

**BROWN MAN’S BURDEN: FOOD, MASCULINITY AND
MISUNDERSTOOD VOICES IN PARINDA JOSHI’S *A HOUSE FULL OF
MEN***

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Abstract

This research studies how food is used to show power, emotion and gender roles in a traditional Indian household. Using R. W. Connell’s masculinity theory, the paper examines how men learn to express strength, control, and authority, while women are expected to serve, nurture, and remain silent. The study closely explores how simple acts like cooking, serving, and eating food become ways to express love, anger, and dominance in the novel and food is not just about eating but a symbol of emotion, power, and control. Male characters such as Kittu’s father and grandfather use food to assert their authority, while Kittu embodies the quiet endurance of women who hold the family together through their constant, unseen efforts. The idea of the ‘Brown Man’s Burden’ reflects how Indian men are caught between the pressure to maintain dominance and their deep reliance on women’s care and emotional strength.

Keywords: Brown man’s burden, Food, Masculinity, Patriarchy, Silenced voices

Introduction

Food plays a very important role in every household, also in many families it’s not restricted only to the act of consumption but to the entire process of procurement, preparation, serving and gratification. Food carries with it several emotional quotients and is used to express love, care, and celebration and even to show power and control. In many Indian families, women are expected to cook and remain within the confines of the kitchen while men make decisions on the entire process of procurement and judge food as per their taste buds. These expectations are often witnessed in everyday routines: who cooks, who eats first, who decides what’s to be served cause discrimination, anguish, despair to women and a sense of superiority and satisfaction to men. Parinda Joshi’s novel *A House Full of Men* explores these layers through the story of Kittu, a young woman growing up in a patriarchal household. This research focuses on how food becomes a tool in shaping masculinity and becomes instrumental in representing misunderstood voices in the novel, revealing the dynamics of a patriarchal household.

Parinda Joshi, best-selling Indian author and screenwriter, known for her insightful storytelling that often explores themes of identity, family and modern Indian life provides a realistic peep into the

misogynist approach of the Indian society. One of her works, *Made in China*, is adapted into a Bollywood film starring Rajkumar Rao and Paresh Rawal. *A House Full of Men* is her fourth novel, listed among India's best fiction books of 2021 and is currently being adapted into a web series and it stands out for its exploration of gender stereotypes, parental remarriage, body shaming, family dynamics and the complexities of personal growth in a male-dominated household in the contemporary times.

Studying how food is used in this novel, we can understand how the gender roles are passed down and how women are expected to put up with male expectations of an ideal womanhood. It also demonstrates how men are taught to hide their emotions and use control instead. This novel delves into these issues in a formidable way. In today's world, people are questioning the old traditions and trying to make more equal relationships at home by focusing on how women like Kittu are finding different ways to stand up for themselves, even for small acts like choosing what to cook or by refusing unfair rules. Kittu's journey is not just about finding herself but also being a source of inspiration and helping others to find their own selves.

The novel also portrays how food reflects the responsibility shouldered by Indian men: the Brown Man's Burden. She presents the male characters as emotionally detached, bounded by tradition and expectations. They hardly ever express feelings directly and silence becomes a tool for control through Kittu's lens, she investigates the emotional distance which affects women in the family. The burden is tied to them, like the stress to lead the family, emotionally untouched, even when they are struggling inside, the pressure to be strong and adhere to tradition. To manage this burden food becomes an approach for men to showcase anger, approval or disappointment by asking for certain meals or by rejecting meals doing this they declare their control. This behaviour isn't just personal instead it is cultural norm it reveals how masculinity is shaped by the social expectations are often taught from a young age and is carried forward through generations. By concentrating on the Brown Man's Burden, through the lens of Connel's theory of Masculinity, the analysis will show how men bear the weight of expectations, and how this burden affects everyone in the family. This research is a textual analysis approach to study how food, masculinity, and misunderstood voices are portrayed in Parinda Joshi's *A House Full of Men*. It traverses how these themes affect Kittu's life and choices and how the novel challenges the traditional ideas of family and gender. The aim is to closely examine the text and understand how food is used to express mood, challenge gender roles, and assert control within the characters of the story. The objective of this research is to explore how the brown (Indian) man has taken the burden on himself to decide and dictate the foodways of his family while staying aloof from the actual preparation and serving of food in the family. It also explores what prompts the brown man to lighten his burden and accustom himself to the growing awareness of the drudgery of Kittu in the kitchen chores to feed the family and contribute to the thankless loop of household chores. (Mosikyan, Dolan, Maria Corsi 2024) This analysis examines consumer attitudes towards novel food products. It focuses on four main areas: theory, context, product characteristics, and methodology. The review provides valuable insights into trends and research gaps but was also subject to certain limitations, such as missing of some studies due to search restrictions. Future researchers are finding by digging deeper into more databases, exploring diverse sources and trying out different approaches. This review offers a solid foundation for future studies, despite its limitations. (Zollet, Qu 2024) explains how young people in Japan are moving to the countryside to start creative food businesses not because they miss the old ways, but because they want a better and meaningful life. Though they don't strictly follow tradition, their work is still deeply connected to the region. Their work seamlessly blends local roots with Contemporary style, contributing to rural renewal and cultural evolution. (Hazır 2024) examines the impact of parenthood on food relationships. This demonstrates that food choices in families with young children are often the result of negotiation and compromise, rather than parental ideals. Practice theory provides a useful framework for understanding these changes as interconnected and influenced by relationships. Gender plays a significant role in foodwork, where mothers take on more food-related responsibilities therefore identities shape our food choices and habits. (Sen 2016) explores food stories mainly on fish, this article illustrates the complex interplay between place, memory, and experience. Food serves as a link to heritage and comfort for

immigrants in cities like Chicago. The article shows how places like food markets, kitchens, and natural spaces hold significance in people's lives and stories. (Jensen 2023) delves into men's talk about diet and body image in the context of fitness vlogging. It shows how men use their bodies to demonstrate masculinity through physical strength and discipline. Men use online platforms to learn from and support each other in following strict diets, despite for potential change these spaces frequently reinforce traditional masculine ideals. (Afzal 2014) discusses how food shapes cultural narratives around race, class, and gender. It also serves as a symbol of community, tradition, and emotional expression. To even express culture from the ancient texts to modern novels cookbooks, food appears as a symbol. Through food, writers create vivid descriptions, evoke memories, and explore complex social themes. The findings highlight the need for a more nuanced exploration of food in cultural and literary contexts. (Neuman 2018) argues that food studies should engage more with social theory instead of focusing mainly on history and development. They suggest using practice theory, which looks at everyday habits, routines, and shared social activities, rather than just individual food choices. This approach helps explain how food connects to social change, production, and power relation for example, who cooks at home versus who becomes a famous chef. In the end, the author believes that studying food in both ordinary and special contexts can give deeper insights into how society works. (Karaosmanoğlu 2020) shows that ethnic food can promote social change and intercultural understanding. It suggests studying food through taste, smell, and power, while reflecting on personal experiences.

The author also links food to gastrodiploamacy and calls for more research on how food helps connect people across cultures. (Aquino, Escoto, Rodríguez et al 2021) demonstrates that traditional food is a flexible and complex idea that varies depending on the culture and individual defining it. Though it can be generally defined by time, place, and practices, each culture sets its own details. In Europe, Guerrero's definition from the true food project which is widely recognized and has helped establish an important conceptual framework for understanding traditional food. (Santos 2024) opines that in literature, food functions as a meaningful symbol that expresses emotions, cultural identity, and social connections. In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, food highlights the complexities of immigration and cultural clashes, showing both belonging and distance from home. Food, along with recipes and rituals, reflects memory, identity, and social relationships in a postcolonial context. (Wendler 2024) explains how people's daily routines affect the way they prepare and eat food. It introduces two ideas: spatiotemporal entrenchment, which means food habits become regular and fixed when linked to other daily activities, and social entrenchment, which means food routines are shaped by relationships with others, like family or partners. People with set structured lifestyles and social support tend to eat more regularly. (Aharoni, Hirsch 2023) examines changing dinner habits in Israeli families, focusing on working mothers in Tel Aviv. While the simple "classic Israeli dinner" of bread, eggs, and salad is still widely recognized, actual meals are more flexible. Where mothers try to balance health, care, and convenience, often choosing quick dishes like pasta. Still the classic dinner remains popular because it's simple, convenient, and socially accepted, reflecting everyday Israeli life. (Mintz, Du Bois 2002) discusses how food research has grown rapidly due to globalization, Western affluence, and U.S. cultural inclusiveness. Studies now explore global food issues, ethics, and cultural eating habits, though class differences are less examined. Anthropologists could greatly contribute to food policy and nutrition but have not fully done so. (Ashley, Hollows, Jones et al 2004) examines the social and cultural meanings of food, emphasizing that eating goes beyond nutrition to express identity, relationships, and power. The book explores how food reflects traditions, social norms, and cultural changes, using insights from sociology, anthropology, and media studies. The authors highlight how food shapes and is shaped by society, revealing broader social, economic, and cultural processes. (Mieriemova 2024) explores how food experiences during war reflect gender roles and social change, focusing on Ukrainian women. They use cooking to care for others, preserve memories, and imagine peace, even as it exposes them to risk and reinforces traditional roles. Though cooking is often undervalued, it becomes a form of agency and resilience, highlighting how gender roles are reinforced but also challenged during conflict. (Lin, Pang, Liao 2020) provides insights into how Taiwanese immigrant women in Belgium

maintain and practice home or ethnic foods in their daily lives. Also identifies four main practices: buying, growing, preparing, and sharing food. These practices help us pass on cultural values, build family bonds, and create a sense of belonging, while women negotiate ingredient limits and family preferences to define “authentic” Taiwanese food. Overall, cooking at home helps women maintain cultural heritage and social ties. (Sharma, Purnima, Kumar 2024) draws attention to Manju Kapur’s novels, *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, and *Home*, highlight the division of masculine and feminine spaces and women’s struggle for selfhood within a patriarchal society. Her female characters challenge societal boundaries, showing how women and LGBTQ+ individuals are reshaping their roles and claiming space in both private and public life. As safe and inclusive public spaces are crucial for supporting marginalized communities. (Das, Mishra 2021) reveals that women continue to face disadvantages in traditional communities because of gender-based sociocultural norms, where economic factors dominate food choices and overpowers cultural aspects. These ingrained gender norms increase women’s burdens, reinforcing the significance of gender-aware policies through a holistic, comprehensive approach. (Marcelo, Ortega, Bordi 2022) highlights how structural gender inequalities in Mexico, especially for women who made and sold handmade corn tortillas, were worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting access to healthcare, employment, and education. However, women with higher education, strong networks were better able to recover economically. It focuses on the role of ethnic foods in food security and calls for policies supporting biodiversity, culinary heritage, and equal opportunities for rural women. (Kharbe 2016) discusses how in *Macbeth*, masculinity is associated with loyalty and duty, while femininity is explored through Lady Macbeth and the witches, who defy traditional female roles. They both have a profound impact on Macbeth’s actions, challenging societal expectations and embodying a mix of masculine and feminine traits. The complex portrayal of women is crucial to understanding Shakespeare’s exploration of women’s power and identity in the play. (Berggren, Gottz’en 2023) describes young men in Sweden who’ve been violent to their partners are changing their ways as society rejects such behaviour. Many are regretting their actions and linking them to their past experiences. Using Heidegger’s ideas, the study reveals how violence can become a habit for some men, but can become aware of their actions and change, even in societies that strongly reject violence. (Moreira, Farias 2022) explores the historical evolution of gendered domestic spaces, showing how social and cultural norms have shaped home layouts from medieval times to the present. The Medieval homes were shared spaces, but from the 17th to 19th centuries introduced strict gender segregation in room use, reflecting societal distinctions between men and women while the 20th century homes are now incorporating gendered spaces again, but more for personal style and status than traditional roles. Overall, domestic design reflects societal values and gender norms. (Camellia, Roodsaz 2023) explains how young men in Dhaka balance two identities: being respectful at home and appearing “cool” with friends, leading to conflicting expectations around masculinity. Which is shaped by the social interactions and personal experiences, influenced by spaces like home, school, and social media, and highlights the emotional shame, anxiety, and isolation of the men’s. Where it reveals that masculinity in Dhaka is complex, shifting, and context dependent. (Abumere 2013) says that masculinity is not natural but a social and cultural construct shaped by history and politics.

It is learned through social interactions and participation in society. Where societal pressures portray femininity as a threat to masculinity, leading to identity issues and work-related challenges for men. (Nayak 2023) explores how masculinity is evolving, comparing traditional hegemonic masculinity with the newer concept of caring masculinities and emphasizing the need for policies like paternity leave to support meaningful change, gender equality and challenge global inequalities. (Hearn, Boise, Goedecke 2023) explain that masculinity isn’t just “toxic” or “soft,” as men can show many different contradictory behaviours. It suggests that by looking at the “hegemony of men” to understand how men as a group hold power in society so for understanding masculinity it requires a multidimensional approach, considering political, economic, and psychological factors. (Scholz, Schwarzenbacher, Leja et.al 2024) reveal that care plays a meaningful role in adolescent boys lives, challenging assumptions that boys lack emotional depth. They suggest that care can coexist with dominant masculinity, and proposes “caring masculinities” as a

concept to critically explore power, hierarchy, and adolescent identity. (Silva 2021) studies masculinity attitudes in the U.S. vary by location, with rural men generally more conservative, and are shaped by race, sexuality, and education. Men from marginalized groups have similar views on masculinity no matter where they live, showing how social inequalities shape masculinity and why it matters for health and social programs. (Palomino 2024) talks about the working-class men in the Global South who face complex challenges in balancing traditional masculinity with caregiving roles due to class, gender, and power dynamics because of this they strive to provide care while protecting their social image. (Wojnicka, Boise 2025) explains that caring masculinity does not always challenge male dominance because men's caring roles can still support traditional power through protection or control. Says that caring is an ongoing process, not a fixed trait. Hybrid masculinity means men show care but still maintain unequal power dynamics, reflecting today's mix of progress and chronic inequalities. (Young, Moji, Duby et.al 2025) demonstrates how gender norms, sexual identity, and health behaviours interact among South African men. Finds that traditional masculinity still shapes South African men's lives, but ideas of self-love and emotional health are growing. It calls for culturally sensitive support and to promote healthier, more equal masculinities. (Connell 2005) introduces ideas like hegemonic masculinity, which supports male dominance, and shows that there are many types of masculinities influenced by class, race, and sexuality. It highlights how these roles affect personal identity, behaviour, and gender inequality, helping us understand and challenge traditional male power. (Alavijeh 2024) talks about the racial biases in the late 19th century that shaped Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*. Through a new historicist lens, the poem is seen as a reflection and contributor to the dominant ideologies of imperialism and racism. Even it reveals how Kipling's work both reflects and shapes the complex power dynamics of colonialism. (Doucette 2021) demonstrates how Tennyson's "Ulysses" and Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" offer contrasting views on masculinity: Kipling emphasizes duty and sacrifice for colonialism, while Tennyson values personal adventure and domestic care. Both portray strong masculinity but with different purposes, reflecting Victorian ideals that supported imperial power. (DESWAL, SINGH 2016) They argue Hindi isn't a practical national language due to limited usage in certain regions. Instead of rejecting English, India should embrace it for its global benefits and potential to promote equality and social mobility. English can be a tool for empowerment, not just privilege. Among all the papers this topic has not been explored "Brown Man's Burden: Food, Masculinity and Misunderstood Voices in Parinda Joshi's *A House Full of Men*."

Analysis

While food has frequently been examined as a cultural and symbolic marker in literary studies, few scholarly investigations have addressed its role in articulating emotional power and gender expectations within patriarchal domestic spaces. This paper seeks to intervene in this underexplored area by analyzing Parinda Joshi's *A House Full of Men*, a novel in which food, masculinity, and silenced voices converge to expose the emotional and psychological tensions embedded in a male-dominated household. Narrated through the perspective of Kittu, the sole female presence among six male figures (four human, one canine, and one memorialized in a frame) the narrative foregrounds her struggle to assert identity and voice within a domestic sphere structured by patriarchal norms. Through close textual analysis, this study demonstrates how quotidian food rituals function as a discursive medium that reflects social hierarchies, internalized gender expectations, and the unarticulated emotional burdens borne by women in middle-class Indian households. By foregrounding food as a site of emotional negotiation and gendered contestation, this paper contributes to broader debates on domesticity, patriarchy, and the politics of everyday life in contemporary Indian literature.

Masculinity theory explains how society teaches men what it means to "be a man." It looks at the rules, expectations, and behaviours men are expected to follow like being strong, brave, and not showing emotions. This theory argues that masculinity is not something men are born with. It is socially constructed, meaning it is created and reinforced by culture, media, family, and institutions. It also examines how certain types of masculinity gain power over others, leading to inequality not only between

men and women but also among men themselves. Masculinity theory helps us understand how gender norms affect identity, relationships, and social power structures.

According to sociologist R. W. Connell, there are four main types of masculinity:

1. **Hegemonic masculinity** – The most dominant and socially approved form, linked with strength, authority, and success.
2. **Complicit masculinity** – Men who may support equality but still benefit from male privilege, often relying on women for domestic work.
3. **Subordinate masculinity** – Men who don't fit traditional masculine norms, such as being gentle, emotional, or gay, and are often looked down upon.
4. **Marginalized masculinity** – Men who show masculine traits but lack social power due to factors like race, class, or poverty.

Food theory explains that food is more than just nourishment, it reflects identity, emotion, and power within society. It shows how acts like cooking and serving reveal social hierarchies of gender and class. For instance, when women cook and men are served, it exposes unequal roles of care and authority. In literature, food often symbolizes love, control, or resistance, showing that eating is not simply a biological, but a cultural and political act filled with meaning.

In Parida Joshi's novel *A House Full of Men*, Kittu's father, Ravi, expresses care and affection through food. After returning from work,

Ravi had just returned from a commotion at work and had said those magic words: 'Bete, cold coffee?' [p.18]

The phrase 'Bete, cold coffee?' functions almost like a ritual command. It shows that Ravi expects comfort and service after a stressful day, not by expressing his needs openly or emotionally, but through this coded language of food. The cold coffee becomes a simple symbol of love and comfort between father and daughter. Similarly, Kittu is not just making a drink, she is using food to make a difficult talk feel lighter and more comfortable. Instead of talking about his work tension, Ravi's way of reclaiming his authority and calm is by expecting someone (often a woman in the household) to serve him. The act of asking for cold coffee is a habit, a symbol of male privilege, but also a burden because it reflects his inability to express vulnerability in any other way. This scene shows how the cold coffee is used to convey the emotional depth and the complexity of family's relationships through the female protagonist, especially in the house where words are misunderstood. In Indian households, men are rarely the ones making or serving food; instead, they 'order' it as a sign of authority.

Bark Twain's mealtime ritual brings humour and explores food and social hierarchy in the line,

Bark Twain's favourite meal was chicken patties, which were ceremoniously made with much love for the poodle prince. They were not to be overcooked under any circumstances. He would not only reject an over-cooked patty but also give the cook and the server a death stare. [pp.50]

Through this scene the care and seriousness of the family is shown while preparing his meal which is more than just feeding a dog rather it is seen as a luxurious meal which even becomes a symbol of class and privilege. Food reflects the family's hierarchy of attention where the pet receives the royal treatment because he is a male and the only women in the house often serve others quietly and cook remain unnoticed. The 'poodle prince' symbolizes the unfair priorities of a patriarchal household, where privilege and luxury are reserved for those who hold power, often male and even if that 'male' is a dog. The 'ceremony' of cooking and serving the patties reflects how domestic labour and affection are directed toward maintaining male comfort. The humour here is used to reveal the social expectation that men must be constantly served, pleased, and obeyed. Through Bark Twain's lavish feeding ritual, which highlights the unequal dynamics in Indian households, where women's constant cooking and care uphold male comfort and ego, while their own needs and wishes are often ignored or placed last.

This moment perfectly captures the gendered assumptions surrounding food and responsibility within the family.

‘I have to go to work today just for a bit.’ ‘What? you’re always complaining that they’re slave-drivers and don’t give you enough time off.’ The self-serving-masked-as-compassionate suggestions rolled off Shamik’s smitten tongue. ‘And look at you going in on Sunday.’ ‘I’m sorry, Kittu couldn’t believe the nerve of this self-centred boy, so I should stay home to cook for your guests?’ She dumped her breakfast plate in the sink. ‘That’s so regressive I have no words. I pity your future wife. I really do.’ ‘Pity her by all means. But first can you please arrange for some food for her?’ He made a puppy face, his eyes gleaming. ‘I have a basketball game after gym. Please, Kittu Di?’ [pp.71-72]

Kittu finds herself once again caught between personal independence and domestic responsibility. Shamik’s tone, disguised as playful or affectionate but still carries an underlying expectation that Kittu as a woman should prioritise feeding others over her own professional life. Shamik’s charm and excuses show how boys in the household use charm and emotional manipulation to get what they want, rather than relying on direct power. This casual expectation that the woman should ‘cook’ or ‘arrange for food’ reveals how deeply ingrained gender roles are, even among educated, urban men. This also challenges the idea that modern households are free from patriarchy, despite Kittu’s independence and ambition she is still burdened by the unspoken rule that women must take care of domestic duties especially food. Men carry the burden of deciding what women must cook or how they should serve because society has trapped both genders in rigid roles: women must nurture, and men must control. Through this scene it shows that the kitchen should not be the only space where women prove their worth, and emotional care should be a shared responsibility between men and women. What appears to be a light and ordinary Sunday morning actually carries a serious message about how traditional gender roles quietly continue in daily life through simple actions such as requesting food or assuming that women will serve.

Highlights the silent pressure to continue the household duties by a woman regardless of their personal pain or exhaustion.

‘Kittu! *Kebabs?*’ he called out again. She wiped the tears and forced a smile. ‘Ji, Dadu. Sit, I’ll serve you some.’ [pp.74]

Even though Kittu is deeply upset, she still answers her Dadu’s call for kebabs with respect and duty. She hides her emotions by wiping her tears and putting on a smile before serving him politely. It shows how women are trained to suppress their emotions and prioritize the comfort of male family members, including elders like Dadu, above their own emotional well-being. Her tears represent her inner struggle, while her quick act of serving food shows the patience and obedience deeply embedded in her expected role. This scene also shows how food functions as a means to uphold gender hierarchy. Men, no matter their age, assume they will be served, while women, no matter their feelings, are expected to do the serving. Kittu’s act of hiding her tears before serving kebabs highlights the cultural pressure on women to suppress their emotions and remain unseen within patriarchal households. It also reflects the idea of the ‘Brown Man’s burden’, where a man’s comfort and authority depend on a woman’s quiet endurance and emotional control. The woman’s responsibility becomes ensuring his ease, while her own struggles turn into unseen emotional labour that holds the family together.

Here, Kittu’s role is reduced to that of an executor rather than a decision-maker; her care and effort are not freely given but monitored and measured.

High BP had dragged Kittu to the kitchen and would spend the next few minutes supervising the amount of almond powder and sugar being mixed in his milk. [pp.196]

Even though Kittu’s grandfather is ill, he still insists on maintaining control. Dadu’s supervision may appear as a simple act of self-care, but it is also a way of maintaining his authority within the family and ensuring the household routines centered around his needs and satisfaction. Even illness does not take away a man’s authority; instead, it usually increases the burden on women to look after him and meet his needs. The grandfather’s actions show that even when women provide care, it remains under male supervision they are expected not just to serve, but to do so precisely in the way men prefer. Within the

larger idea of the 'Brown Man's burden', this scene reveals how patriarchal privilege continues across generations. Dadu, as the elder 'brown man', bears the weight of preserving an old-fashioned form of masculinity based on authority, order, and reliance on women's work. Though he neither cooks nor serves but he makes sure that his choices dictate what happens in the kitchen. His dominance over food preparation reflects the way older men continue to influence the family's daily habits, decisions, and emotional balance.

Finally, Ravi recognizes how much responsibility Kittu has been carrying since her mother's absence. Shows a rare moment of awareness from a male figure in the family.

'Which reminds me of,' Ravi added, 'that maybe Kittu needs a break from filling Kalyani's shoes.'

Kittu winced. 'Come on, Dad.'

'It's true. Kittu is such a control freak, she can't go one day without throwing her weight around on all of us', Shamik butter in.

Ravi glared at him. 'She is not a control freak. Poor child has had to do this because no one else would. Ever think about that? That's about to change right now.'

'What does that even mean?' Shamik asked.

'What that means is, starting today, every member of this family will act like a responsible adult. Even Bark Twain.' [pp.327-328]

This moment represents a significant shift in the gender roles within *A House Full of Men*. For the first time, Ravi starts to challenge the usual household pattern in which women handle all domestic duties while men stay uninvolved or reliant on them. By admitting that Kittu needs a break from 'filling Kalyani's shoes', he recognizes the unseen emotional and physical effort she has put in to keep the family functioning. Earlier, his behaviour showed the typical 'brown man's burden' - a combination of authority and dependence, where men expect to be obeyed yet depend on women's care. In this moment, however, he begins to free himself from that pattern by admitting his role in the imbalance and choosing to take responsibility. His call for "every member of the family to act like a responsible adult" represents a shift toward shared power and duty, moving the family away from its patriarchal dependence. Shamik's mocking comment, calling Kittu a 'control freak', exposes yet another form of gender bias. Women who take responsibility at home are often unfairly labeled as bossy even though they are just doing what others have failed to do. Her habit of taking charge comes from years of having to handle everything by herself, from cooking and caring to managing the family's daily life. When Ravi stands up for her, he breaks the usual silence that hides women's unpaid household labour. His words 'because no one else would' clearly point out how the men in the family have failed to share in the responsibilities at home. This conversation also highlights the slow evolution of masculinity in the Indian middle-class household. Ravi's attitude changes from being detached to understanding, he begins to see Kittu not just as performing a woman's expected role, but as an individual burdened with too many responsibilities. His willingness to include even 'Bark Twain' in the circle of responsibility Ravi adds a touch of humour to the conversation, but his words have a deeper meaning. He realizes that true equality at home can only exist when everyone, not just the women, shares the work and responsibility. His remark reveals how unfairly the daily responsibilities have been divided, with women like Kittu doing all the work while others enjoy the comfort her efforts provide.

Conclusion:

In *A House Full of Men*, Parinda Joshi transforms the everyday act of eating, cooking, and serving into a profound commentary on gender, emotion, and power within a patriarchal Indian household. Through a series of food-centered moments like Ravi's habitual demand for cold coffee, Bark Twain's ceremonious chicken patties, Dadu's supervision of his almond milk, and Kittu's restrained obedience while serving kebabs constructs a subtle yet compelling critique of how emotional and domestic labour are gendered. In this story, food is not just a sign of nourishment or care. It turns into a form of communication that

expresses power, duty, and emotion. It becomes the way relationships are managed, where men's comfort and control are built upon the quiet endurance and unspoken sacrifices of women.

Kittu's life shows how women's work at home often remains invisible, even though it keeps the family emotionally and physically stable. Everything she does from cooking and serving to caring and managing is shaped by duty rather than choice, as she learns to put men's comfort before her own needs. The idea of the 'Brown Man's burden' in the novel reflects not only men's sense of authority and control but also their dependence on women's quiet labour and care. This burden continues through generations from Dadu's dominance to Ravi's expectations and even Shamik's casual privilege revealing how patriarchy is preserved through everyday family routines. Later it reshapes the idea of the 'Brown Man's burden', turning it from dominance and dependence toward understanding and equality.

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