

**Trenches, Vadai, and Puttu:  
Food Memories of Combatant Women in Sri Lanka**

*Geetha Sukumaran, York University*

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***Abstract:***

Contemporary conflict zones blur the boundaries between home and battlefield as well as masculine and feminine roles. Rita Manchanda argues that women caught in armed struggle move beyond victimhood by negotiating their lives as insurgents, family heads, peace builders, agriculturalists and activists (2001). While women participating in insurgent militancy are trained in combat masculinity, they still find themselves performing the feminine role of food work. In Sri Lanka's long civil war women became victims of violence on one hand whereas on the other, perpetrators of violence as members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Their prolific writings provide interesting insights into resistance, food work and war. These understudied life writings form a discursive site of a messy, contentious, and violent past mediated by the female rebels. This paper analyzes such narratives, and weaves several fields—gender studies, memory studies, food studies and conflict studies together – which are not commonly used in conjunction. This essay also attempts to shed light on the way the women moderate the tensions between performing masculine roles of combat and feminine food labour.

***Keywords:*** Life writing, gender food memory, cooking, war, resistance

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