



Dining Out in Bombay

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Bombay as a City and Site of Public Culture

Although many Indian and foreign observers might regard India as one of those world societies that may be best described as "traditional," in fact India has developed one or more modern sectors that are in some ways coextensive with those of the West while retaining a distinctively Indian flavor.¹ Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge, concerned that students of Indian culture come to terms with this development, have argued that this process in contemporary India may be best understood within a distinctive new domain of cosmopolitan "public culture." They propose that characteristic institutions of this public culture (cinema, sport, tourism, museums, restaurants) are keys to understanding that which is "modern" in contemporary Indian life.² Although much of India's society remains rural or poor or both, it may be argued that the expansion of an educated middle class and the emergence of a new urban-centered public culture have begun, and will continue, to shape and condition Indian social and cultural expectations for the foreseeable future. Nowhere is this more evident than in emergent changes in Indian foodways, most particularly in the growth and elaboration of the institution of the restaurant.

This essay, stimulated by the Appadurai/Breckenridge thesis, explores the history of restaurants and public dining in Bombay and describes aspects of

that city's contemporary restaurant scene associated with an emerging cosmopolitan culture. The selection of restaurants for analysis reflects acceptance of the view that they are an element central to the making of public culture in India. Restaurants reflect, permit, and promote the introduction of a wide variety of changes in modern Indian life, including modifications of urban budgets and work schedules, entry of women into the middle-class workforce, new patterns of sociability, and, perhaps, growth of new ways to enjoy wealth through conspicuous consumption. These changes have been accompanied by "very important shifts in ideas about commensality, cuisine, ethnicity, and sociality in India."³

The choice of Bombay as locale of the study reflects both earlier and continuing research on the history of that city's social and economic life.⁴ Furthermore, Bombay's phenomenal role of being at once India's New York and its Hollywood has guaranteed the city a special place in the modern Indian imagination.⁵ Bombay is, in Gillian Tindall's words, "a mecca for incoming peoples, seeking work, seeking money, seeking life itself."⁶ Bombay is perhaps the most cosmopolitan city of India, attracting and holding the attention, ambitions, and energies of people from almost every Indian region. In the view of one native son, "Bombay is a gritty, impossible, unforgettable place."⁷ Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, himself a long-ago migrant to the city, gloried in its dynamism:

Some tens of thousands come here to make their future. Some make it, others don't. But the struggle goes on. That struggle is called Bombay. The struggle, the vitality, hope, the aspiration to be something, anything, is called Bombay.⁸

As India's predominant commercial, film, and advertising center, Bombay has, for better or for worse, been a prominent staging ground for India's acceptance of ideas, images, and institutions from abroad. But if Bombay absorbs foreign elements, it transforms them in a process of domestication or digestion that will soon appear on a wider subcontinental stage.

Indian foodway patterns have not been much studied or analyzed by scholars.⁹ This is not unusual, for relatively little scholarly attention has been given to food in other regions of the world. It has been only recently that historians and anthropologists have chronicled the growth of the restaurants and related high cuisines in European and Chinese cultures.¹⁰ Research on food in Indian culture has remained largely in the domain of anthropology.¹¹ It is appropriate therefore to offer a brief sketch of what is known of the historical contexts of public dining in India.

Food and Public Dining in Indian Tradition

Traditional India possessed no enduring tradition of restaurants or public dining, although food played a central role in the life and culture of Indians of all religious communities, social strata, and geographical regions. P. V. Kane, the great authority on Hindu law, observed that in the myriad *dharmaśāstra* texts the rules regarding the subject of taking meals, *bhojana*, were second in importance only to those of marriage.¹² In the Hindu and Muslim cultures of India, food and its consumption have represented at once a medium of exchange and rank and a reflection of personal moral identity and of social relationship. The norms of social life discouraged the institution of restaurants, that is, commercial establishments for public dining. Although one early source, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, makes reference to various kinds of public eating houses, the practice of dining out did not find a congenial niche within the traditional values of Hindu orthodoxy.¹³ Beyond questions of purity of food preparation, brahmanical tradition further emphasized that because consumption of food in a public place could leave the diner vulnerable to evil influences, "one must take one's meals in private in a place screened from public view."¹⁴

Hindu ideological concerns for commensality and purity thus contributed to anxiety regarding the provenance and purity of food for consumption—matters that are not subjects of inherent certainty in places of public dining.¹⁵ It has been suggested that there might also exist a "more subtle cultural desire to insulate commercial dealings and food transactions from each other . . . [because of] the Hindu view of food as central to the links between men and gods."¹⁶ Perhaps because of this, throughout the history of the subcontinent down to the present century, the problem of obtaining food prepared outside the domestic hearth was principally faced by travelers, whether merchants or pilgrims. On the road, it was likely to be necessary to provide one's own food. The Buddha made an explicit allowance for his followers to carry food while journeying.¹⁷

A limited facility for public dining by travelers existed during the Mughal raj within the institution of the caravanserai (or *khan*), which had been introduced into India from Iran by medieval Islamic conquerors, and which was frequently noticed by visitors in cities and towns.¹⁸ The Venetian traveler Niccolao Manucci recorded that Sher Shah had ordered creation of a chain of serais along the main routes with servants appointed to provide both food and drink to travelers.¹⁹ While some serais were large and substantial, particularly in capital cities, elsewhere many of these lodging places were nothing

more than "an enclosed yard with chambers round it" for travelers and "their pack animals."²⁰ An eighteenth-century traveler in Gujarat reported that even for "anyone of consideration," the most that could be hoped for upon entering a village on his journey would be a presentation of food, wood, and pots for preparation of a meal.²¹

In the great cities given shape by Muslim power, culture cookshops and "public bakeries, where almost every variety of cooked food and uncooked victuals could be bought at a reasonable price" flourished as long as the cities prospered.²² In 1641, when Sebastien Manrique visited Shah Jahan's temporary capital at Lahore, the city teemed with both wealth and people. Manrique found on the outskirts of Lahore a vast market of tents and stalls "filled with delicious and appetizing eatables" with "money-seeking vendors . . . informing strangers, and all who lacked kitchens, where ready-cooked and tasty food could be obtained."²³ Declining urban fortunes appear to have diminished the quantity and quality of such establishments, and in the countryside accommodation remained meager. More than one European traveler in Mughal India complained about a lack of inns and difficulties in obtaining food.²⁴ Meals might be available from a *bhatiyarkhana* ("cooking house"), a low-status inn of uncertain quality, and in some caravanserais women prepared food for visitors, but often travelers had to have with them a servant who would cook food obtained from local bazaars.²⁵ In a few instances, travelers' accounts do speak of availability of inexpensive and varied food. While Manrique praised the cookshops on the outskirts of Lahore for their inexpensive variety of vegetarian and nonvegetarian cuisine, he was describing what were in fact temporary stalls, and it is unclear whether they actually served meals or simply sold food to be consumed elsewhere.²⁶ Events of public dining that did receive notice generally were limited to contexts of public or semipublic ritual functions—a royal feast or food distribution, a charitable distribution of food to pilgrims, or a celebratory feast of a wedding or other rite of passage.

The establishment of British rule in India did not hasten a widespread introduction of European-style hotels and restaurants even for the use of Europeans. To some degree this may have reflected the relative pace at which lodging and dining facilities were developing in Europe itself. The number of nonofficial European visitors to India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was not large, however, and scarcely could have stimulated much demand for such establishments. Even in the 1840s a German visitor remarked:

As there are no inns whatever, the traveler in India is compelled to have recourse to the hospitality of the English. . . . Everywhere, even without letters of recommendation, you find the most hearty welcome, and the most hospitable reception."²⁷

The British Raj's hoary custom of giving departing travelers letters of introduction to friends elsewhere who might offer hospitality was a practical necessity for Europeans in India in the days before widespread construction of the *dak* (postal) or Public Works Department bungalows. One chronicler observed that hospitality to fellow Europeans had inspired a proverb "that no hotel could succeed while people were so hospitable."²⁸ As late as 1909, Maud Diver wrote of this tradition "in the land of the Open Door."²⁹

Visitors to the larger towns might hope to fare better. At least by 1843, Calcutta possessed "four large hotels," but it was said that during the first four decades of the nineteenth century Bombay "contained no hotel worthy of the name."³⁰ When the veteran "lady traveler" Miss Emma Roberts visited Bombay in 1839, she bemoaned the absence of adequate accommodation, noting that some European visitors lacking invitations at private homes were compelled to rent tents on the Esplanade during the cold weather for want of decent hotel quarters.³¹ Bombay obtained a first-class European-style hotel only in the late 1860s, when Watson's Esplanade Hotel was constructed on some ground cleared by the destruction of the Fort walls.³²

It appears that Indian travelers similarly continued to rely upon kinship connections when feasible, staying otherwise at remaining caravanserais or religious pilgrim resthouses such as *dharmshalas* and *choultries*. Indian visitors to Bombay, however, also found limited prospects for accommodation. In 1863, a Bombay paper commented on the inadequate number of caravanserais or *dharmshalas* in the city for Indian visitors.³³

While moving through the Indian countryside, European travelers might find a means of obtaining a meal prepared by a *dak* bungalow cook, but Leopold von Orloch observed that it was necessary for travelers to carry along their own tea, sugar, wine, and bread. Occasionally a European visitor would praise meals obtained at wayside "taverns" or "inns." Bishop Reginald Heber, on tour in 1825 at Panwell, opposite the harbor from Bombay, encountered "two taverns, one kept by a Portuguese, the other by a Parsee, the latter of whom, at very short notice, procured us a dinner at least as well got up, as cleanly and as good, as could have been expected at a country inn in England."³⁴ The bishop proves to be a lonely witness, however. Finding satisfactory public dining facilities remained a practical problem for virtually all subcontinent travelers until at least the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁵

Dining in Colonial Bombay

The prospects of public dining for visitors were limited in Bombay as well. Emma Roberts observed that respectable folk could not contemplate with equanimity dining at the rough and ready "taverns" of the town. She did report seeing in the "native town" "*caravanserais* and *cafes* where the country and religion of the owner may be known by the guests congregated about his gate," but Miss Roberts did not visit these establishments and offered no further comment upon them.³⁶

Accommodation for visitors—both European and Indian—in Bombay remained problematic during the middle years of the nineteenth century. The opening of Watson's Hotel, with both a "restaurant with a billiard room attached" and a "dining saloon" for guests, provided a solution for well-to-do European visitors, but European Bombay did not see a proliferation of independent dining establishments intended for residents of the city. One exception was the provision of "tiffins" or luncheons for men who worked at offices in the central Fort district. Here, some competition did arise. Jewanjee's Exchange at Meadow and Hummam Streets offered "Hot chops, Steaks and Oysters" in their "First Class Tiffin and Billiard Rooms," while nearby at Forbes Street and Rampart Row, the Jerusalem Tiffin and Billiard Rooms also boasted a reading room with all the latest English papers and proclaimed itself to be "the only European House in the Fort."³⁷ These establishments in their cuisine and facilities appropriated the styles set by more exclusive private clubs in order to serve the European merchants and tradesmen of the city.

At a time when restaurants were burgeoning in London as public places for the "respectable" elements of society, Bombay's "respectable" European society continued to prefer dining "at home" or "at club."³⁸ Private entertainments with invited guests continued to bring the city's British elites together. Lady Falkland observed that during her husband's tenure as governor of Bombay, "dinners, balls, occasional picnics and two or three days of races [were] the only amusements."³⁹ Three decades later little had changed. During the later nineteenth century well-to-do European society might dine out at "special occasion" banquets for visiting royalty or politicians and departing viceroys, governors, and other dignitaries. These were often all-male affairs, and strictly European, usually held within the privatizing premises of a racially exclusive European club.⁴⁰ Gatherings of "old boys" from various British public schools provided another occasion for

special dinners in the European clubs of Bombay. The tradition of such "public dinners" at the Byculla Club, for example, was supplemented by the arrangement of "private dinners" given by members of the club, including, with the permission of the managing committee, speeches and ceremonials associated with the club-sponsored events. It appears that the occurrence of these feasts peaked in the 1890s and that they grew less common in the early years of the new century.⁴¹ It is not possible to establish definitively why this change occurred, but it appears that the social styles of London were gradually penetrating Bombay European society, leading to a gradual shift of such celebrations and of smaller group events of "dining out" in the city center to hotel dining rooms, which had emerged in response to a gradual growth of European tourism.⁴²

Racial exclusivity appears to have been maintained in the policy of hotel dining facilities in establishments that sought primarily a European clientele. Indians might be admitted as room guests, but it was not expected that they would enter the dining hall. This pattern changed significantly in 1904 when the great Parsi merchant Jamsetji Tata's Taj Mahal Palace Hotel was opened. Tata's rule was clear: no Indian would be denied dining-room service, although the prices then, as now, guaranteed that access would be limited to the well-to-do.⁴³

Even as late as the 1920s, the limited number of restaurants in Bombay was remarked upon and seemed to require explanation. In an unusual guide to the city, written as a narrative story, a British visitor from Shanghai asks: "How is it that Bombay has no restaurants such as we find in European cities?"⁴⁴ His host, a European living in Bombay, explains:

Such an establishment may not pay here. The communities likely to patronize such a place are not large enough. . . . You must remember that Bombay is, properly speaking, a typical native city. The majority of its inhabitants are Hindus and Mahomedans, who do not eat European food.⁴⁵

The host might have explained further, had he known, that "respectable" members of that Indian majority generally refrained from much public dining regardless of cuisine. For most Indian householders the principal occasions of public dining were special festive events: wedding dinners, caste feasts, and, among Parsis, the confirmatory rite of passage, the *navjot* ceremonies. These events for the most part involved no significant dietary or commensal frontiers—the meals reflected caste or community dietary strictures and were presumably prepared under ritually appropriate circumstances. In the Parsi community, the tradition of well-to-do families

sponsoring charitable feasts for the entire community led to the emergence of a new catering profession that has continued to the present day to serve distinctive meals for weddings and *navjot* ceremonies held in community halls.⁴⁶

Restaurant dining was further encouraged by gradual changes in the timing of meals.⁴⁷ Many Indian merchants as well as clerical office workers of Bombay's "educated middle class" could, if they dwelt with their families in the city, avoid eating outside their domicile. This was made possible by the scheduling of office hours. In Bombay up until the past forty or fifty years, the conventional opening hour of many public and private offices was 10:30 or 11:00 a.m. This allowed clerical employees to eat a large meal at mid-morning at home or in an eating house before going to the office.⁴⁸

Restructuring of office hours and the physical expansion of Bombay city reduced the possibility that most clerical workers could consume all meals at home. When the aforementioned visitor from Shanghai wondered "how do people who work in the Fort manage for their lunch," his Bombay host replied:

They do as best they can. Generally their meals are sent to their offices; some of them find some kind of meals or other in eating-houses; the poorer classes patronize the Irani shops, which style themselves restaurants, but are mostly filthy dens where poisonous stuffs are sold.⁴⁹

Mention of meals being brought to the office points to one unique Bombay institution that has provided a luncheon alternative to restaurants in the city for more than half a century. Many office workers depend for their mid-day meal upon the *dabbawallas*, lunch- or "tiffin"-box carriers, who collect home-prepared food from residences and, following an elaborate network of exchanges, deliver it to the very individual for whom it is intended in, for example, the offices in the Fort business district, and correctly return the empty *dabbas* to the appropriate homes in the afternoon.⁵⁰ This service offers an inexpensive, convenient, and "homely" alternative to taking lunch in a restaurant by providing home-prepared food to suit each client's palate.⁵¹ Luncheon costs are incorporated in the household food budget, and the perennial labor surplus in the city appears to keep the *dabbawallas'* charges within the means of middle-class clients. The service may also be seen to offer status-conscious office workers escape from the non-middle-class image of carrying a lunch pail to the office. It is my impression, however, that as *dabbawalla* charges rise, more office workers will resort for lunch to restaurants or footpath food vendors, a phenomenon discussed later in this essay.

Utilitarian Public Dining

Not all of Bombay's people were truly householders. The city was a magnet in both industrial and commercial spheres for large numbers of itinerant male workers who came to the city solely for employment, living away from their villages and families.⁵² Whether they were bachelors or married with family elsewhere, whether they worked in offices or industries, a significant proportion of the city's male population was required by circumstances to make its own arrangements for eating meals. The city's sex ratio consistently underscored this phenomenon: in 1872 the census revealed that Bombay contained 612 women per 1,000 men; by 1931 this gender gap had reached a proportion of 554 per 1,000.⁵³

These "hearthless" men usually were residents of *chawls*, single- or multi-storied rows of one-room tenements. There they might share collective cooking chores with male caste-fellows, but many relied instead on the tradition of the *khanaval*.

Khanavals (Marathi: "board, cost of eating"⁵⁴—or *jevanavals*) were formal or informal public or semipublic eating houses for Indians in Bombay city. Occasionally the traditional term, *bhatiyarkhana*, apparently was used, particularly to identify inns or eating houses run by and for Muslims.⁵⁵ It has been impossible to document precisely the earliest appearance of a *khanaval* in Bombay. Indirect evidence suggests that the institution arose sometime after 1830. Molesworth's monumental Marathi dictionary, in referring to the alternative terms *jevanaval* and *jevanaghar*, reports that the first term was an "eating house or ordinary table (*table d'hôte*)" in "a new sense and appropriate to Bombay," and that the second was being "applied by some to the Eating houses (for Natives) lately set up in Bombay."⁵⁶ Historical dating aside, it may be observed that the growth of the *khanavals* was a response to the growth of Bombay as a market for rural labor and the consequent pattern of migration to the city by male workers. Most of these workers sought to minimize expenses in order to be able to send money home to their villages, so the *khanaval* food had to be inexpensive. Informal *khanavals* sometimes were formed if one male worker, having managed to bring his wife along to the city, then balanced the family budget by having her shop and prepare meals for other men who paid a weekly boarding fee. In some instances these men would also rent sleeping space in the *chawl* room. Because of the social proximity involved, in many cases such a *khanaval* served men of the same village and caste—a pattern that has continued to the present day.⁵⁷

In other instances, the *khanaval* would be run as a business by a widow

whose cuisine and clientele would generally be delineated by religion and region of origin. The British authorities considered many of these eating establishments to be grossly unsanitary.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the migration of male laborers to Bombay attracted from their villages and towns by the employment prospects in the city's growing industrial and commercial activity guaranteed a continuing demand for a means of providing suitable, inexpensive meals within religiously and regionally specific diets such as South Indian Brahman, Gujarati Hindu, Sindhi Muslim, Maharashtrian Brahman, or Maratha. If the *khanaval bais* (woman cooks) provided inexpensive food that was squarely within the dietary restrictions of their customers, it was rarely compared favorably to "home cooking." A recent researcher reported that most men complained of "the monotony and tastelessness of the food."⁵⁹ For the laboring men of Bombay, "dining out" was not a special treat but a matter of survival in the city.⁶⁰

It should be added that given the limited leisure-time facilities available to most of these "hearthless" working- and clerical-class men, it followed that in the evenings and on holidays they could, within their limited budgetary resources, also seek out places of public refreshment: tea stalls, drink shops, and the newest arrival on the Bombay scene, the Irani cafés.⁶¹

The Irani Cafés and Growth of Public Dining

"The Irani" has been a venerable Bombay institution. These cafés and provision stores were operated by immigrants from Persia, including Persian Zoroastrians, Muslims, and some Baha'is. A visitor to the city in, say, 1960 might easily assume that Irani cafés were an ancient fixture of the city's culinary history, but in fact they had commenced their rise to prominence only at the beginning of this century. Their entry into the Bombay world of public dining came at a particularly strategic time of development in the city. Bombay city was recovering from the socioeconomic dislocations brought on by the plague outbreaks of 1896 and subsequent years. Economic activity and population both were increasing, stimulating a new potential market for inexpensive restaurant facilities. Furthermore, the Bombay Improvement Trust's urban renewal activities were cutting new roads through the congested parts of the city, creating new commercial frontages where Irani shopkeepers could find profitable opportunities.

The first Irani café-store in Bombay cannot be identified with certainty.⁶² One of the Irani pioneers was the Bombay A-1 Restaurant, which opened near the Grant Road Station in 1905. This successful enterprise combined

food, services, and decor that became standard throughout the city over the next five decades.⁶³ Many Irani restaurants began as tea stalls and snack purveyors, featuring aerated waters, Persian breads, sweets, and omelettes ("tomato sauce no extra charge"). Some, such as the Ideal Restaurant at Flora Fountain, remained faithful to that menu to the end; Behram Contractor recalls it as "strictly a tea and bread pudding place."⁶⁴ The A-1, on the other hand, soon became well known as a source of a distinctive Parsi cuisine including the green chutney *patra* fish and the rich, multipulse curry *dhan-shak*. The A-1 also baked Christmas cakes that were a favorite of middle-class families of all communities.⁶⁵

Irani cafés with their high ceilings, bright lights, mirrors, marble-top tables, and bentwood chairs quickly became social gathering places, earning the title "poor man's parlor," although the city's truly poor would be financially excluded. One Goan immigrant student found it less costly to travel from St. Xavier's High School to eat lunch at his sister's home near Grant Road Station and then go back—a distance of three miles—than to eat out: "I couldn't afford a meal at the Irani restaurant, though it cost less than two annas."⁶⁶ Many customers came only for a cup of tea or a snack. Muslim-owned Iranis were predominant in the areas of the city dominated by the Muslim population, while the Zoroastrian shops tended to be situated in localities where they would cater to Parsis and Hindus, but most shops advertised that members of all religions were welcome.⁶⁷ Many Iranis stocked some canned goods and biscuits and other items, functioning as a neighborhood general store for "Westernized" goods and foodstuffs.

Although the largest of these establishments were found along the main roads of the southern portion of Bombay, they spread throughout the urbanized parts of the island. Apart from the attractions of their food and drink, these cafés permitted, if not promoted, new models of sociability in Bombay. Given the densely crowded residential quarters with which much of the city's population had to cope, a café could serve as a leisure-time destination, and with the introduction of the jukebox holding an adequate supply of "filmi" songs, the Irani cafés became even more a social resort for Bombay's male population.⁶⁸ As time passed these restaurants also played some role in enabling women to participate in dining out as a custom of family enjoyment. Most Irani cafés incorporated "family cabins," wooden and translucent-glass partitioned areas where genteel, respectable groups could dine without being exposed to public gaze. The availability of unexposed dining areas allowed entire family groups, including women, to partake of a meal, or at least tea and snacks. By 1939 the Ideal made a point in

advertisements of offering "special accommodation for Ladies."⁶⁹ Other customers, perhaps not so genteel, could employ these "cabins" or "family rooms" at other times for liaisons that required discretion.⁷⁰

The Iranis' food and clientele might vary slightly with neighborhood, but the style was uniform, even to the didactic wall notices that the Bombay poet Nissim Ezekiel immortalized in his "Irani Restaurant Instructions":

Do not write letter
Without order refreshment
Do not comb
Hair is spoiling floor
Do not make mischiefs in cabin
Our waiter is reporting
Come again
All are welcome whatever caste
If not satisfied tell us
Otherwise tell others
God is great.⁷¹

These new popular restaurants collectively were, like the *khanavals*, regarded by authorities as a menace to public health. Health and sanitation concerns led in 1916 to an amendment of the Bombay Municipal Act for licensing all eating houses. The city's chief health officer, citing the "very large number of eating houses in Bombay," made the point directly:

These places play an important part in the lives of the poorer working classes, and the low-paid and unmarried populace, for whom these houses for the most part cater, have to rely on them for their daily food. This fact alone is sufficient justification for demanding that a certain minimum standard of sanitation in regard to these eating houses should be compulsory.⁷²

The perception that the eating houses and cafés were problematic extended to their reputation as congregating spots for "antisocial elements." When in 1913 the police recommended that such establishments close by 9:00 p.m., the conservative Parsi paper *Jam-e-Jamshed* objected that as there were no fixed closing hours for offices and factories, there were many who had to work later than 9:00 p.m.:

The eating houses of Bombay may be the haunts of the *badmash* [bad character] and the ruffian. [However] they feed practically half Bombay. . . . It would suffice to remind the authorities once again, of the fact that a vast majority of the labouring population of Bombay, and together with them the mechanics, craftsmen, petty traders, clerks, office assistants and the rest, are to a certain extent, dependent on these eating houses for the supply of their daily food.⁷³

The proposed curtailment of eating house hours was quietly dropped, although the idea resurfaced recently.⁷⁴

While the extent and frequency of public food encounters for most Bombay citizens might have been limited, it seems plausible that once a person had taken tea and *samosas* at an Irani café, the psychological and moral obstacles to public dining, if not the economic ones, would be eroded. Furthermore, it has been suggested that while the *khanavals* and other public eating places were dominated by a sometimes frantic functional concern for eating quickly and without distraction, the Iranis offered a chance for variety and a more leisurely enjoyment of inexpensive meals. Without offering the exotic consumption opportunities that later came to characterize new Bombay restaurants, the Irani cafés represented a transition toward the “meal as experience”—an essential component for the evolution of a restaurant culture.⁷⁵

As in premodern India, travelers outside cities continued to have to seek out dining facilities. Although individuals who made railway journeys could patronize new forms of public meal services, cost was a serious constraint for most middle- and working-class Indians. Thus, only a minority in fact had much experience of hotel catering, refreshment rooms at railway stations, or the dining and buffet railway carriages. It appears that most travelers carried food from home or survived on light snacks and tea. Even into the 1930s, outside the context of travel, the practice of families going out to a restaurant specifically for the purpose of taking a meal and perhaps enjoying the ambience was virtually unknown outside of elite circles.⁷⁶

In Bombay at least, railway catering did provide one avenue to culinary adventure without the necessity of travel. Bombay's Victoria Terminus contained three restaurants, Brandons, Divadkars, and Karims, catering to European, Hindu, and Muslim dietary preferences respectively. For middle-class Hindu young men, it was not the dull certainties of the Hindu refreshment room at Victoria Terminus that was of interest. Rather, it was in Karims' Muslim dining room, where opportunities lay for experiments in eating meat. A Brahman resident of the city, looking back to the 1930s, recalled that while he was growing up in a strictly orthodox vegetarian home, he had been taken by his uncle to Karims' for mutton *biryani*: “It was something I could never have at home, and my uncle was rather a non-conformist.”⁷⁷

Still, the world of restaurant dining lay beyond the life of most middle-class Indians of Bombay. The economic crisis of the 1930s severely pinched household budgets. Eating out was identified by some as a major source of economic ills. An influential member of the Chitrapur Saraswat Brahman community—a caste dominated by “middle class” employment and aspira-

tions—carried on a campaign in the pages of the caste journal advising readers to avoid “unnecessary expenses” such as visiting tea stalls or restaurants.⁷⁸ One informant who grew up in Bombay, asked to reflect on why middle-class people there had not dined out more in those days, concluded that there were three basic reasons. The most significant was the cost:

The prices were low, but the wages of clerical workers were very low too. The second thing was that dietary preferences and/or rules meant that at a restaurant you would probably be eating the sort of food that could be had at home where a mother or wife would prepare it better. A third consideration was that dining out was simply not done—people believed that eating houses were not terribly clean, not in terms of ritual pollution, but rather in terms of germs.⁷⁹

Cosmopolitan and European Influences

Meanwhile, the European-centered restaurant trade in Bombay had been developing rather slowly, although not so slowly as to be nonexistent, as hinted in the visitor-resident dialogue quoted earlier. Restaurants were not only being opened, they were being promoted through the newly emerging art of advertising. A 1900 guidebook published for foreign tourists included advertisement of the Criterion Restaurant. No boasts were made about the food, but a European management was highlighted and the Criterion was reported to be “the only concert hall in Bombay,” featuring nightly performances by an “Austrian ladies’ string-band.”⁸⁰ The addition of ballroom dancing after 10:00 p.m. assured the management added revenue and appreciably reduced chances of the appearance of an Indian clientele.

Certain European-style or European-owned restaurants continued to play upon the idea of respectability and exclusivity in their commercial messages. The Italian caterers and confectioners Mongini's advertised in 1931 that they were “an old name in Bombay” and offered a somewhat exaggerated reconnaissance of the dining scene, observing that

Bombay is inundated with Restaurants, each having its particular clique of patrons and it is from these that the “tone” of a cafe may be fairly judged. Step into *Mongini's* at any hour, day or night, when it is open, and you will not fail to remark that its patrons belong to that exclusive class—true Restaurateurs—men and women who have a natural instinct to be drawn, as a magnet is to a needle, to the cafe-compatible, where every sense is catered for, where nothing jars.⁸¹

It seems obvious that Mongini's “class” campaign was aimed primarily at Europeans. The prospect of a quiet, refined dinner in a city embroiled with

the disruptions of Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign would have had its attractions. A similar advertising strategy offering refinement and avoidance of the mundane was pursued by The Wayside, which had opened in 1920 under the direction of a Mrs. Edwards and which described itself in 1931 as a "pleasing ENGLISH INN which is quiet and exclusive."⁸²

The end of the 1930s saw several new developments in restaurants in connection with the first construction of buildings along the new extension of Churchgate Street on land that had been reclaimed from the Back Bay during the 1920s. Although the first eating house to be encountered in approaching from the Fort city center was an Irani shop, the Asiatic Cafe and Stores, a number of ground-floor premises in multistory apartment blocks were taken on lease for first-class restaurants. Included was the new Purohit's Dining Rooms, a vegetarian restaurant that had previously operated in cramped quarters near Victoria Terminus. Now Purohit's sought to establish the idea of a stylish vegetarian meal, replete with silver *thalis* (plates) and drinking cups. A gentleman who was growing up in Bombay at that time recalled:

We thought Purohit's was too expensive to just go to for a meal, but our family and friends would make wagers, with the understanding that the losers would buy dinner at Purohit's. This made the event even more special, and for a special event, Purohit's was very nice.⁸³

The space was organized in the tradition of the "family cabin," with wooden-framed translucent glass panels and swinging doors, assuring respectable families the privilege of dining without public scrutiny. Other restaurants along Churchgate Street (subsequently Vir Nariman Road) offered new cuisines and styles of dining, including the Chinese Kamling and the Continental Gourdon & Company. Later, the opening of the Parisian Dairy and Gaylord's introduced the fashion of the sidewalk café. Other entries to this emergent "restaurant row" were the Cafe Napoli, Bombelli's (a Swiss-Italian restaurant), and, later, Berry's, a Punjabi restaurant.

This growth of restaurants was constrained by the effects of World War II. War-related activities brought increased population to the city and, hence, potential customers and prosperity for the restaurant trade. The introduction of rationing and other restrictions on food, however, created difficulties for restaurant managements and their diners. The postwar partition of the subcontinent brought considerable upheaval to Bombay, as some families departed for Pakistan and a substantial body of Punjabi and Sindhi refugee entrepreneurs flowed in. The city was not only receiving devotees of new cuisines: some of the new arrivals came intending to set up businesses, and

more than one Irani café owner, offered what seemed a fabulous sum for his businesses and goodwill by a Punjabi or Sindhi refugee-entrepreneur, gave up his establishment. The apparent prosperity and stability of Iran during the 1960s further led more Iranis to sell off their businesses in Bombay and return to what then appeared to be better prospects at home. The cafés have, for the most part, continued to operate under new ownership, although some Bombay citizens would argue that the change was not an improvement.⁸⁴

The influx of new people into the city also brought new palates. During the early years of independence, it appears that an increasing number of Bombay restaurants began to offer basic Punjabi cooking. The postpartition period also saw the introduction and spread, at the level of popular consumption, of the so-called Udipi restaurants with a concomitant popularization of South Indian vegetarian cuisine.⁸⁵

The evolution of high-quality "middle-class" restaurants continued, although food scarcities in the mid-1960s created some disruptions.⁸⁶ By this time, however, restaurants and cuisines available to citizens of Bombay had entered a new phase of development that may be identified with the emergence of the cosmopolitan public culture of the city.

The departure of the British in 1947 and the years thereafter might have been expected to produce enormous changes in the world of exclusive, upper-class public dining. Some old establishments quietly faded away, but many found that the Indian upper classes of Bombay were prepared to take up the slack and indeed to generate an even greater demand for restaurant facilities and services. The historical experience of dining out was already established within Bombay society. Furthermore, as the city continued to attract ambitious persons from the entire nation, the expectations of city life were soon appropriated by the newcomers. It may be hypothesized that the restaurant scenes included in Bombay Hindi films further helped to project upon a broader national consciousness what life in the city might be expected to offer.⁸⁷ Among the nonelite, the corner cafés and *khanavals* continued to meet the traditional needs of new generations of working men who had come to Bombay to try their luck. Public dining had evolved in a little over a century from a novelty to a convention, setting the stage for further expansion and domestication of the restaurant culture of Bombay.

The Burgeoning Restaurant Culture of Bombay

In the 1960s Bombay restaurateurs began to recognize the potential for an expanding market of consumers. There now were in the city an increased

number of Indians with sufficient discretionary income to indulge in the habit of dining out not from necessity but from opportunity, and for display.

Bombay had experienced physical growth that had more than doubled its size in the expansion into the suburban areas of Salsette Island. The city also was absorbing an ever increasing number of immigrants from virtually every corner of India. Where today the population of Bombay would be estimated at a little over 10 million people, in 1966 it was estimated at only a little over 4 million. Such expansion could not but be reflected in the restaurant trade. In 1909 Bombay, with a population of 977,822, reportedly had 1,839 eating houses, 43 refreshment rooms, 494 tea and coffee houses, 70 cold-drink shops, 114 boarding and lodging houses, and 36 boarding houses, a total of 2,596 establishments.⁸⁸ Not all such dining places were sufficiently prominent to obtain notice in Bombay directories. A 1920 city directory specifies the locations of only 550 eating establishments, including "restaurants," "Irani shops," "refreshment rooms," and "boarding houses" as well as "hotels."⁸⁹ This array of facilities served a city of 61 square kilometers with a population of 1,175,914. Six decades later, Bombay had outgrown old neighborhoods and was assimilating thousands of new migrants daily. By 1981, when Bombay's size had reached 428 square kilometers and a population above 8 million, the *Illustrated Weekly of India* reported the existence of 11,520 eating establishments within the city.⁹⁰

While some of this expansion of restaurant facilities is surely a direct reflection of the explosive growth of Greater Bombay, the specific emergence of a number of restaurants of more substantial gastronomic ambitions cries out for a more satisfactory explanation. The growth of wealth in Bombay, with its by-product, discretionary income, might explain the market development to some degree. An additional stimulus may have been the gradual dismantling of prohibition in Bombay over the past two decades. While one result of this policy has been the proliferation of "beer bars," some restaurants also obtained serving licenses. It has long been accepted in the North American restaurant trade that alcohol provides a level of profitability that permits far finer food and service than might otherwise be the case. It is likely that a similar relationship has been at work in the Bombay restaurant trade.

Shaping the Restaurant Culture of Bombay

At this point in the story, my perspective is modified by the fact that I first visited and lived in Bombay from 1965 to 1967 and had considerable oppor-

tunity to observe the "restaurant scene." During part of my stay I was able to secure residential quarters as a paying guest with an Indian family. In return for my "rent" I had my own room and took my morning and evening meals with the family. Occasionally some of the younger members of the family and their friends and I would opt out of dinner for an excursion to a cinema, in which event we would generally consume some "snacks" sold near the theater or, in at least one case, on the theater premises.

I might also be invited to join the family in "going out to dinner," perhaps once in a month. On one such evening it was decided that we would all go out for Chinese food, but we had no agreement as to where we ought to dine. I suggested a Chinese establishment on Colaba Causeway that struck me as offering tolerable versions of sweet and sour everything. "No, no, no," said another, "let's go to the Kamling. *It looks so Oriental!*" My first reaction was to point out to my friend that there were in fact those in the West who considered Bombay itself to be quite "Oriental," but he retorted that he meant Oriental as in China—the way all "sensible" people thought. We went on to dinner at the Kamling. It was certainly "Oriental" and the food wasn't bad. My friend's idea that Chinese food was best consumed in an "Oriental" ambience was understandable enough. He had, as it were, been sold the sizzle instead of the steak.⁹¹

This incident was recalled to mind a few years ago when a new English-language fortnightly periodical *Bombay: The City Magazine* (hereafter *Bombay*) was first produced in 1979 by the publishers of the highly successful newsmagazine *India Today*. *Bombay* functioned as both a chronicle and an advertising vehicle of the city's burgeoning consumer economy and culture. The magazine seemed very much a product of its namesake city; it was an innovative enterprise that existed primarily for making money, a commercial undertaking that survived by selling advertising. Both editorial content and advertising copy targeted an upper-middle-class readership possessed of discretionary income and a willingness to spend it. Where older periodicals that have traditionally catered to "middle class" readers, such as the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, were cluttered with "ads" offering bargains or containing extensive written text promoting products and services that met "practical" needs, many of *Bombay's* advertisers preferred promotion through nuanced image and mood. The city's sophisticated advertising industry was quick to adapt to the rhythms of an international culture of consumption, producing advertising copy akin to that seen in the pages of North American periodicals like the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times Magazine*. (*Bombay* is described here in the past tense because it ceased publication in early 1991, caught be-

tween rising production costs and stagnant circulation and advertising revenues. A legacy of style and content survives in other serials and a growth of colored newspaper supplements that carry similar advertisements and articles.)

The images and contents of *Bombay* did not reflect the actualities of most "middle class" citizens, whose horizons of consumption are limited by harsh realities of static income and economic inflation. If India's cosmopolitan public culture is to be the object of scholarly analysis, its essentially elite qualities must be acknowledged. Only a minority of those who absorbed the message of *Bombay's* advertising may realistically expect to participate fully in the realities of expanded consumption. On the other hand, it may be argued that simply the act of looking at stylish advertising is a form of consumption that subtly informs one's taste, sensibilities, and expectations. As one son of Bombay observed:

The permissive whisky-and-soda lives of the rich, projected in type-cast imagery through the city's Hindi films and through Bombay's advertising industry, the largest in the country, are of absorbing interest to the whole population.⁹²

Early in the career of *Bombay*, an "Eating Out" feature containing reviews of selected local restaurants was introduced. The reportage made it clear that some restaurants in the city were indeed now being promoted in terms of more than simply cuisine. Themes, ambience, and style were offered directly as enticements to potential customers. *Bombay* appeared to be assisting its readers in identifying and sorting the myriad dining options in the city and in making the most of possible adventures in eating. Some "Eating Out" columns offered what amounted to instructions that would encourage or enable middle-class Indians to consume new cuisines and innovative restaurant styles. Here seems to be the juncture between the traditional concern for finding satisfactory food in Bombay and the emergence of a new "public culture." If the majority of *Bombay's* readers could scarcely afford to patronize some of the upscale establishments, the reviews appear to have found a substantial audience who vicariously experienced the presumed pleasures of the restaurant under discussion. In any case, it certainly appears that restaurateurs who gained a favorable notice from *Bombay's* columnists welcomed this cachet.

In general, *Bombay's* coverage of various aspects of the city and its life suggests a modern incarnation of the "in unknown London" style of journalism that provided substantial content for the middle-class press in Victorian Britain. In a restaurant article regarding traditional Muslim "*biriani* facto-

ries" in the Mohamadali Road area—not terra incognita for Bombay's well-to-do, but certainly terra infirma—there is a sense of being led to areas that are, frankly, a bit dangerous, yet sanitized by vicarious access.⁹³ This aspect meant that *Bombay* did not concentrate only on the upscale, trend-setting establishments, but also occasionally ran a feature on college canteens or old-time cafés. In a feature entitled "Off the Eaten Track," the editors noted:

While the prominent eating places and hotel restaurants draw custom on their own strength, in Bombay it's the little places tucked away in obscure galis and crowded ghettos which really tilt the balance. Eateries in the most basic sense of the word, these restaurants (if they can be called that) have none of the fanciful decor and contrived atmosphere which characterize their more expensive counterparts. Difficult to find, often hard to get to and lacking the graces of larger restaurants, the quality of food in these eateries nevertheless makes the arduous trek worthwhile.⁹⁴

It may have struck some *Bombay* readers that they could not entirely escape "fanciful decor" or "contrived atmosphere" since one of the featured "eateries" was the Aram Kutchi Restaurant, which offered Kutchi cuisine; its "walls [are] done up like a village interior, Kutchi coverlets are used for upholstery, the music is popular Saurashtrian and Kutchi folk, and the waiters are liveried like the shepherds of that arid land."⁹⁵ On the other hand, the Radio Restaurant just opposite Crawford Market, which I personally can testify is a genuine dive, did get a write-up that clearly stated that the food was not good but the style was fascinating: "Take your outstation guest and let him soak in the atmosphere. Keep eating down to a minimum."⁹⁶

It seems evident that one pattern of restaurant culture has not changed in the past two decades—a willingness to borrow images and names, if not concepts, from the metropolitan centers of the British Raj. Many of the pre-World War II Irani cafés embraced Raj and royalty in nomenclature, for example the Alfred, Prince Albert, British Flag, Britannia, Coronation Darbar, Edward, George, King George, New Empress, Royal Marine, Royal Good Hope, and Union Jack restaurants. Metropolitan models of a vaguely perceived image of high-class culinary and social status were seen in, among others, the Savoy, the Temple Bar, and the Cecil. A remarkable example of this transmission was the Rustom brothers' Corner House Restaurant, said to be inspired by the original Lyon's Corner Houses of London. The Rustom brothers' locale at the Girgaum-Charni Road junction would not remind a Londoner of the "corner" of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road, but the sincerity of the compliment could hardly be doubted. Today the borrowings from the West are not centered entirely upon London, although the top-

of-the-scale dining rooms in the five-star hotels have acquired through the channels of international financial connections some specific inspirations, as for example *Menage a Trois*, a transplant from Knightsbridge to the Taj Mahal Hotel.⁹⁷ One recent entry into the market, Bombay Brasserie, takes its name from another London establishment but offers what might be termed an all-India nouvelle cuisine in an elegant setting designed to create "the ambience of the stately home offering gracious hospitality—or even an exclusive club."⁹⁸ At the fast-food level, Bombay does not yet have a "Big Mac," as New Delhi does, but a local entrepreneur has opened, without regard to franchising agreements or trademark registration, a Jack in the Box.⁹⁹

New varieties of cuisine have become popular in Bombay restaurants. An innovation from the late 1960s was the introduction of "sizzlers," first at the Excelsior Cinema restaurant, but soon spreading elsewhere; the entrée, on a hot metal plate resting in a wooden platter, arrives at the table in a sizzling cloud of steam. The idea took hold so convincingly that several chefs quickly moved to add "vegetarian sizzlers" to their menus in order to appeal to the widest possible range of customers.¹⁰⁰

Something like an approach to a "national" cuisine for "crossover" enjoyment may be seen in restaurateurs' attempt to include any item on their menus for which it is perceived there may be a market.¹⁰¹ For example, the Bristol Grill, now owned by the Madras hotel Dasaprakash, offers a South Indian vegetarian buffet to which has been added Gujarati fare, while at Status, a Punjabi vegetarian restaurant operated by the Kamat family chain, the management has introduced a Gujarati *thali* "cooked by experts from Surat."¹⁰² Accommodating the varying dietary expectations of multigeneration family parties has required Bombay restaurants to be both responsive and innovative.

How to explore new cuisines in comfort while holding on to one's dignity in specialty restaurants is a challenge in any society. Many of Bombay's middle- and upper-class consumers, having limited experience of such cuisines, might feel diffident about culinary adventures. From time to time, *Bombay* offered guidance to its readers about what to do and how to behave in certain settings; if the writing seems to the knowledgeable reader to be tongue-in-cheek, it nonetheless provided useful, usable hints to a neophyte. At the Lobster Pot in the Sea Rock Hotel, described as "the ideal place to impress your girlfriend or make your guest from Marseilles feel at home," for example, the *Langouste Newbourg* was

carefully presented with a signature garnish of lightly cooked carrots, beans and ladyfingers [and] has succulent morsels of lobsters. Prepared before your

table—like most of the other dishes—the lobster is heated in paprika and butter and flamed with cognac. With cream added, the concoction is then reduced and seasoned with lobster butter and flavoured with sherry as a large flourish.¹⁰³

But while all this is happening, how is one supposed to behave? *Bombay* offered succinct instructions:

The rule of thumb, while all this elaborate culinary expertise is put on display, is to look appreciative (but not overwhelmed) and nod benignly when the food is finally placed before you. And in case your dish is prepared in a white sauce, *make sure to tell the captain whether you want it done bland or spicy to cater to your Indian palate.*¹⁰⁴

It might be noted that the "family cabin," now called a "private dining room," exists at this elegant restaurant, thus preserving a tradition from the old Irani cafés, although at Lobster Pot prices no one anticipates that they are more often for discreet liaisons than for "family dining."

Some restaurant innovators, finding themselves unable to wait for the customers to be educated, simply impose some order. The Saladero opened what was reported to be Bombay's first serious salad bar. Salads, which are an exotic culinary item in India, have not had much success in Bombay, being offered at high prices for small portions of basically uninteresting fare. The Saladero's manager, noting that the salad dips and dressings were not understood by patrons who mixed them up in ways that were "disastrous," saw much utility in telling customers exactly what they should eat and with what. *Bombay's* only comment was that "in a city where interesting meals are getting either increasingly rare or increasingly expensive" the salad bar offered hope.¹⁰⁵

Innovative angles and explorations of ethnicity seem to meet in restaurant revivals. Gaylord's at Churchgate was an established restaurant that added a new decor and Turkish cuisine in a bid to strengthen an eroding trade. Like those of most Indian restaurants, however, its management is sensitive to the unwillingness of some of its customers to experiment. Hence the Gaylord continues to offer "a smattering of most cuisines, Indian, European and Chinese—all adapted to a basic Punjabi palate," but nonetheless one may now also find at Gaylord a "Turkish Adventure."¹⁰⁶

Bombay restaurant marketing has promoted innovations in decor, particularly in the five-star hotels that ostensibly cater to foreign tourists (as often from Arab countries as from the West) but whose major custom has been drawn from Bombay's well-to-do elites. After the Hotel President was taken over by the Taj Mahal group, the old-style dining room, Mayfair, was

made over into an elegant Indian restaurant, Gulzar. There were complaints, however, that "in the time-tested tradition of the Taj Mahal hotels the Gulzar combines high prices with steadily diminishing servings."¹⁰⁷ Perhaps catering to an affluent Sindhi residential enclave in its vicinity, the Gulzar included regional specialities of Sindh. Recent changes in taxation policies—a luxury tax and a surcharge on hotel restaurant services—may reduce the market shares of these establishments, yet it is also likely that in attempting to draw in customers at higher prices, they may create even more innovative cuisines and settings.¹⁰⁸

Foreign cuisines have to some extent been domesticated in Bombay. Some Bombay restaurants promoted this transition even before 1947. Italian fare was popularized by Mongini's in the Fort and Vianelli's at Chaupati. Subsequently, Chinese cuisine, or something that might better be termed "Bombay-Cantonese" cooking, became the basis for judging Chinese cooking (I exclude my friend who judged it all by the decor), and several innovative operations became successful in Bombay. A new Chinese restaurant, Chinatown, was described in 1982 as "the most original restaurant to appear on the city scene . . . completely unlike the standard Bombay-Cantonese." Many special dishes and gracious touches were offered, including complimentary cups of a special jasmine tea flown in from Singapore. The old-line Bombay-Cantonese was retained on the menu "for the die-hards and [the] unadventurous."¹⁰⁹ Mention of Chinatown leads to another aspect of Bombay restaurant culture—the connection with celebrities: restaurants encourage and cater to well-known sports and film figures.¹¹⁰ Chinatown's success, it was said, was in part a result of its popularity with Shashi Kapur and other film-industry personalities.¹¹¹ An even more attractive Chinese restaurant, the China Garden, opened to rave reviews that noted its clean modern interior, striking ambience, innovative and high-quality cuisine, and celebrity clientele. The owner employed two "socialite interior designers" to produce "a dream of a restaurant."¹¹² One local observer says:

The restaurant scene in Bombay changed with the arrival of Nelson Wang and the China Garden. Before him, the restaurants were over-carpeted, under-lit, with solemn diners talking in hushed voices and background music of the type that Indian Airlines plays before taking off or while landing. Nelson Wang removed the carpets and bared bright marble floors with light and sounds reflecting, people talking at the tops of their voices, greetings across the table, no music.¹¹³

The Hunan style of Chinese cooking was later introduced in several Bombay restaurants.

Clearly, the upscale restaurants of Bombay offer a wide assortment of cuisines and settings. Among the ethnicities to be explored are those of India itself. For example, in the best tradition of the Festival of India, the Village, an elaborate open-air restaurant, displays curios of rustic India. A potter is employed to make clay pots (and engage the interest of those waiting for their tables). The waiters are, according to *Bombay*, liveried like cowherds and, "speaking impeccable English," give good service; water is poured out of the earthen jars, food is in clayware, "and everything has the distinct aroma of the backwoods."¹¹⁴ On a less elaborate scale, the Pritam da Dhaba opened in 1985 as a recreation of a roadside *dhaba* that typically would cater to the truck drivers of the Punjab highways. An authentic open kitchen with raised mud *choolahs* produced "mostly good" food, although with more varieties than would be found in a true roadside stall. On the other hand, the authenticity of insisting that customers sit on *charpai* cots created resistance: a two-hour meal offered "a form of torture that only masochists would welcome."¹¹⁵

Changes and Continuities

One final comment on Bombay's "dining out" phenomenon must capture the so-called fast foods. As one author put it, "The trend today is to grab a bite." Youngsters are tending to eat out more, for a change from home cooking and to relax in snack bars where they can also listen to recorded popular music, mostly imported Western rock. Hamburgers and pizza have been rather thoroughly domesticated within Bombay's various fast-food outlets. Their popularity seems rooted as much in the ravages of inflation as in the culinary delights of the products. Bombay snack bars have such evocative names as Waikiki, Sundance Cafe, Hard Rock Cafe, Chuck Wagon, and the aforementioned Jack in the Box; the latter has not only the obligatory loud "background" music, but also a video game parlor.¹¹⁶ A well-known Bombay literary and political figure, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, complained in 1987:

Bombay food is found no-where! The old Irani Restaurants are gone, the vegetarian restaurants are gone, the Rice Plate for six Annas is gone, now the fast food—Chicken in plastic *thalli* for Rs. 25/- with Ice Cream for kids at Rs. 5/- each. You eat from card-board plates and plastic spoons, because there is no time to eat and relish your food. Fast-fast-faster-fastest goes the rhythm of eating. What you get is peptic ulcers in the bargain.¹¹⁷

Perhaps Abbas's distaste arose within that indulgently austere aesthetic of plain living and high thinking associated with devotees of both Gandhian

and socialist ideals. If so, the distaste may be misapplied since the new phenomena in fact represent an evolution of popular consumption practice that has grown among a large percentage of Bombay's population. Fast-food restaurants ought not to be seen as merely an innovative adaptation of foreign models by Bombay's public-dining industry. Another source is rooted in older agencies—the street-corner vendors and handcart food sellers of the city. Footpath food vendors have long been plying their trade in Bombay, to the delight of the citizens and the anxiety of the municipal health authorities. The *bhelpuriwallas* at Chaupati beach have become as much a part of a visit as the hot dog vendors of New York's Coney Island.¹¹⁸ Elsewhere in the city, the variety of street food has remained immense despite problems of storage, water supply, weather, and police harassment. Street vendors' overhead is low, and business can flourish provided "that they provide something that is cheap, tasty, seductive."¹¹⁹ An extension of this tradition is found on the skyscraper-lined streets of Bombay's Nariman Point. There the rental cost of building space is so prohibitive that very few restaurant owners have been able to afford a lease. (In *Topsy Turvy*, a satirical revue of life in Bombay produced by actor/impresario Sylvester da Cunha, one sketch is about finding a reasonably priced lunch at Nariman Point.)¹²⁰ Each day at the lunch hour, thousands of office workers literally descend upon the virtually permanent stalls and vans of street vendors. Here too new cuisines are encapsulated within the range of Indian palates. One van owned by a Muslim features "Chinese" lunches cooked by a Maratha Hindu from Jalgaon who adapts his productions to the tastes of his customers. He explained, for example, that Gujaratis "have a sweet tooth so I put in extra sauce for them. Punjabis like *thikha* so I add extra chilli."¹²¹ Asked about this "competition," the manager of Kamling diplomatically responded, "I can't vouch for the authenticity of the food, but it's value for money." As an alternative to the *dabbawala* or as a white-collar parallel to the *khanavals*, these street vendors seem largely to meet the utilitarian dining needs of the officegoers while creating another form of "restaurant" for Bombay.¹²²

Conclusions

This essay has been concerned to describe the emergence in contemporary Bombay of a restaurant culture that has become one of the mediators of what Breckenridge and Appadurai have termed India's cosmopolitan public culture. In order to establish the roots of public dining phenomena in Bombay, an extensive historical survey establishes that public dining at the utilitarian

level of daily necessity (the *khanaval*) has been a continuous feature of the city's life since it began its growth as a great colonial commercial and industrial center in the early nineteenth century. By contrast, restaurant dining in Bombay as an elite activity for leisure time, whether for European colonial society or for Indians, emerged much more haltingly. While historical evidence does suggest that urban necessities linked to industrial working-class laborers and commercial middle-class office workers significantly eroded traditional cultural imperatives against public dining, wealthy Bombay citizens often appeared to be content to experience public dining only in encapsulated domains of family, caste, or community. Colonial rule seems to have had only a tangential relation to this phenomenon. The growth of restaurant dining in Bombay extends across the political watershed of Indian independence. With the exception of certain establishments and institutions that had been racially exclusive preserves for Europeans, there appears to be no clear break between the colonial and postcolonial period.

A full discussion of nonelite eating possibilities in contemporary Bombay must lie beyond the scope of this essay. Any visitor to the city today will become aware of the extent to which a broad spectrum of the society "dines out," even if it is at humble establishments. Much of the evidence presented may suggest that there always existed a profound dichotomy between the domains of customers, styles, and foods of Bombay's utilitarian eating houses and those of elite restaurants. Observers might be tempted to view the latter merely as interesting, possibly amusing, manifestations of the cultural consumption on the periphery of a Euro-centered world capitalist system. Such a reaction should be resisted insofar as it slips too easily into a comfortable assumption that Indian public culture is merely a derivative, if colorful, form of global modernity. There is no "typical" Bombay dining patron. Viewed synchronically, considerations of class may be seen to align the customers of the two extremes. Certainly an average customer of a textile-mill-neighborhood *khanaval* is unlikely to drop by the Taj Mahal Hotel's Sea Lounge for a cold coffee ice cream, which would cost him the equivalent of one week's meals, even if he brazened his way past the formidable doorman. And, apart from the excursions "Off the Eaten Path" suggested by *Bombay*, few habitués of the expensive restaurants will frequent the tea stalls and lunch homes of Parel. Still, in the complex metropolitan setting of Bombay, a growing "middle class," itself internally differentiated, has occupied a complicated world of consumption between the extremes. It seems likely that in the evolution of India's public cultures this middle ground of consumption

will contribute prominently to complex flavors of public taste, even if the more classical forces of economic wealth define the extent of participation.

Placing the analysis in a historical framework, emphasizing the dynamics of change over time, illustrates more clearly that most of Bombay's population has existed between the extremes of great wealth and abject poverty and that at many intermediate levels people have experienced a growth of purchasing power and purchasing incentive. During the twentieth century increments of income and experience have encouraged and enabled an ever widening popular participation in the phenomenon of restaurant dining. Even if the "upscale" restaurants of Bombay have made their mark by catering only to the very rich, that social category in Bombay has always been open to new wealth and ambition, and patronage of such establishments has become a mark of status, as underscored in a recent voyeuristic novel of Bombay "socialite" life.¹²³ If there has been a marked change in recent years, it may be that the employment of new themes and styles has begun to trickle down into new, less costly restaurants whose custom is drawn more from the city's growing middle classes.

Another consideration must be that these developments have not been limited to Bombay. Although discussions of the city's enormous population growth have centered on migration to Bombay, urban expansion has also entailed both a natural increase and considerable circulation out of the city. Just as Hindi films and national periodicals have projected an image of Bombay's culture to the rest of the subcontinent, so too have the "Bombay-returned" brought to other localities powerful memories and expectations of what it is to be "up to date." All this may be taken as proof that Bombay is on the "edge of India" in more than just geography. The Calcutta editor M. J. Akbar complained:

Bombay's culture and thinking have simply drifted away from the rest of the country . . . It is not just a question of wearing jeans, or sharing ideas from the West (to which there can be no sensible objection), but of adopting foreign patterns and ideas without question, as a city might when it stopped thinking.¹²⁴

Dom Moraes drew a different perspective, one often favored by Bombay residents, comparing the city to New York: "Like New Yorkers, the citizens of Bombay have some indefinable but perceptible quality that makes them easily identifiable to their countrymen."¹²⁵ He might have added "copiable" as well.

And what of the foods offered in the Bombay world of restaurant dining? In an Indian nation of multiple regions and communities, it might be argued

that all Indian cuisines represent "ethnic cuisines," at least in the context of a great cosmopolitan metropolis. Ethnic cuisines may reflect the modern functions of ethnicity that work as adaptive self-interest mechanisms.¹²⁶ Furthermore, explorations in ethnic-cuisine restaurants may offer a relatively easy means for vicarious experience of another culture.¹²⁷ Yet ethnic restaurants face the dilemma of remaining "true to tradition" or of accommodating aspects of the dominant foodways of their locality. Commercial compromises such as offering ethnic cuisines along with familiar Indian regional dishes may diminish "authenticity" to the point where the only "ethnicity" left is in the words printed on the menu.

The evolution and growth of restaurants in Bombay, and in India generally, may be in part linked to the colonial past. The utilitarian, functional public dining facilities of the city were a direct by-product of the pattern of labor recruitment from the countrysides of the subcontinent. Men residing in the city without their families while they worked as mill hands, dock laborers, railwaymen, and office clerks generated a demand for inexpensive, functional meal services that would enable them to save their earnings to send back to their homes. While this phenomenon occurred in a colonial context, there is nothing specifically colonial within it. Colonialism may have had an impact on gastronomic patterns of the Third World,¹²⁸ but the emergence of a restaurant culture was consistent with patterns of metropolitan consumption, in this instance in Britain. Similarly, the appropriation of elite consumption patterns of the foreign colonial elites by emergent well-to-do Indians may be interpreted as a subcontinental illustration of consumption mobility characteristic of the developed and developing worlds alike.

In conclusion, one cautionary note is required. Scholarly analysis of public culture must not lose sight of the fact that the abstractions of style and consumption really matter only when living people are experiencing and reacting to them. I am reminded of an interview in connection with this project with two very thoughtful Bombay natives who now live in Seattle. One of them, an academic of broad education and interests, was anxious to think some more about public culture and what it could reveal about the direction of Indian life. He wondered if in looking at ambience, decor, and even cuisine purely in descriptive terms an important point was not missed: the factor of enjoyment. He recalled that "my uncle would come to our house and say, 'Hey, Ramesh, let's go,' and off we'd go. I never asked where. I knew it would be for food. It was always an adventure."¹²⁹ My informant's wife added that when she was growing up in Bombay during the 1930s, resources were stretched thin in her middle-class family. When people did go out to

dine it was seen as a special occasion: usually the party would include members of two or more families together for a celebration or observance. In part, eating out solved the difficulties of preparing food for large gatherings in Bombay's typically cramped residential quarters. Furthermore, eating out reflected a sense of occasion, whether it be celebration of a high pass on a school exam, a birthday, or an engagement:

We didn't think of going out except for special occasions. We couldn't afford to but it was always a treat; it was always great fun. I think most of our friends in Bombay still feel that way about it.¹³⁰

Partaking of sustenance together has long been a marker of human community and identity.¹³¹ Thus, scholars of public culture must acknowledge and consider that for many Bombay restaurant patrons "dining out" still represents primarily excitement and celebration. We have to ask whether in constructing a theory of a "restaurant culture" the diners are only to be thought of as an "audience" that consumes the productions of the "producers" of public culture, or if we ought not also to reckon on what role the "audience" may itself have as "producers," even if the production is only an innocent merriment of celebration and adventure.¹³²

Notes

1. A preliminary version of this essay was read as a paper in a panel entitled "Public Culture in India" organized by Carol A. Breckenridge at the Wisconsin South Asia Conference in November 1987 and stimulated by several essays concerning the problems and aspects of "public culture" in contemporary India. Some of the research for this paper was accomplished "in the field" during the author's periods of residence in Bombay between 1965 and 1987. Thus, credit must be given to the American Institute of Indian Studies, the U. S. Department of Education, and the Indo-U. S. Subcommittee on Education and Culture, who picked up the bill but never told me where to dine. Although some of the evidence must be frankly acknowledged to be impressionistic, I have found that many of my colleagues accept that my opinions carry some weight, so to speak. The critical readings of earlier drafts of this essay by Professors Breckenridge and Appadurai and by members of the University of Washington History Research Group are gratefully acknowledged. The essay was completed in its final revised form in 1990.

2. A theoretical overview is offered by Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge in their introduction to this volume. Appadurai and Breckenridge also argue that an analysis of public culture challenges and expands the historian's notions of culture, which are predicated on such polarities as high and low, elite and popular. It may be premature to spend much time on the matter of terminology. Appadurai and Breckenridge have rejected the use of the term *popular culture* for reasons that strike me as being reasonable and adequate. I have discovered in discussions with some historians of Europe and America, however, that *public culture* possesses some intellectual luggage, namely, in a vigorous historiography regarding the history of political discourse, most particularly that of early Anglo-American political theory. In J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), public culture is primarily concerned with the development and implications of civic virtue and emergent republican ideologies. My

colleague John E. Toews brought this to my attention in his "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *American Historical Review* 92 (October 1987): 890-92.

3. Appadurai and Breckenridge, introduction to this volume.

4. Within that work, it has been possible to demonstrate a considerable historical depth for manifestations of the public culture domain extending earlier than the past two decades. Indeed, contrary to a priori assumptions, there is no clearly defined "break" associated with the end of colonial rule, but instead a continuity of development of the restaurant phenomenon culminating in an efflorescence of consumption at the present day. This should enhance our understanding of the processes by which modern cosmopolitan culture has emerged. In the example of restaurants in Bombay, historical evidence of a longer-term accumulation of the experience of public dining in Bombay, even in utilitarian settings and circumstances, may help to account for the apparently successful transition of Bombay society toward its contemporary patterns of restaurant "consumption" in the cosmopolitan mode. Furthermore, this has called into question certain bits of "urban folklore" to which many Bombay citizens themselves subscribe regarding the degrees of change that have occurred over the past century in the public life of the city.

5. Frank F. Conlon, "Industrialization and the Housing Problem in Bombay, 1850-1940," in *Changing South Asia: Economy and Society*, ed. Kenneth Ballhatchet and David Taylor (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Hong Kong: Asian Research Service, 1984), pp. 153-68, and Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins, 1700-1935* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977).

6. Gillian Tindall, *City of Gold: The Biography of Bombay* (London: Temple Smith, 1982), p. 19.

7. Dom Moraes and the editors of Time-Life Books, *Bombay* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1979), p. 5.

8. Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, *Bombay, My Bombay! The Love Story of the City* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1987), p. 165.

9. On early India, see Om Prakash, *Food and Drinks in Ancient India from Earliest Times to 1200 A.D.* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1961). Cf. McKim Marriott, "Caste Ranking and Food Transactions," in *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, ed. M. Singer and B. S. Cohn (Chicago: Aldine, 1968), pp. 133-71; R. S. Khare, *The Hindu Hearth and Home* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1976); R. S. Khare, *Culture and Reality: Essays on the Hindu System of Managing Foods* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1976); and R. S. Khare and M. S. A. Rao, eds., *Food, Society and Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1986). One historical essay noted is Carol A. Breckenridge, "Food, Politics and Pilgrimage in South India, 1350-1650 A.D.," in Khare and Rao, *Food*, pp. 21-53.

10. Most studies comprehend those phenomena as expressions of newly emergent social formations and aspects of the development of "taste." See, for example, Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985); Gerard Brett, *Dinner Is Served: A Study in Manners* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1969); Reay Tannahill, *Food in History* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973). At least one survey of Victorian London includes a fair amount of information on that city's dining establishments: Donald J. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), esp. pp. 102-11. Cf. Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 97ff., and Robert Forster and Orest Ranum, eds. *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, vol. 5 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979). The extended historical tradition of restaurants in Chinese culture was first given extended attention when a pioneering symposium on food in China was published as K. C. Chang, ed., *Food in Chinese Culture: An-*

thropological and Historical Perspectives (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977), and has been further advanced in E. N. Anderson, *The Food of China* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988).

11. Cf. Khare, *Hindu Hearth and Home*, pp. 264-73, which touches, at least tangentially, upon the place of restaurants and other public dining places in changing patterns of commensality. Another aspect of food research is seen in Mahadev L. Apte and Judit Katona-Apte, "The Left and Right Sides of a Banana Leaf: Ethnography of Food Arrangement in India," a paper presented to the American Anthropological Association in December 1975. Arjun Appadurai has described the contemporary phenomenon of cookbook publication in India and the creation of a "national cuisine" among those whom he identifies as the "spatially mobile class of professionals, along with their more stable class peers in [urban] . . . India" (Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 [January 1988]: 3-24 at 6). Appadurai speculates on culinary logic paraling the world of cookbooks in the growing restaurant industry (p. 9).

12. Pandurang V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, 2d ed., vol. 2, part 2 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974), pp. 757 and 757-800 generally. Some general insights on classical Islamic views on food preparation and consumption are provided by Maxime Rodinson, "Ghidha," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 2. (Leiden: Brill; London: Luzac, 1965), pp. 1057-72.

13. R. P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthasastra, Part III: A Study* (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1965), p. 161.

14. Kane, *Dharmasastra*, p. 759: "One should take food in privacy, for one who does so is endowed with wealth and one who eats his meals in public becomes bereft of wealth." It must be acknowledged that isolated evidence suggests that in early South India, at least, public food shops offered cooked rice and meats for sale; see A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (New York: Grove, 1954), p. 204.

15. Khare, *Hindu Hearth*, pp. 264-73.

16. Appadurai and Breckenridge, introduction to this volume.

17. Om Prakash, *Food and Drinks*, p. 85.

18. Hameeda K. Naqvi, *Urban Centers and Industries in Upper India, 1550-1803* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1968), pp. 79-81. On caravanserais, see N. Elisseeff, "Khan," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 4, pp. 1010-17.

19. Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor or Mogul India, 1653-1708*, vol. 1, trans. W. Irvine (Calcutta: Editions India, 1965), p. 115. There are references to Akbar's practice of opening houses to feed poor Muslims and Hindus, but these appear to have been entirely charitable in plan and do not meet a definition of public restaurant. Cf. Abu Fazl Allami, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. 1, trans. H. Blochmann (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1939), pp. 210-11, 285-86.

20. Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases*, new ed., ed. William Crooke (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 162. Thus, a Mughal capital city, Agra, said to have 660,000 inhabitants in 1640-41, was reported to have ninety caravanserais for the accommodation of strangers (*Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643*, vol. 2 [Oxford: Hakluyt Society, 1927], p. 152. Cf. Naqvi, *Urban Centers and Industries*, pp. 124-25, on accommodation at Patna and Benaras).

21. James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs: A Narrative of Seventeen Years Residence in India*, 2d ed., vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), p. 40. Forbes did report that Mughal rule had produced *serais* in the countryside along the principal roads, noting that well-to-do travelers carried along provisions and the poor found some modest local provisions (p. 195).

22. K. M. Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, 2d ed. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1970), p. 220.

23. F. S. Manrique, *Travels of Manrique, 1629-43*, vol. 2, ed. E. Lenard and H. Hosten (Ox-

ford: Hakluyt Society, 1927), p. 186. Manrique reports that some cookshops offered roast meats, others fowl and birds; still others provided Persian-style *pilaos*. Hindu dietary preferences apparently were also addressed, for Manrique noted "the simple foods of the native and superstitious Pagan . . . dishes made of rice, herbs, and vegetables" (p. 187).

24. Surendranath Sen, in the introduction to *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri* (New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1949), pp. lvi-lvii, cites several specific seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel accounts.

25. One significant variation is found in the account by the Russian Athanasius Nikitin of his travels in the Deccan during the fifteenth century A.D.: "In the land of India it is the custom for foreign traders to stop at inns; there the food is cooked for the guests by the landlady, who also makes the bed and sleeps with the stranger" (R. H. Major, ed., *India in the Fifteenth Century, Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India*, part 3 [London: Hakluyt Society, 1857], p. 10). Cf. comments by Manucci, *Storia*, vol. 1, p. 115.

26. Manrique, *Travels of Manrique*, vol. 2, pp. 186-88.

27. Leopold von Orloch, *Travels in India, Including Sindh and the Punjab*, vol. 2, trans. H. Evans Lloyd (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845), p. 38.

28. James Douglas, *Bombay and Western India*, vol. 1 (London: Sampson, Low and Marston, 1893), p. 187.

29. Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India* (1909), quoted in Charles Allen, *Plain Tales from the Raj* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1975), p. 91.

30. S. M. Edwardes, *Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island*, vol. 3 (Bombay: Times Press, 1910), p. 299. Edwardes makes reference to the opening in 1837 at Mazagaon of a European-style hotel, the Hope Hall, but in 1810 the existence of an institution by that name was noted as the place where Englishmen returning from a day of riding would pause for a dinner; see Samuel T. Sheppard, *Bombay* (Bombay: Times of India Press, 1932), p. 143, citing the *Bombay Courier*.

31. Emma Roberts, *Notes of an Overland Journey through France and Egypt to Bombay* (London: Wm. H. Allen, 1841), p. 257. A German visitor in 1842 stayed at the Victoria Hotel in the Fort, which he described as "the only inn in this place, which much resembles our German post-houses, while the charges are on the scale of the first-class hotel in London"; he did, however, obtain "a good supper" (Orloch, *Travels in India*, vol. 1, p. 30). Another option open to European male visitors was temporary membership in the Byculla Club or the Bombay Club; see Samuel T. Sheppard, *The Byculla Club, 1833-1916* (Bombay: Bennett, Coleman, 1916), pp. 146-47, 138n.

32. The Esplanade Hotel advertised itself as "the only one in Bombay that is conducted entirely by Europeans" (*Bombay Gazette*, March 3, 1871, p. 4).

33. *Chabuk*, quoted in *Bombay Gazette*, October 30, 1863, p. 3. Further facilities were built during the 1860s.

34. Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-1825*, vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1828), p. 105.

35. It would be imprudent to take at face value the comparisons of food service facilities in India and Europe in the early nineteenth century, if only because the implicit comparisons of an observer like Emma Roberts suggest a far more widespread knowledge of and sympathy for restaurants. Brett, in *Dinner Is Served*, p. 14, makes the point that modern European food habits were "enabled" in part by economic change, most especially the gradual increase of population and of volume of imported food and the general rise of living standards, all contributing to an improvement of quantity and quality of food consumed. Brett somewhat arbitrarily defines the essential feature of a "restaurant" to have been "the large number and variety of the dishes it offers. The restaurant of today has forerunners, most notable among them being the inn, the chop-house and the Ordinary, but it has no ancestors. It seems to have grown out of the eighteenth

century interest in prepared food for invalids . . . and in the shops which dispensed such foods. The word *restaurant* first appeared in France, but not earlier than about 1765."

36. *Ibid.*, p. 233. Cf. Edwardes, *Gazetteer*, 3:299-300.

37. *Bombay Gazette*, January 3, 1871, p. 1; *Bombay Gazette*, March 3, 1871, p. 4.

38. As late as 1890 notice was given to the opportunity for "well accredited travellers," that is, British visitors with introductions, who could obtain rooms at the Byculla or the Bombay Club. Furthermore, temporary membership in the racially exclusive Royal Yacht Club gave access to "an excellent restaurant" (W. S. Caine, *Picturesque India* [London: George Routledge, 1890], pp. 2-4).

39. Viscountess Falkland, *Chow-Chow: Being Selections from a Journal Kept in India, Egypt and Syria*, 2d ed. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1857), p. 52.

40. Sheppard, *Byculla Club*, pp. 132-44. One Bombay editor made a semifacetious suggestion that the government pass a "Burra Khanna Act" to regulate "the plethoric dinner," which "begins too late and lasts too long, leaving but little time for conversation and music; it injures the average human being by imposing a greater strain on his interior organs than they should be called on to bear, at least in this country" (*Bombay Gazette Overland Summary*, January 7, 1871, p. 5).

41. Sheppard, *Byculla Club*, pp. 76-77.

42. See Barbara N. Ramusack, "The Indian Princes as Fantasy: Palace Hotels, Palace Museums and Palace on Wheels," in this volume.

43. S. K. Kooka, "Times Past, Times Remembered," *Taj Magazine* 11, no. 2 (1982): n.p. There is an undocumented tradition of Bombay urban folklore that Tata once had been turned away by the dining room at Watson's Esplanade Hotel and had decided to build a greater establishment where such discrimination would not exist; Tata's official biographer, however, attributes the Taj Mahal to Tata's "patriotic" view that the growth of Bombay required a monumental first-class hotel (Frank Harris, *Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata: A Chronicle of His Life* [Bombay: Blackie, 1958], pp. 72-73). A recent survey of this class of hotel in the colonial East is Martin Meade et al., *Grand Oriental Hotels* (London?: Vendome, n.d. [c. 1989]).

44. Ben Diqui, *A Visit to Bombay* (London: Watts, 1927), p. 28.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

46. Shirin Bahadurji, "Jamva Chalo Ji," *Bombay* 6, no. 7 (November 22-December 6, 1984): pp. 56-60. In contemporary Bombay catering of weddings and other functions for persons of all communities has become a substantial industry with some two thousand active firms ("Cooking Up Millions," *Bombay* 10, no. 24 [August 7-21, 1989]: 39-43).

47. Cf., for Britain, Arnold Palmer, *Moveable Feasts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952).

48. Edwardes, *Bombay City and Island Gazetteer* 1:243, noted this in the first decade of the twentieth century in describing the routines of the middle-class Prabhu community. The late-morning openings remained the dominant model in later years (*Labour Gazette* [Bombay], May 1926, pp. 860-61). It must be conceded that not all clerical staff enjoyed such hours — certainly retail shop assistants and ordinary copyists worked far longer hours and were thus not permitted such adjustments of dining to working hours.

49. Diqui, *Visit*, pp. 28-29.

50. The institution of the *dabbawallas* and their complex network of collection and distribution of lunch containers merits study within the context of distinctive aspects of urban geography in Bombay. The work of the Bombay Tiffinbox Suppliers Association, as they are called, is, however, tangential in the present context of a concern with public dining as it appears to exist as an adaptation by Indian families to avoid resort to restaurants during office lunch hours. Bachi J. Karkaria, in "The Incredible Dabba Connection," *Taj Magazine* 11, no. 2 (1982): n.p., credits the tradition to British invention. Carriers also take factory and mill laborers meal

boxes containing food prepared at home or at a *khanaval* (Hemalata C. Dandekar, *Men to Bombay, Women at Home: Urban Influence on Sugao Village, Deccan Maharashtra, India, 1942-1982* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1986], pp. 247-48).

51. Laxmi Hiremath, "Zesty Indian Luncheons: The Miracle of Bombay's Dabba System," *India Currents*, May 1988, p. 36.

52. K. C. Zachariah, *Migrants in Greater Bombay* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1968), pp. 113-15.

53. Census of India, 1931, vol. 9: *Cities of the Bombay Presidency* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1933), p. 31. Even in 1971, it was reported that the ratio had reached only 717 per 1,000 (Ashish Bose, *Studies in India's Urbanization, 1901-1971* [New Delhi: Tata-McGraw-Hill, 1974], p. 397).

54. James T. Molesworth, *Marathi-English Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Bombay: Bombay Education Society, 1857), p. 203.

55. Thomas Candy's completion of J. T. Molesworth's *Dictionary: English and Marathi* (Bombay: American Marathi Mission Press, 1847), pp. 355 and 219, offers *bhatarakhana* for both "inn" and "eating house," while *khanaval* is cited only as "cost of eating" under the English term "board" (p. 80). Molesworth, *Marathi-English Dictionary*, p. 600, specifies *bhatarakhana* as "an inn or eating house (esp. a Musalman hotel or cookshop)," adding that the term was used to invoke "a tumultuous and disorderly intermixture, at feasts and entertainments, of the purified and the impure or common."

56. Molesworth, *Marathi-English Dictionary*, p. 323 (emphasis added).

57. Dandekar, *Men to Bombay*, pp. 249-50.

58. A. R. Burnett-Hurst, *Labour and Housing in Bombay: A Study in the Economic Conditions of the Wage-earning Classes in Bombay* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1925), p. 64. Burnett-Hurst tends to run together references to *khanavals* and Irani cafés.

59. Dandekar, *Men to Bombay*, p. 249. According to Dandekar, in the early 1980s fewer women were willing to take up the demanding work of a *khanaval*, and consequently the male customers did not air their grievances too loudly since alternatives were hard to find.

60. The place of a *khanaval* and problems of diet for young clerical ("middle class") migrants of the Saraswat Brahman community in Bombay is noted in Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World*, pp. 119-121, 176.

61. Cf. J. C. Massellos, "Spare Time and Recreation: Changing Behaviour Patterns in Bombay at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," *South Asia*, n.s. 7 (June 1984): 34-57, concentrates upon the circumstances of a wider, poorer public and offers significant examples of "leisure" activities.

62. Various informants offered conflicting views on this matter. Two stalwart old Irani establishments at Dhobi Talao, Kayanis' and Bastanis, were frequently cited, but the matter must remain unresolved. The Cafe Mazda on Sleater Road near Grant Road Station advertised that it was founded in 1898, but it is not possible to confirm this from another source (H. D. Darukhanawala, *Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil*, vol. 2 [Bombay: G. Claridge, 1939-63], p. lxxxiv).

63. Shalini Ramchandani, "The Last of Irani Restaurants?" *Times of India*, March 6, 1977, p. 11; Busy Bee [Behram Contractor], "Trailing Those Charming Cafes," *Taj Magazine* 11, no. 2 (1982): n.p.; M. G. Moinuddin, "The Poorman's Parlour," *Bombay* 8, no. 8 (December 7-21, 1986): 49-53.

64. Busybee [Behram Contractor], "Thoughts of Glorious Repasts," *Bombay* 11, no. 1 (August 22-September 6, 1989): 123.

65. Interview with Ramesh Gangolli, September 16, 1987; Rashmi and Chander Uday Singh, "Flavour of the Past," *Bombay* 4, no. 5 (October 22-November 6, 1982): 96-97.

66. Aloysius Soares, *Down the Corridors of Time: Recollections and Reflections*, vol. 1 (Bom-

bay: author, 1971-73), p. 55. Given the wide range of variables, it is impossible to offer an exact translation of value. Two annas (one-eighth of a rupee) may be understood in terms of approximate purchasing power for a student in 1910-11 as equivalent to 1989 U.S. \$1.50 or more, although actual exchange rates would make it worth less in formal terms.

67. Ramchandani, "The Last of Irani Restaurants?" p. 11.

68. Edwardes, *Gazetteer* 1:179 notes a variety of places young men visited for drinks and snacks in Bombay.

69. Advertisement of Ideal Restaurant (Darukhanawala, *Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil*, vol. 1 p. 659).

70. Mennell, *All Manner of Food*, p. 154 notes that in the nineteenth century, while new London restaurants were large and high-ceilinged, the Parisian restaurants now had *cabinets particuliers*—a tradition associated with eighteenth-century coffeehouses and the equivalent of the private "family cabins" of the Bombay restaurant tradition; see Robert Thorne, "Places of Refreshment in the Nineteenth-Century City," in *Buildings and Society: Essays on the Social Development of the Built Environment*, ed. Anthony D. King (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 233-37.

71. Nissim Ezekiel, *Latter-Day Psalms* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 24-25.

72. J. A. Turner and B. K. Goldsmith, *Sanitation in India* (Bombay: Times of India, 1922), p. 883. Act 1 of 1916 added "keeping of eating houses" to the list of trades specified in part IV of Schedule M, Section 394 of the City of Bombay Municipal Act, thus requiring licensing of premises and defining eating house to be: "any premises to which the public are admitted and where any kind of food is prepared or supplied for consumption on the premises for the profit or gain of any person owning or having an interest in or managing such premises." *Oriental Review*, June 30, 1912, called for regulation of boarding houses in Bombay to control the spread of cholera and other diseases (*Bombay Report on Indian Newspapers*, week ending June 29, 1912, para. 61).

73. *Jam-e-Jamshed*, June 17, 1913 (*Bombay Report on Indian Newspapers*, week ending June 21, 1913, para. 29).

74. In 1989, a state government minister suggested closing all restaurants at 12:30 a.m. to reduce the crime rate! Asked how this could have any effect, a police official stated: "We can question everybody at night and they won't be able to escape with the standard answer of going to a restaurant" (*Bombay* 10, no. 15 [March 22-April 6, 1989]: 16).

75. The "functional" eating house par excellence among the Maharashtrian middle-class officegoers was the Madhavashram near the Girgaum Police Court, where the rush for meals before and after office hours meant that those eating in the "first shift" dared not linger over their *thalis* as the "second shift" impatiently stood directly behind their chairs. Interview with R. Gangolli.

76. Interview with S. Nanavati, Bombay, December 26, 1986.

77. Interview with Dr. Gopal Hattiangdi, July 31, 1987. Another informant, Dr. Ramesh Gangolli, noted in our interview that in the 1930s he too would count on his uncle to take him out to snacks in restaurants where he might otherwise have never gone.

78. H. Shankar Rau, "Family Budgets," in *A Chitrapur Saraswat Miscellany* (Bombay: author, 1938), pp. 15-31.

79. Interview with R. Gangolli. With respect to sanitary considerations, see Turner and Goldsmith, *Sanitation*, pp. 883ff., for an alarmingly lengthy list of common hygienic flaws in Bombay restaurants.

80. William Berol, *Tourist Handbook to Bombay* (Bombay: n.p., c. 1900), p. 116. The Criterion derived its name from the well-known establishment that had opened at Piccadilly Circus in London (Donald J. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979], pp. 108-9).

81. Times of India, *Bombay: Metropolis of the East* (Bombay: Bennett, Coleman, 1931), p. 103.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 56. Mrs. Edwards had just sold the Wayside to a Parsi firm.

83. Interview with R. Gangolli.

84. Ramchandani, "The Last of Irani Restaurants?" p. 11.

85. The term *Udipi* refers to the Krishna temple of Udipi in South Kanara (contemporary Karnataka state), which had a tradition of feeding pilgrims. One of the Shivali Brahman cooks, seeing the potential for providing the traditionally excellent vegetarian fare for profit, opened what became a model of "hotels," i.e., restaurants. The history of the evolution of this blending of brahmanical tradition, entrepreneurship, and good cooking needs study. See S. Krishnan, *Host to the Millions: The Story of Krishna Rao of Woodlands* (Madras: New Woodlands Hotel, 1983).

86. In the winter of 1965-66, Bombay city restaurants and eating houses were restricted from serving food grains on certain days of the week, and eventually all meal service was abolished on one evening each week as a temporary measure.

87. The role of the cinema in the domain of public culture is a subject that requires further research. In the case of restaurant dining, it would be secondary to plots and problems of most films. It is likely, however, that the visual images of urban ways would be assimilated by a wider audience. See Beatrix Pfeleiderer and Lothar Lutze, eds. *The Hindi Film: Agent and Re-Agent of Cultural Change* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985).

88. Edwardes, *Bombay City and Island Gazetteer*, 3:300.

89. Based on analysis of *Times of India, Directory of Bombay City 1920*, pp. 479-711.

90. *Illustrated Weekly of India* 102, no. 23 (July 5, 1981): 61. The figures suggest a possibility that the proportion of eating establishments to population has declined. If this were so, it might be explained by the growth of nuclear families among Bombay's working and middle classes, with a consequent increase in domestic food preparation.

91. I first encountered this phrase in an American manual on improving sales promotions published in the 1940s. I have been unable to confirm the title of this source. The image, however, is entirely appropriate for the following discussion of the "consumption" of restaurants' style and images.

92. Moraes, *Bombay*, p. 156.

93. Rashmi Uday Singh, "Bombay's Biryani Factories," *Bombay* 6, no. 4 (October 7-21, 1984): 114-21.

94. "Off the Eaten Track," *Bombay* 3, no. 14 (March 7-21, 1982): 86-88.

95. *Bombay* 3, no. 14 (March 7-21, 1982): 87.

96. *Bombay* 3, no. 21 (June 22-July 6, 1982): 51.

97. *Bombay* 5, no. 13 (February 22-March 6, 1984): 98-99.

98. "All That Glitters," *Bombay* 10, no. 16 (April 7-21, 1989): 40-41.

99. "Snappy Snacks," *Bombay* 3, no. 11 (January 22-February 6, 1982): 47-48.

100. *Bombay* 5, no. 5 (October 22-November 6, 1983): 103-4.

101. Cf. Appadurai, "National Cuisine," p. 9.

102. *Bombay* 5, no. 12 (February 7-21, 1984): 81-82; *Bombay* 5, no. 7 (November 22-December 6, 1983): 100-101.

103. *Bombay* 4, no. 9 (December 22, 1982-January 6, 1983): 86-87.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 87, emphasis added.

105. "Salad Days," *Bombay* 8, no. 3 (September 22-October 6, 1986): 52-53.

106. "Turkish Adventure," *Bombay* 6, no. 13 (February 22-March 6, 1985): 66-67.

107. *Bombay* 3, no. 22 (July 7-21, 1982): 65-66.

108. *Bombay* 10, no. 16 (April 7-21, 1989): 40-41.

109. *Bombay* 4, no. 1 (August 22-September 6, 1982): 48-50.

110. Cf. "Star Attractions," *Bombay* 9, no. 19 (May 22-June 6, 1988): 45-46.
111. *Bombay* 4, no. 1 (August 22-September 6, 1982): 48-50.
112. "Enchanted Eating," *Bombay* 6, no. 17 (April 22-May 6, 1985): 64-67. Having been taken there to lunch in January 1987, I can avow that China Garden offered food both marvelous and expensive.
113. Busybee, "Glorious Repasts," *Bombay* 11, no. 1 (August 22-September 6, 1989): 114.
114. "A Cut above the Rest," *Bombay* 4, no. 12 (February 7-21, 1982): 64-65.
115. "The Ethnic Taste," *Bombay* 7, no. 4 (October 7-21, 1985): 60-61.
116. Anjali Ewing, "Let's Not Eat Out Today," *Illustrated Weekly of India* 102, no. 23 (July 5, 1981): 60-63. Cf. "Snappy Snacks," *Bombay* 3, no. 11 (January 22-February 6, 1982): 47-49.
117. Abbas, *Bombay, My Bombay!*, p. 166.
118. H. Shankar Rau, "The Glories of Bhacl," *Kanara Saraswat*, May 1936.
119. Arjun Appadurai, "Street Culture," *India Magazine of People and Culture* 8, no. 1 (December 1987): 20.
120. *Bombay* 10, no. 24 (July 22-August 4, 1989): 41. The satire turns upon the Maharashtra government's setting up a luncheon service in the State Assembly chambers and then enforcing upon the would-be diners the type of myriad bureaucratic requirements associated with any government undertaking.
121. Prakash More, interview, "Noodling Around at Nariman Point," *Bombay* 10, no. 12 (February 7-21, 1989): 38-40.
122. This essay has not addressed directly the question of whether there is a culturally significant distinction in Bombay's public dining between indoor and outdoor settings. The economic aspect of inexpensive food from street vendors may be acknowledged, but the question of aesthetic and cultural comfort for those who have sufficient wealth to exercise a choice remains a question to be researched. Certainly, outdoor "garden" settings as annexes to restaurants have existed for at least three decades, as in the sidewalk cafés of Churchgate, yet my observations suggest that some customers are ambivalent about outdoor settings. Nevertheless, the phenomenon continues to increase and is now found also in provincial towns and cities of India. Bombay's climate—the discomforts of hot-season midday glare and monsoon-season rains and winds—does limit sit-down outdoor restaurant dining.
123. Shobha De, *Socialite Evenings* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), features visits by the novel's characters to many of Bombay's elite restaurants as backdrops, but emphasis is on the visit, not the culinary experience.
124. M. J. Akbar, "Delusions of the Prosperous," *Bombay* 8, no. 1 (August 22-September 6, 1986): 128. Akbar's criticism is not leveled at cultural synthesis, but rather at what he believes to be Bombay's inflated sense of importance and "self-created sense of isolation."
125. Moraes, *Bombay*, p. 9.
126. Cf. Abner Cohen, ed. *Urban Ethnicity* (London: Tavistock, 1974) and Charles F. Keyes, ed. *Ethnic Change* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981).
127. Pierre L. van den Berghe, "Ethnic Cuisine: Culture in Nature," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 7 (July 1984): 393-94.
128. Richard W. Franke, "The Effects of Colonialism and Neocolonialism on the Gastro-nomic Patterns of the Third World," in *Food and Evolution: Toward a Theory of Human Food Habits*, ed. Marvin Harris and Eric B. Ross (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pp.455-479, notes colonialism's impact on diet.
129. Interview with R. Gangolli.
130. Interview with S. Gangolli, September 16, 1987.
131. Wilbur Zelinsky, "The Roving Palate: North America's Ethnic Restaurant Cuisines," *Geoforum* 16 (1985): 51-52n. I must thank my colleague John Findlay for calling this source to my attention.

132. This essay was completed in its final revised form in 1990. Bombay's restaurant scene has continued to evolve, but without the benefit of *Bombay: The City Magazine*, which ceased publication in March 1991. Restaurant reviews now appear in various newspapers and magazines. At least one guide to Bombay restaurants—Diana C. Proeschel and Saroj Merani, *Flavours: A Selective Guide to Eateries in Bombay* (Bombay: Perennial Press, 1988)—has been published.