study could serve as a literature review. The results

of this study may also contribute to a better understanding of cultural conflicts. Furthermore, educators can employ this research or the book itself as a valuable teaching resource. For instance, a teacher could utilize the book to demonstrate ethnocentrism and cultural relativism as illustrations of cultural conflicts. The teacher could encourage the students to read the book and pinpoint instances of cultural conflicts present within it.

Hassan Haji's journey in *The Hundred-Foot Journey* illustrates the transformative power of food in cultural adaptation. By blending Indian and French cuisines, he bridges the cultural divide and fosters mutual respect. This story highlights the challenges and rewards of cultural integration, showcasing the unique ability of food to unify and enrich diverse traditions.

Acknowledgements

Not applicable

Authors' contributions

S. Vijaykumar contributed to the review section. Akhter Habib Shah contributed to the introduction section. A.Sathikulameen contributed to the analysis, and discussion and Huda Majeed revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

This study is supported via funding from Prince Sattam bin AbdulAziz University project number (PSAU/2024/R1445)

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) established.

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer-reviewed.

Data availability statement

Not applicable

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This open-access article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the authors with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

- Barker, C. (2003). *Cultural studies: Theory and practice*. Sage.
- Bennett, M. J. (2004). *Becoming interculturally competent*. In J. Wurtzel (Ed.), *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 62–77). Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.
- Calder, A. J., Rowland, D., Young, A. W., Nimmo-Smith, I., Keane, J., & Perrett, D. (2000). Caricaturing facial expressions. *Cognition*, 76, 105-146. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277\(00\)00074-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(00)00074-3)
- Calle-D íz, L. (2014). Godofredo Cinico Caspa: A positive discourse analysis. *Zona Pr áxima*, 20(1), 35-46. <https://doi.org/10.14482/zp.20.34>
- Dovidio, F. J., Hewstone, M., Glick, P., & Esses, M. V. (Eds.). (2013). *The Sage handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Hall, S. (1980). Cultural studies: Two paradigms. *Media, Culture & Society*, 2(1), 57-72.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Haryono, R. I., & Muslim, A. B. (2019). *Stereotypical portrayals of Indian and French in Richard C. Morais' The Hundred-Foot Journey (2010): An orientalism study* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia.

- Herskovits, M. J. (1973). *Cultural relativism: Perspectives in cultural pluralism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Johnson, R., Chambers, D., Raghuram, P., & Tincknell, E. (2004). *The practice of cultural studies*. Sage.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2017). Cross-cultural adaptation. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.18>
- LeVine, R. A., & Campbell, D. T. (1972). *Ethnocentrism: Theories of conflict, ethnic attitudes, and group behavior*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lewis, J. (2002). *Cultural studies-the basics*. Sage.
- Maissa, N. (2020). *Food politics and identity construction in Richard C. Morais's The Hundred-Foot Journey* [Master's thesis]. Larbi Ben M'ehdi University-Oum El Bouaghi.
- Masithoh, N. (2021). *Diaspora and its effects on two main characters in Richard C. Morais's novel The Hundred-Foot Journey* [Undergraduate thesis]. Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang. Retrieved from <http://repository.unissula.ac.id/id/eprint/24563>
- Morais, C. R. (2008). *The Hundred-Foot Journey*. Scribner.
- Nanda, S., & Warms, R. L. (1998). *Cultural anthropology* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Neuliep, J. W. (2009). *Intercultural communication: A contextual approach* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Neuliep, J. W., Hintz, S. M., & McCroskey, J. C. (2005). The influence of ethnocentrism in organisational contexts: Perceptions of interviewee and managerial attractiveness, credibility, and effectiveness. *Communication Quarterly*, 53(1), 41-56.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370500056150>
- Pramiswari, M. C. (2019). *Cultural conflict experienced by Hassan on Richard Morais' novel The Hundred-Foot Journey* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang.
- Reidel, L. (2010). What are cultural rights? Protecting groups with individual rights. *Journal of Human Rights*, 9(1), 65-80.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14754830903408656>
- Rohmah, H., Kuncara, S. D., & Lubis, I. S. (2021). Prejudice towards Indian in Morais' The Hundred-Foot Journey novel. *Ilmu Budaya: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni dan Budaya*, 5(1), 100-109.
- Sanchez, A. (2019). A culinary journey of faith, hope and love. In *Re-mapping identity, culture and history through literature* (pp. 7).