3
INDIAN DELIGHTS

In early 20th-century Durban, a woman wishing to concoct a biryani, khurma, khuri or patta employed the skills and knowledge transmitted through apprenticeships to her mother, aunts or mother-in-law. Her repertoire of dishes was largely a familial or circumstantial inheritance, falling within a matrilineage of recipes that had traversed the Indian Ocean. Women who immigrated in the late 19th century as labourers and/or wives, under indenture or in trading families, had incorporated imported and locally grown ingredients to make meals that tasted of home. The familiar savour of meat or vegetables prepared with jeera, arad, lavang, methi and other spices made daily nourishment for the body also a ritual of cultural reproduction and transmission. Just as crucially, pleasures of the palate and aesthetics of the table were a medium for local (and commercial) adaptation, experimentation and change. As in other diasporic communities, food and the material relations of sustenance reflect the varied and changing socio-economic, gendered and cultural realities of Indian South Africans.

By the late 20th century, an authentic-tasting biryani might be attributable to another skill: that of literacy. Putting gastronomic knowledge into writing reflected and shaped the way community was imagined among people of Indian ancestry and also localised changes in family, gender and class relationships. The development of culinary print culture turned household kitchens

into public spaces and their gendered readership into agents of diaspora. In Durban, the most important text in this process was the cookbook *Indian Delights*, compiled and published by the Women's Cultural Group.[1]

The success and circulation of *Indian Delights* makes it possible to consider the interface between food and text as an aspect of cultural change – and to focus on those gendered spaces in which blended practices of cooking and literacy affected collectively imagined meanings of national or diasporic identity. There are two aspects through which this can be observed. The first relates to the compilers of the cookbook, who in their aspirations to produce a literary work – albeit one with a focus on preserving traditions – sought to make modern, public citizens of themselves. Members of the Women's Cultural Group collected varied, oral food knowledges, which they translated into replicable, print-based recipes and then collated them into a single 'Indian' cookbook interspersed with proverbs, stories and other narratives of a cultural past. Sales of this runaway best-seller have sustained the Group's civic life and philanthropic involvements for half a century. The second point relates to readership and the social life of the book as an artefact that crosses oceans and kitchen thresholds. Now in its thirteenth edition and with over three hundred and fifty thousand books sold locally and internationally, *Indian Delights* has become a standard gift for young newly-weds and culinary novices. With its

wide circulation, this text provides a common household reference on Indian South African communal identity and its transoceanic origins.

During its first few years, the Group considered embarking on a literary project as a means to raise funds to provide educational bursaries for disadvantaged children, but members were unsure what to do. Zuleikha Mayat explained that some members 'had been working in isolation, [others] in the community, [and] we'd been always wanting to expand on our activities and also to help people at the same time, so members were constantly asked to bring in ideas'. Frene Ginwala, on a visit from London, mentioned to Mayat that she had been asked to produce a study of Indian South Africans, and that she hoped somebody with more time might take up that challenge.[2] Mayat reported this to the members, who wavered as to whether such a project was within their capacity, 'so that fell flat'.[3] But their determination grew when anthropologist Hilda Kuper asserted at one of their meetings that, after a century in South Africa, Indian South Africans had failed to produce a literary work of note. Mayat objected strongly, arguing that PS Joshi's *Tyranny of Colour* was a fine example of Indian work. More importantly, she stressed to Kuper, the masses of Indians lived in poverty and did not have access to proper education or leisure time to produce works of note.

> I told Hilda,'Listen, literature is written when there is, you know, satisfaction here. You may be angry, but the other social structures must be there. You can't be working in the shop and trying to get pennies together, sending money to India, to the family there, looking after things here – there's no time for [writing].'

But Kuper had clearly touched a nationalistic nerve and as Mayat puts it, 'I told the girls, "Come on! Let's do something".' Hawa Bibi Moosa suggested that they submit a recipe for chevda, an Indian snack made with Post Toasties, to the manufacturer of the cereal to put on the outside of the cereal box. 'If they put it on the box,' remembers Mayat, 'you'd earn some money. So when she proposed this, I said, "Leave the Post Toasties. Let's start a book!" They responded, "What book?" I said, "A cookery book!"'[4] The idea of producing a cookery book brought together some of the divergent skills and interests of Group members, those with talents in the kitchen and those with literary inclinations, where everyone's contribution could be valued.

It was a project, too, in which the private duties of homemaker could be put to valuable use in the fashioning of a public voice and presence for women in the Group. Moreover, it reflected their generation's own experience of the changing structures and mobility of family. In a letter to Grace Kirschenbaum, editor of *World of Cookbooks*, dated 16 February 1988, Mayat explained that *Indian Delights* was 'the result of a first generation of South African women who could no longer spare the time to teach the cooking to their daughters owing to such factors as the breaking up of the extended family system and mothers having to work outside the home to supplement family income.' Perhaps even more crucially, these women were the first generation to see their own daughters with expanded opportunities for higher education and overseas travel. Zohra Moosa, one such mother, recalls:

> Somebody suggested, 'Why don't we have a recipe book?' because the young girls are all so busy studying, going to university – they don't have the time to learn from their mothers to cook. We didn't have recipe books, so we thought it would be a good idea if we had a recipe book where they can refer to it. And not only the girls, but the boys who go away too, overseas [to study] – they all refer to the book, you know.

Writing in 'Fahmida's World' in 1960, Mayat pointed to another reason for producing a cookery book:

> Indian recipe books from India are out of touch with simplified cooking methods employed here, and also that the lavish use of spices most of our people have discarded in this country. We do prefer more subtly flavoured dishes…The method of cooking employed in these recipes is simplified…The shortcuts suggested certainly take the boredom of tediousness out of cooking but they in no way compromise with the finished result of delicious taste.[5]

Initially, not all the members of the Group were convinced that a cookbook would sell. Few South African Indian women were literate and, in many circles, culinary knowledge appeared ubiquitous and not something anyone would pay money for. There were counter-proposals for a more modest project. But other members, confident in their vision, 'rebelled against what we considered to be scaling down our aspirations. Eventually, reason and common sense

prevailed.'[6] Nevertheless, the debate appears to have fine-tuned members' analysis and anticipation of a market for such a text. Mayat's introduction to the first edition of *Indian Delights* acknowledged that 'the cookery book, as such, is something that is foreign to Indian housewives'[7] and explained how recipes and skills had long been transmitted across the generations through example. And, she argued, much more than tasty meals were at stake in this training! Young Indian women inevitably faced a specifically female economy of family reputation, in which cooking prowess featured prominently in the arsenal of talents a young bride was expected to deploy in her new marital home, as a demonstration of 'proper' upbringing and her usefulness. Mayat wrote that mothers teach each dish

> over and over to the growing daughter, so that by the time she enters another home as a daughter-in-law the recipe is in her head as well as at the tips of her fingers, and it is with great confidence that she cooks her first meal in the new household. The greatest stigma a mother faces is that her daughter has in some way slipped up in the new home. Therefore, extreme care is taken that no novice is given in marriage.[8]

Yet, all this was changing:

> With the rest of the world, our modern way of life is such that mothers can no longer teach each individual dish to daughters under the old rigid conditions. Girls stay longer at school and manage their own homes sooner than in the olden days, where they still had to serve a term of apprenticeship under the mother-in-law. Under these changing circumstances, one finds the need of a good and reliable cookery book an essential entity; one that will be a boon both to the young initiate as well as the experienced housewife, who will refer to the recipes contained therein as an aid to memory.[9]

Advancing girls' education was a key focus of Group activities and it is notable that the cookbook is matter-of-factly proposed as a practical substitute for the often insular world of extended family relations that these authors were themselves shaped by. Like post-war women in other parts of the world, they saw their generation of womanhood as an advance guard of modernisation. As such, their initiative in producing a book of recipes was an important validation of changes

in family and women's opportunities, even as it reasserted the figure of the Indian housewife within a gendered and cultural division of labour.[10]

Indian Delights shows itself to be a squarely modern product as an expression of faith both in progress and in preservation. The authors' regard for ancestral mothers' culinary expertise can be observed in their methods of recipe compilation and their sense of urgency in translating memory into print. Khatija Vawda conveys the Group's general confidence in the power of script to archive cultural and gendered knowledge:

> One of the main ideas was to get the old recipes down. As time goes on, people forget; they use modern recipes. We used the old recipes of our mothers. Nowadays it is not mother's cooking. We wanted to retain this – retain how meals were prepared in 'them days'. The idea was to retain the old methods. Do you notice now that papad is a lost art and samoosa pur is bought ready-made? All this is most time-consuming and people don't have time. Most people buy rotis. In time to come, people are bound to forget our lentils mugh-ni-dhal – the youngsters don't seem to prefer it. But what if they want to try it? There may be no granny to show them. That's why we have the book. They can follow it.

Members drew upon the knowledge of senior members of their own families and households to 'get the old recipes down' but they also approached acquaintances and the public at large. This meant that the book's content reflects the compilers' networks and mobility in the community and around the city. Mayat turned to her in-laws as 'the whole Mayat family were good cooks and their extended family were all really good cooks'. This included her sister-in-law, Mariam Bibi Mayat, and her mother-in-law, Hafiza Mayat. 'Foreign' influence came in the shape of Mrs Gori-Apa Mahomedy, who was from Pakistan. Certainly, the mobility of Group members searching for recipes was affected by gendered and religious proprieties, as well as official racial zoning, and, in this sense, members sometimes moved across boundaries in a way that raised eyebrows. Gori Patel, for example, relied on her liberal-minded husband to legitimate her movements through the city for various Group activities in the face of community disapproval:

> You see, I had the habit of not asking the family. I just – I got the permission from my husband, that's all. Because everyone – even my sisters and

> them – they all were very angry with me. They say, 'Now you going walking in Grey Street…[You have] no shame.' But my father was very modern, too, huh. I know. I tell them, 'If Papa was here, you know, he would have encouraged me to do [this].'

Where Group members did not have family access to grannies, they made contact through neighbours, domestic employees or employees of their family-run businesses. The aim was to produce a book as inclusive of 'Indian' cuisine as possible, and mainly as represented in South Africa. Something of their conception of what this meant can be found in the foreword to the first edition, written by Fatima Meer, which briefly traces the history of Indians in South Africa and underscores the region's culinary heterogeneity. For Meer, whatever the social, economic and political consequences of difference among Indians, it at least 'makes their cooking particularly attractive'.[11] Meer identified four broad groups: Tamils and Telegus from South India; Hindustanis from the North; and 'two groups of Gujaratis, differentiated by religious affiliations [Hindu and Muslim] and food habits'. There were, of course, many other ways of expressing differences, such as those of social class, region of ancestral origin, ethnic or clan identity, migration patterns and language. Even among the Muslim passenger classes there were distinct culinary tastes and methods of cooking between ethnic groups broadly identified as Memon, Surti, Konkani and Mia-bhai. 'The old recipes', the ones existing in memory and practice, belonged to family and ethnic lineages.

Gori Patel notes that they made use of their connections as best they could in trying to achieve inclusivity for what was to be a compendium of 'Indian' (or diasporic) delights:

> We used to go from home to home. If I, you know, I got some old grannies – say my kala is there – so I know them and I tell Mrs Mayat – then they give us recipes. We make an appointment and we take our ingredients, everything, and go there. A lot of people we went to – we went even to Tamil people's house, Parsee people's house, Gujarati Hindu people's house for recipes. Like, I don't know the Gujarati Hindu people, but the other members will know them. So she will introduce us, 'let us go to that house and that'. All recipes – and even for the confinement too – everything is there.

The cookbook was meant to capture the diversity not only of regional but also of local preparations.[12] Mayat explains that they tried for a spread of 'ethnic' recipes from 'all classes of society'.

> I had even recipes in there from people working in our homes – those are the kalas – and my one sister-in-law, Mrs Aisha Mohamedy, had an Indian girl working for them, Lutchmee, and she virtually grew up with them and she had lots of Tamilian recipes…We've got lots of recipes from Gujarati Hindu people, from the Popatlall Kara family – Indira was a member – from the Dhupelia family – Kharunissa Coovadia, our secretary, worked for one of the Dhupelias and got recipes from them. Parsee recipes came from Tehmi Rustomjee – she was our treasurer – and Nancy [Rustomjee] and Khorshid Ginwala, who was not a member but had a close relationship with some of us and she would suggest some special Parsee dishes.

She concedes, however, that meals 'as cooked in certain strata of Hindu and Muslim homes appear to have been given preference. The simple reason for this is that access to these homes, via our members, has been easier.'[13] Mayat asserts, therefore, that the first edition 'in no way claims to be a comprehensive and complete encyclopaedia of Indian cooking in South Africa'.[14] Meer glosses over this circumstantial bias, however, producing rather a poetic sense of the diversity the book captures under its encompassing title: '[Although] a basic uniformity may be abstracted in respect of Indian cooking in general, each of these groups have so elaborated and distinguished their own repertoire of dishes, as to accommodate in each, distinctive forms of food preparations.' So, while Gujarati cooking may have had 'symptoms of upper-class cooking', the cuisine of the descendants of indentured Indians was 'subdued in the variety of commodities used, [but] enriched in taste by a wealth of knowledge in ways of preparation'.[15]

Shairbanu Lockhat, a second-generation member, recalled the conditions in which her mother prepared meals – with big families and traditional technologies. Her mother, known as Chotima (as the youngest of five daughters-in-law living in the household, she was called 'small mother'),

> was a very good cook, my grandmothers were very good too – my mother's mother [Nanima] was an excellent cook. And because we had the farm in Westville, you see at that time there were no freezers and

> things. So my grandfather used to bring his friends and say, 'Right, cook this, cook this'. Sometimes my grandfather used to tell her on Sunday morning, 'I'm getting ten people for lunch so you'll have to cook x-amount', whatever. So my mother and them used to go into the garden, go and run up to the fowls, and bring the fowls and cut them, because you know we had to say the word 'Bismillah' (you know, in the name of Allah). They used to cut them, skin them, do it themselves; they used to wash clean, and cook it and serve. There was no such thing of saying, 'I can't do it', 'I don't have a maid', or 'I can't do it today', or something. No, if they said this had to be done, you had to do it.

Mana Rajah also grew up in a time when most people did not own fridges. Thus, 'in Ramadan the samoosas were made every day [as] there was no such things as freezers and the bhajias were made [from scratch] every day'. One result was simplicity: 'We didn't have such a big spread like how you…see all this lovely food [in the present day]. It was basic, you know, the haleem and then one other thing and one chutney.' Even the chutney required manual labour in the absence of liquidisers and grinding machines. 'My mother used to have that black – we used to call it kundi, with a little wooden rod [pestle] and she used to take fresh mint and fresh dhania and [make chutney].'

Lockhat's and Rajah's descriptions highlight another important feature about putting into writing the oral knowledge of older generations of women – the problem of their translation into a language of precision and replicability such that 'no difficulty should be encountered by the average person' in producing a given dish.[16] Clearly, the meaning of 'average person' was changing, as was the social context. Putting into writing the methods of women who crafted meals in a time where it was normative to cook for large numbers, in the Durban heat without benefit of refrigeration – thus necessitating ritual slaughter and preparation just prior to meals – required more than transcribing recipes into print from the verbal instructions of the 'women who cherished them'. It also required that they be 'brought up-to-date and, whenever possible, short cut methods devised.'[17]

In this endeavour, one major challenge was converting the measurements of ingredients, traditionally exercised through habit and intuition, into quantifiable amounts. The older women had not typically measured with much precision. Gori Patel explained:

> You know that we ask [the] grannies, 'Ma, how much you put this masala in?' They said, 'Put a little bit.' 'And the salt?' 'No, after that you must put your finger in and you must taste.' You see, that's how they tell us, like that, and that's how I also learnt cooking.

Tasting, then, was an ongoing part of transcription from oral to textual record, and it involved the considered judgement and input of Group members. This meant that, to some extent, the Group's own preferences came into play in deciding on the stipulated amounts of salt, ghee and spices. In keeping with an age excited by scientific achievement, cookery from a printed manual offered a kind of popular chemistry for the kitchen. Gori Patel remembers:

> We put [different ingredients] on the scale and see how many ounces (that time [it] was, you know, no gram, no kilo, but pound and this thing, ounces) so that's how [we converted] from [weight] into teaspoon [amounts]. It took a lot of time – I think about one year it took to make that book – because it wasn't easy. We don't just print the recipe in the book – first, we all cook and then we try.

By the time Nafisa Jeewa joined the Group, the revised and expanded versions of *Indian Delights* were being planned and the sources of recipes were more varied:

> It wasn't so much [going to] houses – it was like talking to family members and getting recipes from them and, if you've been abroad and you ate something and you'd, you know, if they were polite enough to give you the recipe then you'd bring that with you and you'd submit that. We'd try it out and if it's feasible then [include it] because every recipe in the book is tried and tested.

A range of local influences, too, is apparent in these pages, as the use of South Africanisms such as the word 'braai' and the use of ingredients such as springbok and gemsbok indicate. Recipes can be found for 'Namaqua Steak', 'Indian Biltong' and 'Cape Frikkadels'. A recipe for 'Chinese Springrolls' and several for 'putu', 'Roast Green Mealies' and 'Mealies with Sour Milk' reveal the cookbook's rootedness also in the South African social terrain. In these recipes, and others, exchanges with various indigenous and immigrant communities make their appearance as 'Indian' delights.

Zuleihka Mayat acknowledges that the Group's labour in this process often depended upon various women who were not members of the Group. For example, Mayat's domestic assistant, Mildred Mdladla, is the first person to be thanked in the acknowledgements section in the deluxe edition of *Indian Delights*, for 'her quick grasp of [cooking] procedures' which 'spared me many valuable hours which were sorely needed for recording and writing'. The hiring of domestic assistants and cooks was, over the decades, an aspect of change in a growing number of households. Mothers working outside the home found it possible to subcontract some of their own duties of child-minding, cooking and other chores. In some households, as in Mayat's, these assistants were trained in cooking, learning the subjective art of tasting as well as estimating – an especially important skill in preparation for Ramadan feasts, when devout members of the household could not check the flavour of the food they would eat after sundown.

Behind *Indian Delights* is the labour of bridging taste and calculation, of reconciling culinary diversity with a Durban creole conception of 'Indian' cuisine, and of preserving tradition through a celebration of change. Transcription to print, and bringing cooking methods 'up-to-date', meant accounting for innovations in culinary technologies, dietary trends, health wisdom and the daily rhythms of the modern household. While the compilers of *Indian Delights* took it as axiomatic that 'as a cook, the Indian housewife is second to none' and that 'in the handling of food, the Indian woman finds fulfilment for her talents…and this is visible when her labour of love appears on the table',[18] they were eager to account for changes in the labour process. So, for example, *Indian Delights* notes:

> The ancient Indian technique of wrapping fish or meat in banana leaves for stewing, steaming or baking, is rapidly being replaced by the use of tin foil. The contemporary housewife can no longer bother hunting for the banana leaf, even though it may be growing in her back yard.[19]

It is clear that new technologies were welcome. In regard to microwave ovens, which were becoming popular by the 1980s, Mayat wrote:

> The signs are there that they will be increasingly used in the future. For the working mother, this means a more relaxed period with her family once she is at home from work, for she can take pre-planned dishes from

The South African context of the Indian Delights *series is evident not only in the influences on its recipes, but also in the labour processes represented in its particular formulations of class relations in the home. This photo appeared in the second edition of* Indian Delights.

> the freezer, pop them in the oven, lay the table and call to her family that dinner is ready.[20]

The convenience of the freezer, the microwave, Tupperware containers and other time-saving technologies are discussed as part of an energy-saving and pro-family economy headed by the modern housewife. Readers are instructed also in how they can save and conserve money:

> Remember the adage: 'A woman's savings are equal to a man's earnings.' To live up to this motto you must learn to make do, improvise and substitute…Don't buy bread crumbs, rather put the stale slices into the oven from which you have just taken out your cake. The remaining heat will make the bread crisp and you can then crumb it fine. Which reminds us, do switch off the element a little before baking is done or the pot of curry stewed. The remaining heat will do the job for you at no cost.[21]

While a special section of the enlarged 'super edition' of *Indian Delights* provides instructions for mass gatherings, such as weddings ('Biryani for 100 People' or 'Gajar Halwa for 800'), most recipes are designed for daily sustenance of a modestly sized household, with proportions to serve six. This is one indication of changes in family relationships and household make-up. Another is indicated in some of the narratives within the text that convey various aspects of disappearing gender etiquette. So, 'Homage to the Serva Curry' (gravy curry), a dish which 'sustains families over lean days without making them feel like paupers', explains that 'males being traditionally the bread winners in the family, growing children, women who were pregnant or breast feeding babies, would be coaxed [by the mother or cook] to spoon off the choice bits of meat and vegetables':

> Mothers were usually left only the gravy to spoon over their portion of rice or to mop up with their bread. Often, when father insisted that mother too must have some meat, the latter would pretend that she had gone off meat or had a current digestive problem…Of such stuff are mothers made.[22]

The inclusion of tributes to idealised womanhood in the figure of the self-sacrificing homemaker/mother might be viewed as an instance of female (self-) disciplining. Yet such praises can be considered as much a reflexive

acknowledgement of changing ideals of femininity and womanhood as a behavioural prescription, even if the construct of the past is represented as normatively virtuous. Such narratives are often conveyed with a sense of humour and playfulness introduced through hyperbole – husbands described as a 'Prince Charming' or a 'Lord and Master' who is waited on hand and foot by his 'Lady' in 'days gone by'[23]. Parody is mixed with respect for 'them days' – for example, in recounting the many social benefits for women who were part of a clan who regularly joined forces for a full day to multiply their efficiency, creating pickles and rotis to sustain many households and lighten the labour of individuals.

As women sensitive to the trends and new opportunities of their own era, even as they set out to 'preserve' the food traditions of India that could be found in South Africa, their work was necessarily transformative. The text they produced was an influential agent in the formation of a growing diasporic imaginary. Out of a diversity of private-sphere family traditions they created a public, creole conception of culinary tradition. Moreover, their own tastes, sensibilities and specific social circumstances were inscribed into what would become the 'classic' archive of South African Indian cuisine.

From household to public knowledge: publishing and marketing

In recounting the story of how *Indian Delights* was published, Mayat and other members use the kind of storytelling devices that indicate that this narrative has become something of an oral tradition. It is a narrative of overcoming various kinds of adversity, of encounters with villains and unexpected allies, of using their wits to defeat male bigotry. The manner of telling says something important about the experiences of women (housewives, and therefore private-sphere people) making their way into the public domain, the sphere of business, of men. What is clear is that Group members gained valuable skills through these experiences, which they subsequently put to use in their collective, civic life.

Once the recipes had been gathered, tested and written up, the prospect of how to publish them was a new challenge. None of the Group members had any editorial experience and typing skills were in short supply. Zubeida Seedat and Ayesha Vorajee helped to proofread the recipes; Mariam Motala (then the Group's president) assisted with typing, a skill she acquired during her stay in London; the illustrations were sketched by Fatima Meer (then a sociology

Prominent businessman and community figure, Yusuf Lockhat, is presented with a copy of the first edition of Indian Delights.

lecturer at the University of Natal); while Dennis Bughwan took the photographs gratis. Members prepared the dishes and displays of food to accompany the recipes.[24] As Mayat recounts, once the draft was ready they were compelled to call upon the resources of men within their broader networks:

> We didn't have sufficient money to go to a publisher so I went to Essop Mota Kajee [of the firm AI Kajee]. The late Essop Mota was a manager at that time, and I told him, 'Essop Mota, we need just three of your sponsors, or the firms that you deal with, and we are going to ask them for help'. I didn't ask AI Kajee to give me anything. So he said, 'What? A cookery book – everybody knows how to cook!' I said, 'I don't know how to cook, and there will be people in future who [will not] know how to cook, so we are going to print it, it's ready. Now give us the names.'

Kajee gave the names of three companies, Illovo Sugar, Joko and Nestlé. Mayat and Mariam Motala visited each and stated their case, and were given the twenty-five pounds they asked for (one company even offered them a job, impressed by the way they had marketed their product).

With start-up capital secured, they set out to get quotations from printing houses. The first printer was abrupt and paternalistic: he described their typing as 'atrocious' and did not regard Fatima Meer's illustrations – whimsical Mughal figurines – as 'art'. In designing the sketches, Meer recalled:

> [I took] stick figures and made them run and clothed them and dressed them, trying to show the Cultural Group as an *active* group of women. I wanted to show something light-hearted because the Cultural Group were light-hearted in their approach – I wanted to depict the fun aspect. These women are a breezy lot.

Fatima Meer's original sketches.

Mayat confirmed:

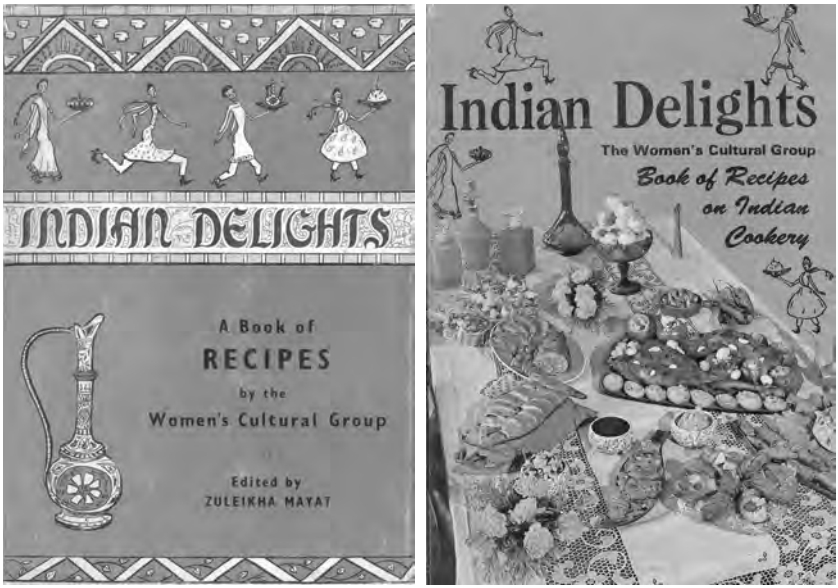
> We were very happy with those sketches. They looked so lively. But [the first publisher] says, 'Ja, but there's something very wrong, what do you think? You don't want *those* pictures – I've got some lovely pictures' and he brought us some Indian calendars with those big, curly-haired women with the clips in the hair and so on. I said, 'This is *our* book, *this* is what *we* want. Please, we want you to give us a quotation on *that*.'

His price was 'double what the Group had budgeted' and he wanted to charge an additional amount to correct typographical errors. Worse, when they asked him to return the manuscript in order to obtain another quotation, he would not give it back. They devised a trick to retrieve their manuscript:

> So we phoned one of the members [Amina Moosa], and said, 'Look, okay, we are going back there now for the manuscript, you phone us in exactly half an hour and say that your father-in-law says to bring that manuscript back immediately.' Her father-in-law was Mahomed Moosa [a powerful figure in the community]. He had nothing to do with it. So now we went back to the printer [and] said, 'Look, we really can't come up with this [money]. We will just abandon the whole thing.' And just then Amina phones and he says, 'There's a call for you.' So I said, [mimics speaking on the phone] 'What, here? Okay, alright. No, no, no, I'll tell the printer. No, if your father insists…' and, you know, we made a little drama there, so the man gave us the thing back.

Fortunately Mr Ramsay, the second printer, was more sympathetic and there was no need to use plots and dramas to equalise the imbalance of gender power. He said that his compositors would take care of typing errors, his quotation was substantially cheaper, and he allowed them to run a second edition before he had been paid for the first. Best of all, he 'chuckled at the sketches and thought them enchanting'.[25]

The first delivery of a thousand books was sold out before payment was due.[26] Books were sold through members as well as through Indian retailers like Roopanand's and Taj Company (later Sartaj) in Durban, and Saloojee's and Akhalwaya's in Johannesburg. The Group believed that their market was not in the Indian community alone, so Zuleikha Mayat summoned her courage and found, to her surprise, a female ally:



The first and second editions of the book.

> I went to CNA [a national book-selling franchise] in Smith Street. They said, 'No, the buyer is upstairs.' So I went upstairs and there was a woman who was doing something with books and I said, 'I want to see the buyer of the English books.' She looked at me and said, 'I'm the buyer of the English books.' So I said, 'Look, we've got a book here which we have printed – it seems to be very popular amongst Indians but maybe you could also sell it.' So she said, 'You'll have to leave a copy, let me have a look at it', and she took a copy and immediately they bought.

The first, 140-page edition of *Indian Delights* sold at CNA for 19s. 6d.[27] This edition was reprinted seven times over the next nine years – amounting to 17 500 copies in all. The public response was encouraging and new recipes were offered to the Group out of the enthusiasm generated by the book. According to Mayat, ordinary members of the public

> were so excited with our work that they gave us full support. Their home was always open for us. They gave lots of recipes too. Like Mrs Suleman Paruk of Derby Street, we would go to her home, even if it was for a

> function cooking, we would do it there. If it was anything to do with books they would have it there. They would pick up the tablecloths for the photograph sessions and so on. Whenever we would go somewhere the old ladies would say, 'Oh, have something to eat, this is also a nice recipe', and they would just say it by mouth and I would come home and write it down.

A revised and extended 310-page second edition was published in May 1970. It contained many new recipes and eighty-five thousand copies sold over the next twelve years. Rapid sales of the 1961 edition had resulted in a decade-long delay in getting the second edition on the market despite public interest and demand. In fact, reprints of the first edition included an almost apologetic explanatory note to readers:

> For some time now, we have been contemplating on bringing out a revised and enlarged edition of *Indian Delights*, but pressure on sales remain unabated and we are compelled to bring out yet another impression of this popular cookery book in its old format. However, a firm decision has been taken and work is proceeding on a new, more comprehensive, highly illustrated edition.

It was in the mid-1970s that members fully recognised the scale of *Indian Delights*' print success. The Group placed an order for fifteen thousand copies, a major leap from the previously prudent practice of printing a couple of thousand copies at a time. Delivered in September 1975, every copy had sold out by April of the following year. Their new printer, Robinson & Co., required them to cede investment certificates to the New Republic Bank, which would guarantee payment.[28] Brisk sales meant that the Group did not have to call on the bank, something that members reflected on with pride.[29]

With some nervousness an order for twenty-five thousand books was placed with Robinson, partly because of demand and partly to secure a lower unit cost that would allow them to sell the book at a lower price. This was a 'difficult decision' as members feared that they might be getting into 'something we could not handle'. The books were delivered between August 1976 and February 1977, leaving the Group with a 'colossal' bill of R46 000 that was due in May. As they entered into this deal, Mayat told her group, 'Ladies, our reputation stands high and I have great pleasure in telling you that Robinson

has not asked for any guarantees from us and has even extended terms of payment from 60 to 120 days after delivery.'[30] At the end of the year, she would record:

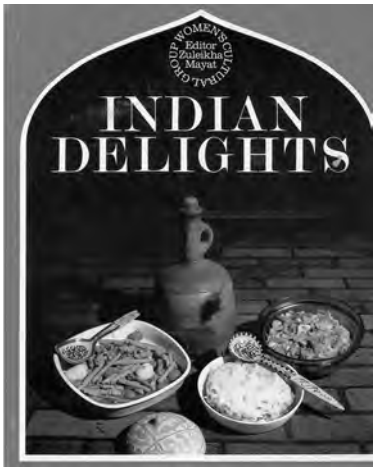
> Putting our shoulders to the wheel we started early last year collecting monies from creditors, cajoling merchants to buy more books, putting any cash that came in into safe investments and thereafter, even if it was for short terms, we scrounged around for favourable investment returns. The result was that Mrs [Mariam] Motala and I, with shaking hands, put our signatures to a cheque of R46 000. The cheque was posted the next morning and when Mr Quirke phoned me in the afternoon using a tone one usually reserved for creditors who owe you money and you are making the first call in this respect, I was able to forestall him by saying: 'Hello, Mr Quirke, you must be after your money?' Let me assure you the man was taken aback. He was prepared for an extension of time and here I was telling him that the cheque had been posted to him.[31]

Even without advertising, sales averaged a thousand copies a month in the late 1970s. As bigger consignments of the books arrived – no longer two thousand or five thousand, but ten to twenty thousand – their physical storage became a significant problem. As the Group did not have a warehouse, boxes of books were stored in members' own households. Those with cars transported these heavy loads, others packaged them for delivery. This was the case until a calamity struck one day: Bari Paruk phoned to say that her basement had flooded and the books were getting wet. Zuleikha Mayat and Bibi Mall 'rushed' to the scene. Around thirty books were sodden, the damp remainder were brought to Mayat's house. The Group secretary recorded the work that followed in her annual report:

> About a dozen members sweated for a full day, opening parcels, wiping, drying, dusting with mildew-preventing powder, airing each individual copy and finally making up the parcels again. Robinson's [& Co.] rushed extra dustcovers to replace badly damaged ones and brown paper and tape for the new packaging. The hard labour saved the books.

The incident produced a change in storage strategies, one in keeping with the increasing professionalisation of the Group's approach. Zuleikha Mayat spoke

to a local book distributor, Taj Company's AH Khan, who, according to Mayat, 'said, "Fine, you can bring them", and afterwards, when Taj Company closed down and Sartaj opened, he [Mr Gani] continued, and he still stores [the books] for us – ten thousand copies at a time'. From 1977, they negotiated a fee of five cents per book for Taj Company to deliver books to retailers. They also paid an annual insurance premium. Members continued to collect and deliver small orders, however.



The Red Edition*, first published in 1982.*

Meanwhile, recipes continued to be collected and the need for an expanded edition again became pressing, but progress was slow. This was partly because of the continuing high demand for the existing edition, but also because it was during this time that Mayat, who took responsibility for much of this project, lost her husband in a tragic road accident. At a committee meeting in March 1980, Zohra Moosa said that while Mayat had done 'a great deal of work on the new *Indian Delights*, it was time for others to make a meaningful contribution'. With typing assistance from non-member Sabera Desai, as well as members who tested new recipes, Mayat edited a 400-page, enlarged super edition that was published in 1982 and became known as the *Red Edition*. To its editors, this expanded version felt like a new level of accomplishment, both in content and appearance. In a letter to Ahmed Kathrada which he received at Robben Island on 8 May, Mayat expressed her pleasure:

> Congratulate me. The new *Indian Delights* is out and it is a beauty. As my children say, it's no longer housewifey but professional, meaning thereby that [Durban artist] Andrew Verster who had been responsible for the arrangement deserves the credit for appearance. The public that had patiently been waiting for this new edition has just overwhelmed us with orders, and that has not given us time to launch or publicise it yet. Price R10.95+GST.[32]

The book was launched at the *Natal Mercury* Auditorium with cookery demonstrations and hundreds of sample delectables (such as samoosas) prepared by Zohra Moosa, Fatima Loonat, Fatima Mayat and Farida Jhavery. The *Daily News, Tribune Herald* and *Sunday Times* provided extensive pre-launch publicity, an indication of the Group's marketing savvy. The CNA allowed members to promote the book at its La Lucia branch, and Jane Raphaely, editor of *Fair Lady* magazine, was convinced to run a feature article. In April 1985, Zuleikha Mayat appeared on a television programme to speak about the cookbook.

Of the first twenty-five thousand copies of the *Red Edition*, 18 418 sold out within three months[33] and the rest by the end of the year.[34] The second impression of twenty-five thousand copies was delivered in July 1983. The books 'flew off the shelves', with fifteen thousand copies sold within nine months. By the end of 1983, the Group had paid the printer, set aside money for a women's activity centre they were hoping to build, contributed to their Education Trust, and purchased items like a microwave oven, a tape recorder and a photocopier that were desperately needed.[35] 'Sale of our *Indian Delights* is still soaring due to all Mrs Mayat's efforts in this direction and it is through this that we have managed to give out twenty-seven bursaries,' the secretary recorded in 1983.[36] Within five years, sales of the *Red Edition* stood at eighty thousand.[37] 'There is no doubt,' Mayat wrote in 1988, 'it will become a classic.' She intended 'overhauling it every ten years because it contains not only recipes but a way of life as reflected in our cuisine'.[38] Each new edition was to reflect the changing way of life in Indian South African households.

The 1984 AGM resolved to publish *Indian Delights* under their tax-exempt Educational Trust[39] and, further, produce new editions. 'After these tremendously successful figures,' stated Mayat, 'I am not going to relax [but] propose that we not only reprint the current *Delights*…but as well compile a *Delights* for beginners to fill an urgent need.'[40] Visions of cookbooks to service various tastes and expertise had been floating about for a while. Mayat had earlier written to Ahmed Kathrada of her idea to create a 'Soul Food' version of *Delights*, with the help of Group affiliates Siko Mji and Virginia Gcabashe, which would present an African-Indian fusion 'based on peasant Indian cooking like khitchiri and khuri, pumpkin and potato curries, lentil dhals etc. combined with traditional African dishes – that is, the Indian manner of cooking bhurkoo and the African putu! Similarly the different manner of cooking pumpkin, samp mealies, etc.'

The proceeds would go towards baby crèches in the townships.[41]

Best *promoted the use of 'time-saving gadgets for modern housewives'.*

This particular dream was not realised but other cookbooks did indeed emerge. In January 1986, the Group got to work on a new book.[42] *The Best of Indian Delights*, even more than other editions, responded to the changing pace of life in South African Indian households. This was to be a book that promoted 'shortcuts' and the use of 'gadgets' as time-savers. As they tell it, the Group began compiling *The Best* in response to complaints from working women that the *Red Edition* had too many versions of each recipe to sift through: 'This [new book] is at the insistence of modern housewives who…just want tried out, best of the litter sort of recipes.'[43] As Mayat pointed out at the book's launch, *The Best* was not 'simply a repeat edition' but had been updated and included 140 new recipes[44] to reflect 'changing culinary tastes'. Where basic recipes were repeated, according to Mayat, 'they have been cut down in labour'.[45] New recipes included casseroles, which could be prepared in advance, frozen, and warmed in an oven or microwave.[46] There were recipes based around 'the humble dhania chutney. If you have this in your freezer you can turn out the most tantalising dishes' with little time spent in the kitchen.[47] Working wives were advised to fry onions in larger quantities and keep them in the fridge or freezer for future use. *The Best* was also syncretic in making traditional dishes using non-Indian products. For example:

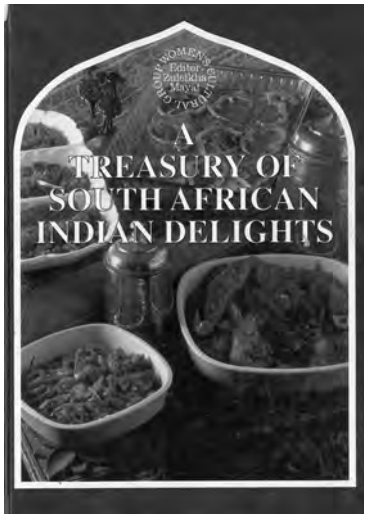
> Look at mithais. We used to do the mawa in the old days – it had to be the milk that you had to burn and dehydrate to make a mawa. Nowadays very few people bother with that and they all use…dehydrated milk; and maybe the mawa tastes nicer but people have forgotten those days – they still like this one here.

Another example was the use of phyllo and katayef pastry with Indian fillings in place of the samoosa pur, which required both time and expertise to make.[48]

In Mayat's estimation, *Best* was a success because of the 'easier methods, the "face lifting" of old favourites and presenting them with trendy styling'.[49]

Health was also more consciously taken into account. By the time *Best* came out, Mayat explains:

> Some of the doctors had been complaining that, you know, 'you're interfering with the health of people with all your recipes', so this is when I started saying, 'Less oil when you cook'. So we've got a section just on health foods at the back – people's tastes also [changed]. Look, in the olden days if the ghee wasn't swimming there or the oil wasn't swimming there, it wasn't good curry. Nowadays people don't like to see all that oil – so our tastes also changed.



The most recent edition in the series.

The new book, at two hundred pages, was half the length of the *Red Edition*. Again, in its creation, progress was slow and earnest pleas were made at committee meetings to assist Mayat, Zohra Moosa, Khatija Vawda and other stalwarts who took on much of the typing and proofreading. By February 1988, Mayat and Andrew Verster had prepared ninety-nine pages of the book. Yasmin Sabat was roped in to assist with typing. That the typewriter had to be repaired several times did not help the cause.[50] The first thousand copies were received in August 1988. Two hundred copies were exported to the United States and the rest sold by Group members at launches in Pietermaritzburg, Stanger and other parts of Natal. A stall was hired at the flea market on the beachfront on the last Sunday of August where Fatima Loonat and Khatija Vawda sold books.[51] Only one impression of ten thousand copies of *Best* was printed as plans were soon made for something new and different, the *Treasury*.

The most recent cookbook in the Women's Cultural Group stable is the 1999 *A Treasury of South African Indian Delights*, the first one to specify itself in the title as 'South African'. Like *Best*, it was responsive to perceived changes

in Indian culinary tastes and lifestyle, as well as 'the availability of newer products, the increasing acceptability on our tables for cheese, pasta, etc., lesser use of fats, increased salad consumption and…our growing interests in the cuisine of other cultures'.[52] *Treasury* more conspicuously than ever celebrated cultural fusion, the variety of commercial products that could be incorporated, and the appropriation of global dishes which could be given an 'Indian' taste and appearance:

> See how we utilised the various types of noodles, couscous, coconut cream, cheese and dairy products, and transmuted them from their origins into the Indian look. Taste and tradition have been enhanced and the repertoire enlarged in a way that it can be presented internationally.

The claim that these recipes enhanced not only taste, but also tradition, indicated the flexibility and centrality of change that infused the Group's conception of culture. In contrast to a quest for 'purity' or to claims that authenticity is to be found in a rejection of innovation and blend, the concept of heritage has a more dynamic and cosmopolitan (and, also, much less fragile) meaning for the Group. Mayat would read and compare other cookbooks, mainly Western ones, and with her own experience, seek to produce creative new culinary ideas that were 'Indianised' through the addition of Indian spices and techniques. Uppermost in Mayat's mind was creating dishes that could be popped in the freezer and enjoyed later. *Treasury* conceded that it could not fight globalising consumerism but had to change 'with the times':

> The current trend by busy homemakers is to turn to the market shelves for packets of soup, tinned products and marinades…Our mission statement is that since such recipes are found in magazines or exchanged among friends, they should not be called recipes for they fall in the category of tips. To prove that it is not our intention to put anyone off from utilising these quickmeal measures, we have included some…as a further aid to the housewife in the transformation of a ready product into a unique dish.

During the production of *Treasury*, Mayat reflected on the difficulties and challenges of producing a book. 'You have all been asking why it's taking so long. Members of course have no idea what is involved for with past editions

I controlled things from my home.'[53] The transition from typewriter to word processor – in another attempt to keep up with the times – did not assist Mayat's otherwise sound faith in progress, but rather created new challenges:

> I roped in Aziza [Mayat] to help input with the word processing. Simultaneously we worked on two discs, one at the Centre and one from home. Often work was duplicated which later presented problems when it came to publishing. It was not possible to go through all the recipes on Aziza's disc with the result that many recipes were given to the printer without the editor's drastic pen having gone through them.

Production of the cookbook involved much more than typing up the recipes:

> Apart from photographs, proofreading, word processing, etc., there is a lot of other work entailed such as getting quotes for the various stages of book preparation; obtaining an ISBN number from Pretoria and the bar code from Johannesburg, and writing to the public library informing them of the new book, working out the costs and selling prices to various clients and so forth.

Mayat's daughter-in-law Shameema would often find her working late into the night 'after sehri and fajr' and into the morning. Her granddaughter Dilshad once had to beg her, at 9am after such a night, to 'please go and get dressed' before the gardener came. Following the launch of the book, Mayat reflected in her presidential report in July 1999:

> After a long delayed pregnancy this book saw the light of day at the end of March 1999. The baby really cost me sleepless nights. It was not only the concern of being long overdue, but also the fact that I relaxed my usual discipline of testing our recipes, and including only those that appealed to me. This time members were given free rein. Working from both home and the Centre added to the confusion and I was afraid that the baby would be disfigured, retarded or stillborn. Alhamdolillah, all my fears vanished like phantoms when our very attractive newborn blue-eyed baby finally arrived. For its attractive appearance thanks go to Andrew Verster and also [daughter-in-law] Shameema, who is my worst critic…Members played a magnificent role in selling the copies. Their relatives and connections spread the word and more orders came from

Catering for weddings and other joyful family occasions features in a special section in the Red Edition. *Other recipes assume a six-person household as the norm.*

> faraway towns…So members, thank you once again. In the present economic climate you have performed miraculously.[54]

Production was also hard labour because Mayat was a perfectionist. The photographs are one example. Laila Ally, a second-generation member who was involved in the photographs for the *Red Edition*, explained the process:

> You know, for photographs you can't have fully cooked food, you have to have it half-cooked for the colour to be right, and it's amazing, we had brilliant photographers and Andrew Verster helped us with the layout and the design, but Mrs Mayat is so talented, she just knows what colour the food must be even if it means enhancing it. We sometimes enhanced it with just glazed honey to give the food that little shine for the photographs, you know, and as I said half-cooked food, not fully cooked, because sometimes the colour becomes a bit dark when you fully cooked it. And Mrs Mayat would say, 'Right, we're ready for the next photograph', and lay out everything and then she looks at the plate and says, 'Well, we're running short of' something, then all of us would run helter-skelter to get what we needed for those photographs. A lot of photographs were taken at members' homes and out in gardens and things like that. Many members got involved, whoever was interested, that's one thing about Mrs Mayat, she gave everyone a chance.

Fatima Mayat recalls the photographic process for *Treasury* because her home was used for some of the photographs:

> We had lots of members bringing food here to my home. My daughter-in-law, my daughter, my mum were roped in and we did a lot of preparation. If you open the book, lots of pictures of my dining room and kitchen and everything are in there, and we really had a wonderful time. We had to place [the food] in so many ways, use the coffee table and use ornaments. We had to get in lots of fresh flowers and bright tablecloths and serviettes and napkins and the lighting had to be perfect. Because of my skylighting I get a lot of light coming in so the photographer was happy with that. We had to get into the garden, into the rockery and place our foods there as well – and after that we had a feast because there was a variety of food here. It was lovely.

The success of this search for perfection is reflected in some of the requests that the Group periodically receives. For example, the Dictionary Unit for South African English, an Institute affiliated to Rhodes University in Grahamstown, was granted permission on 29 September 2003 to use a photograph of Indian food on a table covered with decoratively cut newspaper, and which included orange slices, pumpkin curry, aloo fry and fried okra. The photograph was included in a programme known as the Language Portal, which was part of a project to foster multiculturalism by getting South Africans to learn about the languages and cultures in the country. And, in its 1989 publication, the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of India*,[55] Cambridge University Press included a photograph of Indian spices in a large tray from *Indian Delights* in the food section. Mayat regarded this as a major feather in the Group's cap for 'in spite of the cultures of India, Bangladesh, Ceylon, the University of Cambridge [Press] wrote to us to request one of the photographs from our book. It was also a compliment for us when Time-Life Books featured some of our recipes. Among the chosen recipes was my mother's "sweet potato puree" recipe…It [*Indian Delights*] has crossed the frontiers.'[56]

Into its fifth impression, the *Treasury* remains popular, with forty-five thousand copies sold during its decade of existence. Sales of this book, however, did not diminish those of the deluxe *Red Edition*, demand for which continued strongly into the 1990s and late 2000s, selling an average of six to seven hundred copies per month,[57] suggesting that the search for practical answers to quick meals has not eclipsed the desire for the 'authenticity' now more strikingly associated with the expanded version of the original text. Indeed, globalisation and the availability of new commercial commodities that came with the end of apartheid has paralleled the new, post-apartheid valorisation of ethnic distinction in South Africa.

Transoceanic kitchens

In marketing *Indian Delights*, the Group relied on personal contacts as well as a personal touch. For example, in 1987, when the Group received advance payment for a book from a Mrs Fourie of Kimberley, who failed to include her address, the Group placed an advert in a Kimberley newspaper in an attempt to get the book to her.[58] This personal approach proved successful in gener-

ating interest not only in South Africa, but internationally as well. According to Zuleikha Mayat, word of mouth and family connections were key.

> Look, we've never really advertised and so on, but we get ideas from all over the world. People buy a book, they give it to somebody, they go to their home overseas, they show it to their friends. Our expatriates have gone overseas, some to Canada, some to Australia, and they would have copies there and show it to their friends and this is how the orders start coming in.

These networks spread across diasporic communities in North America, Australia and the United Kingdom as well as in India and Pakistan. At this time, too, a concept of ethnic cuisines and an appetite for gastronomic exploration was growing in the United States and elsewhere, and so a new market for Indian recipes developed among people who were not of Indian ancestry.

In 1970, a publisher in Pakistan wanted to sell the book and offered to buy the copyright, arguing that it was much cheaper to produce the book on that side of the ocean. This was a 'wake-up call' as the members considered, for the first time, the commercial value of what they had produced, and the possibility of the book's illicit production. Mayat used a family connection in Karachi, Abdul Hameed Dadabhay, to register the copyright of *Indian Delights* in the name of the Women's Cultural Group in Pakistan. In her affidavit, Mayat stated that she had, as editor, 'donated the entire book to the Group and therefore all copyright has been permanently donated to the Group'. A few years later, a publisher in Delhi wanted to print the cookbook in Urdu and English.[59] Unlike Pakistan, where South Africans had relocated and Mayat perceived the threat of copyright theft to be 'real', Mayat did not feel a need to register the copyright of *Indian Delights* in India.

In the mid-1970s, the Group began to receive regular orders from around the globe. The book was then selling for £5 in London and $12 in Canada. A distribution agent in London organised book reviews in newspapers and it featured in a women's magazine. On a trip to the United Kingdom in 1977, Mayat was interviewed on BBC television's Sunday Urdu program, *Nai Zindagi Naya Jeevan*, by Salim Shaheed.[60] In the early 1980s, there was talk from Europe about the book's translation into German and French.[61] An order for five hundred copies of *Indian Delights* came in from Los Angeles in November 1985.[62] The following

year, six hundred copies were sold in Britain and fifty in Australia.[63] In August 1985, Fuad Elahee in Calgary, Canada, undertook some advertising on behalf of *Indian Delights*. In January 1986 he sent the Group some pamphlets he had made advertising the book and they decided to direct all enquiries from the United States and Canada to him.[64] Later that year, however, he reported that the response had not been that good because of general resentment towards South African products in Canada at this time due to anti-apartheid sanctions.[65] Ghiwalla Stores in London had better success. In early 1987, they placed an order for five hundred copies of *Delights*. In the same year, MA Kurta, also of London, also placed an order. Ayesha Kajee sent a pamphlet showing that her son was advertising the books in the United States: he was sent a hundred books.[66]

Overseas demand for the book increased with the 1988 release of Los Angeles-based Grace Kischenbaum's *World of Cookbooks*, in which *Indian Delights* received an excellent review. New queries followed from North America.[67] In the same year, a Nadia Beekun of Philadelphia wrote to Zuleikha Mayat that she had purchased a copy during a visit to Mauritius. She related that since her

> return to the United States I have not seen a cookbook on Indian cooking that compares in either recipes, ease of use, or presentation and I also find that your delightful book is not available here…*Indian Delights* is not just about food but also a way of life, an Islamic way of life. The small stories, the helpful hints within boxes, running commentaries on spices, history, and human nature are all interesting and informative, and present Islam in a different way to westerners, who only hear the negative aspects of 'Muslim' terrorists. I really believe it will be very successful here as both a cookbook and as a new way to look at Muslims.

Beekun offered to become an exclusive distributor. She described herself as having access to newspapers, her own talk shows and food magazines, and as being connected to the Islamic Society of North America and American Trust Publications. She appeared regularly on radio and television on issues of Islam and Christianity and Islam and women.

Partly in response to Beekun's encouragement, Mayat made a trip to North America in 1988. Her first stop was Canada, where one of her nieces-in-law arranged a few interviews. One was with a Mr Chandrasekhar:

> I took the book there. So when he saw the book, he shouted to his wife – I forget her name – he said, 'Please come here quickly. You see this lovely book? I'm interviewing the editor.' So she looked at him [and] she says, 'From what book do you think I've been cooking for you all these years?' [*laughs*]

In Philadelphia her niece Leila Lateeb (daughter of her sister Bibi and Dr Mall) had contacted a few radio stations. Mayat also visited Mrs Beekun to promote the book. The Group had sent two hundred books in advance but because of the political sanctions 'the whole consignment had to be diverted' and there were no books when she arrived. She managed to get hold of a few copies from friends and family for promotional events. One was at the Islamic Society of North America's centre in Washington, where she was interviewed for television. Beekun did eventually purchase a consignment of several hundred books.

Mayat also appeared on the 'Focus on Islam' channel run by a Pakistani couple in the basement of their home. They were wary of the 'Indian' in the title because of tensions between India and Pakistan and decided rather to feature another of the Group's publications, *Nanima's Chest*, which featured clothing and traditional attire.[68] Mayat lectured to several organisations and Zuby Haffejee, a past bursar, donated $100 to the Group. 'The people there were very impressed with our book but the only problem was the sanctions because no banks wanted to handle transactions from South Africa.'[69] In January 1989, letters were received from Mauritius and Belgium requesting that *Indian Delights* be translated into French. Mayat declined because it would have meant finding a translator and printer and developing a whole new market.[70] In August 1990, an order was received for four hundred and fifty copies of *Indian Delights* and eighty copies of *Best of Indian Delights* from Ghiwalla's Stores of Leicester. In December 1999 the Group gave permission to Shaban Pathan of Surat to publish recipes in Gujarati in the newspaper *Hilal* during the period January to March 2000.

The Group eventually negotiated a deal with a distributor in California, Tariq Rafeeqi of XC'lent International. Rafeeqi wrote to the Group on 14 July 1998:

> Your cookbook *Indian Delights* is an extraordinary book containing delicious recipes. The cover and inside printing and graphics show impressively well, and it uses a good quality paper for printing. My wife

> is a good cook, like my mother. She also takes pride in using your book to find new and delicious recipes. I would like to market your book in the United States. The main reason is to make the book available to as many people in the world as possible; because a lot of hard work has gone into this book and the product is impressive.

In her reply of 3 August 1998 Mayat specified the terms:

> As a charitable organization, operating on voluntary help from members, we do business on a strictly cash basis. We have an agent in the UK who purchases almost 200 copies each year, and the basis is that we send him a pro-forma invoice, and when we receive his draft, we ship the books to him. Our organization is over fifty years old so your money will be safe with us. Also with the currency overwhelmingly in favour of the dollar, you will benefit as other buyers have been selling copies at $25.00.

Rafeeqi agreed to buy a minimum of two hundred copies per annum.

Besides those interested in commercial distribution agreements, requests for *Indian Delights* have been received from readers all over the globe. Vic van der Merwe of Port Elizabeth wrote that 'after experiencing the spicy taste of Biryani…I wished to establish which ingredients are actually involved in the making of these dishes. The mother of one of my pupils, Mrs R Pillay, lent me this wonderfully practical book of cooking and I now wish to own a copy of my own.' Janet Laval of Morley, Perth, 'recently had the pleasure of reading your cookbook *Indian Delights* and I would dearly like to own one.' Thecla Danton of Mississauga, Ontario, was certain that the Group would be 'surprised to get this letter all the way from Canada'. She had seen the book when it was given as 'a wedding present to a friend. I have tried to obtain this wonderful book here in Ontario, unfortunately without success.' Aziza Mayat thanked her on 14 October 'for your lovely letter regarding the *Indian Delights*; however, we are not surprised as we receive many requests from all over the world very regularly.' There was another request from Canada when Michelle Leroux of the Office of Francophone Affairs, Toronto, wrote that she had 'recently come across *Indian Delights* and was most impressed. Your cookbook, from beginning to end, is an ocean of absolutely divine recipes. Would it be possible to order two copies from you?' Zeinab of Makkah, after reading *Indian Delights*, wanted to know if she could 'be a member of your Group? I'm originally Indian, but

born and raised in Saudia! And I read, write and speak three languages Arabic, Urdu and English beside accents like Memon and Hindi.'[71]

Hari Narayan of Noku'alofa, Tonga, began her letter, 'Well, I guess you will be surprised to receive a letter from a total stranger thousands of miles away from an Island in the Pacific Ocean. I recently sighted a booklet on Indian cookery titled *Indian Delight* by Zuleikha Mayat. Being a person of Indian origin naturally I find the book very interesting.' Elizabeth Smith wanted to know whether the Group 'still have any of the books for sale, *Indian Delights*. Guess my old man was an Eastern soul in his last life, as he is crazy about exotic curry dishes.' Basil Dickson of Sydney had 'four daughters, two daughters-in-law and my wife also has an *Indian Delights* book, one of my girls has an earlier edition of the books I bought for my wife in Durban sixteen years ago. Now looking through the book I see the 1st edition was published in 1961 so I am very keen to know of the latest publication if there is one, also the price.' Mrs MV Hlazo wanted a copy 'irrespective how much the book and postage will cost me. I desperately need the book.' Ghazal-e Tirmizey of Zumikon, Switzerland, after having had the 'pleasure of looking through the book', wanted a copy, which 'will help a non-cook like me become capable of producing mouth watering meals for any occasion.'[72]

Shahzia Harunrani of Nairobi, Kenya, was 'a Kenyan lady of Asian origin aged 23 years' who 'came across your book and was very impressed by its contents. I am writing in the hope that you will assist me in acquiring this very wonderful book…I will be anxiously waiting for your response.' Annie G Banda of Lusaka, Zambia, was, 'very happy to write to you. I am a Zambian aged 28 years…I have seen your book from my sister. How much is the book?' Dana Falletti, an American who had just moved to serve in the Peace Corps in Blantyre, had borrowed a copy from a Malawian friend. She described it as 'one of the finest cookbooks I've ever read…May I order one from your office?' Rafiqunnissa Iqbal of Colombo, Sri Lanka, wrote for three copies; Mrs Kanta Surti of Leeds, England, put in her order on 6 October 1996; Debbie Chaudhary of Valdosta, Georgia, USA, sent her request in January 2000; Aidan Gotz of Phalaborwa wrote for a copy in January 1999; Mina Sisodraker of North Vancouver ordered five books in May 2000; Mary Ann Davis and Betty-Jayne De Vos of Chicago ordered copies in 1994.[73] Rashida Usman of Chicago, USA, wrote that she used *Indian Delights* practically every day of her life:

> I own two publications. *Indian Delights* and *The Best of Indian Delights*. I have seen someone with the newest *Indian Delights*. I would like to buy one so therefore I would like to know how much would it cost for me to buy including air freight shipping to America. If possible also would like to know how you would like to get paid…In 1978 I owned the very older version of *Indian Delights* (it was a thick small book). That book had great recipes. I lent it to someone and never got it back. Then in 1982 I received the *Indian Delights*. Then in 1988 I received *The Best of Indian Delights.* If so, how much for the older book?[74]

One of the most complimentary letters was received from an Estelle Malan on 9 December 1993. Her letter provides pointers to changing social relationships as apartheid was ending, culinary fusion, and the recipe book as a repository of history.

> Two years ago, when Indian friends appeared in my life, I purchased a copy of *Indian Delights*. Since then I have derived only pleasure and (of course!) many delicious meals and sweetmeats from it. Today while paging through it to find a murku recipe (my first attempt), I suddenly feel to write to you; to thank you and many, many others – all those involved in the creation of *Indian Delights* – for this excellent book; not only for the recipes, but also for the informal, chatty and encouraging way it has been put together. I grew up in an Afrikaans home in Pretoria, and from time to time, when visiting my parents there, I take along a curry or a dessert or some item that comes from the book – always a smash hit and my mother usually begs me to show her how, and to bring the necessary spices or ingredients (somehow easier available in Johannesburg than in Pretoria, unless one is prepared to travel to Laudium). I have several other Indian cookery books, some by local cooks, but none so complete, so comprehensive and so fascinating – even just to page through it and read little extracts here and there, is interesting. I remember when making vadde for the first time, I did not even know for sure what the finished item should taste like but your recipe and the photograph got me there, and earned me several compliments from the Indian people who were surprised and delighted that an Afrikaans girl should take an interest in traditional Indian food. What a great idea to gather in all the

> typical Indian recipes, adapted to our local circumstances, and to compile a whole book of culinary favourites – I cannot thank you enough. Unfortunately the gadgets don't come with your book, so I'll be off to the Oriental Plaza in Fordsburg in search of a murku machine!

While all this correspondence points to the popularity of *Indian Delights*, it also suggests that word-of-mouth advertising was the most powerful engine for its promotion. And while few, if any, South African publishers could claim to have sold as many copies of any of their trade titles, it seems likely that the book's full income-generating potential might have been greater if advertising or an alliance with a larger publishing house had been pursued seriously, particularly since the book was already a going concern before the local and international explosion of cookbook publishing really took off. Mayat concedes that 'we were really not professional enough in marketing [the book]…We've never really followed up these big things because we only have this half-day staff. Earlier everything came virtually to my table. If somebody had really taken that up, it would have been wonderful.'

Yet, as a fundraiser for local charity projects, the book most certainly succeeded beyond all expectations, rippling across oceans and cultural boundaries into many kitchens. And it continues to sell widely, clearly inviting multiple uses and readings from its varied and global publics.

Kitchen publics

Clearly, the Group's dream of making a literary impact was not far-fetched. The book has served the Group and others in many different ways. Journalist Judy Desmond wrote in her review of the original edition that it was 'not even necessary to try out the recipes, just to read over and imbibe them, for that is what one does if one really likes recipe books.'[75] And a columnist for the *Natal Mercury* commented that the 'guide to the art of Indian cooking including, among many other traditional dishes a comprehensive chapter on curries, is the latest contribution of Durban's Indian community to achievements marking the centenary year of the arrival of the Indian immigrants in South Africa.'[76] Ranji S Nowbath, a columnist known as 'The Fakir' when writing for the Indian weekly newspaper the *Leader*, was also full of praise (conveyed with characteristic chauvinism):

> Do you know (or does your wife?) how to make ghawla? You don't know what it is? Come on, you silly, why it's an Indian pancake, of course… Cooks, it is said, are not born but made. With a cookery book like this one, any girl would like to be a cook on the make. The recipes are precise and simplified though they include all the finest delights of Indian cuisine…This is a marvellous book containing hundreds of recipes with some lovely illustrations of prepared foods. Some of the photographs also show off some lovelies to good advantage. This is a book well worth having…There's only one section with which some chaps I know may quarrel with. The authors imply that the male Indian masseurs are better than the maiden masseurs of Japan![77]

Writing an Afrikaans review, Kobie van der Merwe observed that, with the book, food knowledge crossed more than one kind of threshold and that, indeed, it was geared to a national public: '*Uit Zuleikha Mayat se* Indian Delights *sal die Suid-Afrikaanse vrou dus baie van die dinge kan leer wat tot dusver net in Indierhuise bekend was. Die resepteboek is by Suid-Afrikaanse omstandighede aangepas.*'[78]

Newspaper reviews provided one kind of public feedback; another, which reveals a different kind of reading, came to the Group through written correspondence. Over the past five decades, while hundreds of complimentary letters have been received about the book, there have, according to Zuleikha Mayat, 'been around twenty complaints about mistakes – that the measurements are not accurate or it doesn't come out as nice as somebody else's and so on. Like the jalebi recipe – we had quite a few complaints and we said, look, we'd rather leave it out because jalebi is really for professionals.' A Mrs S Singh, for example, complained on 29 May 1987 that

> many recipes tried by me and many others…never turn out right. They try step-by-step following the recipe and flop it goes when baked or fried, whatever the recipe calls for…Please look into this matter as now we are beginning to think that this is a money making scheme…I would like you to ask this Zuleikha Mayat to try her recipes first before publishing in books just to make money and getting rich overnight.

Mayat responded with a lengthy and conciliatory reply on 5 June 1987, explaining that 'each week we receive orders from throughout the republic,

Zambia, Fiji, Europe, Canada and even India and Pakistan' and gently suggesting that perhaps the problem did not lie in the recipes: 'Please, I am not saying that the recipes are so perfect that they cannot be improved upon. I constantly overhaul them and try and make it simple for the young housewife.' She also assured Mrs Singh that

> to the last cent, all the money goes for bursaries to students at various universities and we give vast amounts to organisations such as Natal Indian Cripple Care, Blind Society, baby crèches, etc…Not only do we not make a single penny but all ingredients used for testing and photographs, the members pay for out of their own pockets…If you would like help with any of the recipes, just phone.

The Group's personal approach, as demonstrated through its replies, and also apparent in the conversational tone of the book, has clearly gone a long way towards effecting the aims stated in the first edition of *Indian Delights*. While the book invites varied readings and uses, and – as a text – therefore has many 'publics', the Group endeavoured to provide 'modern', young women with the culinary skills and cultural, diasporic knowledge that they felt were being lost through changes in society and family. A letter, dated 15 September 2008, demonstrates that, even after half a century, they continue to succeed in these specific aims. Farzana Jawaheer Khan of Circonstance, St Pierre, Mauritius, wrote:

> Respected Madam,
> Ten years back I came across one of your editions of *Indian Delights*, then I was a teenager. But although very young I was very interested in your book and I jot down some recipes. But now I'm a housewife and mother, I came across your book again, a new edition, a new look. Believe me, I know what a treasure your book is. 'An invaluable jewel that all and every housewife loving Indian cuisine will want to possess.'…Once more I want to compliment you for the colourful and lively photos, setting and layout of the book. You successfully disclose…hmmmm, no, no, but I would rather say you opened the doors of many recipes which make this book a unique masterpiece, un *chef-d'œuvre*. Your frankness really touched me. You must be a woman with a golden heart, golden mind

> with golden ideas. You not only shared recipes but a whole culture. I want to write much more Madam. But I'm very busy. I have twin babies, and I have little time. I hope you will understand or else I would have talked much more about your book…I believe good work, hard work performed with heart and so much dedication really needs all these compliments.

Letters and published books are an aspect of transoceanic print culture. This letter points to *Indian Delights* as a text that has generated a public situated within the private, gendered spaces of kitchens, a public that – through using these recipes and understanding them to be 'Indian' delights – share and pass on an idea of diasporic identity.

Indian Delights as cultural representation

Behind the creation of *Indian Delights* was an ethnographic motivation, an attempt to 'get the old recipes down' and to 'preserve the richness of a well-established culture'. It is a text rich in narratives, its recipes intermingling with cultural anecdotes, stories, poetry, proverbs, illustrations, and claims about the past. According to its editor, it was 'never intended to be a primer of Indian cooking.'[79] But, of course, it is used as that too. It contains an instructive, encyclopaedic glossary of ingredients, careful instructions and advice for the novice. It was produced to cultivate skill and cultural knowledge and has become a gift given to many brides.

Hajira Omar, who joined in the 1990s, is among the younger generation in the Group. She regards *Indian Delights* as a retainer of her cultural heritage, which she hopes to pass down to her daughters:

> I think [the book] is extremely important because it's a way of preserving the culture. I mean we are all now eating differently because of health reasons, we are starting to eat baked fish and grilled meat and that sort of stuff, and this book in a way preserves [food history]. Even if you don't use the recipes, it's a good way of knowing how people did prepare food. So it's a preservation of culture. And whether, I mean both my girls hardly ever use it but they have the book, you know. I think that every family gives it to their daughter as a gift.

Nafisa Jeewa also believes that this is one of the reasons why the book continues to appeal:

> We sell a lot of books to people overseas as well. And it's a book that anybody can follow. You know, you have recipe books, and you have recipe books, and you find that with the new books, every housewife doesn't have all the ingredients. But with our *Indian Delights* everybody has all those ingredients in the home, so it's easy. You're not rushing out all of a sudden to buy something. That is why it's a very popular book. It's a lovely book to give as a gift and I think most brides – new brides – want it as well. Whether they use it or not is another matter.

Omar's and Jeewa's suggestion that *Indian Delights* has value even if it is not actually used as a cookbook, highlights the way in which it is perceived as a book of food history, a cultural archive. Some feel that this comes from the recipes themselves; others consider the informational text boxes arranged around the recipes to offer insights into the cultural past. Mayat herself saw the book as a repository of history and culture. In response to a query from a Professor Alfredo Cabacungan of the Department of Food Service at Kapi'olani College, Honolulu, Hawaii, Mayat described the book as

> considered locally and internationally [to be] the encyclopaedia of Indian cuisine. It not only has recipes, but it surveys the scene from the cultural and historical aspect. Furthermore many anecdotes and stories accompany the recipes which help to fill in the history of Indian cuisine. A whole section deals with home remedies alone.[80]

This was valued by many readers. In May 1985, for example, the Ananda Kutir Yoga Association in Cape Town requested and was given permission to publish extracts from *Indian Delights* on vegetarianism and honey in their bimonthly magazine, which 'provid[es] advice on yoga, health, etc.'. Occasionally readers expressed reservations about these added narratives. In 1982, Leila Badawi of *Arabia: The Islamic World Review* lavished praise on the *Red Edition*, but felt that the folk tales, homely asides and anecdotes of family life made 'outsiders' at once feel charmed and excluded:

> excluded because they often seem so distant and so foreign – and because they present a remorselessly idealised picture of life in South Africa's

> Indian community in the same way that some of the books on 'home-making', written in America in the 1950s, idealise the American way of life, or the American family. The impression one gets is of an intelligent, hardworking, astute and yet rather naive community.

Mayat confessed to being 'disappointed' by this characterisation even though the review was positive. She felt that it missed the crucial point that 'this is part of our history'. She points to a section of the book that describes the use of tablecloths made from newspaper, with the accompanying illustration showing a simple but elegant arrangement with a water jug and some basic, well-presented dishes. The setting and text was intended to show readers that lavish wealth was not needed to create a beautiful and festive table. When she says 'this is part of our history', she is referring to times of economic hardship, with racial exclusion and job reservation translating into socio-economic scarcity. '[Paper tablecloths are] what we had at every wedding at one stage,' she points out. Mayat is adamant that 'the way our books sell speaks for itself. What is antiquated about folklore? Aesop's Fables, Haji Baba stories are classics. No child must be deprived of its own folk stories.' Similarly, Laila Ally observed that on the back cover

> of the third book [*Best*] we did a photograph…I don't know if you noticed, but Mrs Mayat's brilliant idea was that we have a modern recipe book, but she still wanted the old to be there. So I'm sitting with a grinding stone to remind people, even our own children, of our roots and where these recipes all came from. Basically it's all our mothers and grandmothers. That's something that can never be forgotten, it's so ingrained in me and my daughter.

Ayesha Vorajee also regarded the bits of 'history' as being of great importance:

> There are some lovely little snippets and stories and photographs, and [history of] the origin of spices and so on. My niece who qualified as an optician, she says, 'You know…I just go through *Indian Delights* reading all those little snippets, about how this came about and how that, and about the North Indian curries'. She's not cooking [but] going through the recipe book reading up those little…[*laughs*] Yes, it's history and Mum [Mayat] is very good at that.

The ethnographic aims of the Indian Delights *series were given visual expression through images like this one, which appeared in the* Best *edition.*

Some of the book's representations of culture have caused controversy. In 1990, for example, there was a polite complaint from a Fatima Lorgat of Yorkshire, England, that *Indian Delights* contained an Arabic inscription and she questioned whether it was permissible for members of the public to hold the book without wudhu. The cover carried a photograph of a Turkish spoon with the word 'Bismillah' inscribed on it. Mayat replied that while the Group appreciated and shared Lorgat's concern, the spoon had been purchased in Turkey, where they were sold widely in bazaars to tourists, whether Muslim or not. Further, she added, printers all over the world produced Islamic books and there was no guarantee that they made wudhu before handling them.

> These things are necessary and even if we are disturbed by their handling, until the whole world turns Muslim, we will not be able to avoid it. An American architect was so attracted to Islamic calligraphy that he left his work and went to Morocco to study it. He converted to Islam. Today he goes around – Muhammad Zakariah – showing the beautiful tughras and manuscripts he writes and paints. Hidayat to him came through Islamic writing.[81]

The Group weathered these and other complaints and took heart from the reality that the responses have been overwhelmingly positive and have enabled them to continue with their community work.

The Group's own conception of culture is clearly one that embraces change and flexibility. *Indian Delights* is not a quest for an elusive cultural essence or purity. Rather it celebrates appropriation and adaptation, fusion and short-cutting. While the book conveys a strong plea to readers to value (even idealise) the past, it is not retrogressive or reactionary in relation to promoting that past, and innovation and invention are held to be equally important aspects of culture. While ensuring that old classics like samoosas and biryanis were not compromised, the cookbooks have 'added to our repertoire categories of dishes not dreamt of by our elders'. Mayat's explanation is worth quoting at length:

> Any culture, anything develops – it doesn't remain static. If you go to a new environment and there are new products, then you take it on and it becomes part of it. Like the original Arabian and Persian recipes that we had, like biryani, samoosa and so on – if you eat our Indian biryani and then you eat the biryani in Persia, there's a world of difference because

> we've used the products of India and that really changed the biryani to something new. Biryani in India, in Gujarat, it's the one with the masoor, if you eat it in Kashmir, it's got no masoor. So it becomes an Indian dish afterwards. In the pasta, sometimes you just put a dollop of your own thing and it does change. Nowadays we are using a lot of fusion foods. On our tables especially, when young children are there, you've got to give them burgers. Our burgers are stronger [more spicy]…an Indianised version. And what is a burger? It's a type of kebab really. Food is changing [but] haleem is still very much Indian; dhal is still very much Indian… you get a hundred thousand types of curries, but if you talk of a curry it's an 'Indian' curry. Food is evolving all the time. Even appetites, tastes are evolving. You have to accommodate that because we use less sugar now, we use less oil and ghee and yet, I mean, the authenticness of the dish doesn't change. [The new dish] becomes the authentic dish – it's still an Indian dish.

The Group has nurtured their own expertise in a philosophy of fusion in terms of culinary knowledges and this has, interestingly, increased their market value as consultants in an increasingly cosmopolitan, commercial South Africa. For example, from November 1999 to April 2000, the Group earned around R30 000 for its charity projects when a leading fast-food franchise contracted them to concoct a distinctively 'Indian' selection of fare, 'formulating methods that could be applied to all halal outlets to prepare the items at the pace that they are used to [while] keeping the Asian palate in mind'.[82] Taking up this challenge, the Group marshalled a team of tasters, males and females of various ages, to visit the restaurant anonymously. The tasters sampled various dishes, noted their findings and observed what was involved in a normative dining experience. Thereafter they obtained par-boiled chops, chicken breasts and steaks, as well as sauces, marinades and spices, from the food chain to experiment with in the Group's kitchen. They then reformulated the spices and provided the restaurant with several sauce recipes to complement its commercial range of sauces, and proposed that some products be renamed. For example, they suggested that 'Hot Rock Chicken' be changed to Chicken Sultani or Sultani Tava Chicken so that 'the name will be understood by Muslims from Durban to Timbuktoo. To elaborate, all languages, English included, religious and racial groups of Muslims will recognize it as the King of grilled chickens.'

Advice was also proffered on interior design, since 'many Indians had negative remarks about the dark exteriors and interiors'.[83]

Creating a balance between foods that carry a specific cultural identity or meaning and those that are products of expanding markets in taste and product availability is a challenge that the Group welcomes. Their ideals around this make an important claim for the value of the *local*, the variations made possible by local produce and ingredients and the influence of flavours made possible through inter-cultural encounters. In one of the Group's Eid newsletters from the early 2000s, they note the agency of women in creating and catering to shifts of taste.

> In a fast changing world that threatens the core values of our cultures, the celebration of our festival days assumes increasing importance. It is a vital cog that binds a community. As mothers constantly battling against the erosion of our lifestyle we attempt to regain lost ground via tempting dishes on the Eid table…[But] reality has to be faced. The old must give way to the new. Christmas puddings and turkeys have given over to fare more in keeping with the South African climate. Accordingly we too have to adjust our menus to suit the appetites that are getting accustomed to fast food. Mothers must take this into consideration and rack their brains not to sacrifice tradition to the demands made by the addicts of junk food and jeans culture and therefore the menu devised for Eid gives your traditional dishes a new guise. Instead of chicken biryani, there is seafood paella, whether the housewife can incorporate scampi, calamari, oysters in addition to what the recipe states. In place of dahi the moulded cucumber ring is not only very attractive but in our hot climate a most appetising dish. Fruit juices and here you can 'go to town' with strawberries, pineapple, peach, mango, mix and match and see what delightful results are achieved. Agreed, what is Eid without its offering of mithais but all you health and figure conscious persons, you will put something on the table that may not be exactly diet fare but will be less time consuming!

Khatija Vawda, too, suggests that changing preferences are not necessarily good or bad but are about individual taste: 'It depends on one's palate. If they like it, then it's good.' The idea of taste as a criterion for what constitutes 'good

cooking' is, somewhat ironically, much more aligned with the largely oral, traditional knowledge of the grannies who shared their recipes fifty years ago.

Indian Delights has preserved, but also altered, the flavours of diaspora. Khatija Vawda is old enough to remember when foods prepared by South Africans of Indian ancestry belonged to family lineages of oral knowledge, before this was collated into a compendium of 'Indian' cuisine, and remembers above all the variety of distinctive flavours prepared at different family tables.

> In the past, when you went to people's homes, whether they were Memon or Surti or Kokni, Gujarati Hindu, or even Tamilian, there were very distinct tastes. They used different spices and methods and you could see and taste the difference – even the aroma was different. Nowadays they are all similar.

Indian diasporic identity in South Africa has been formulated out of difference as a political reality, but it is also a culinary reality, the result of literacy, changing relations of gender and labour, and global commercial trends in food production and representation. In this story, *Indian Delights* has played a small but very significant part. Like other texts that are regarded as repositories of culture, it constitutes a common household referent of diasporic identity and material culture. *Indian Delights* has its publics in the gendered spaces of kitchens, spaces in which the flavours of Indian heritage can be similarly and simultaneously savoured in Durban, Dehli or Toronto.