

**Jabberwock, the Annual Academic Journal of the Department of English, Lady Shri Ram
College for Women**

presents

Inter-College Paper Presentation Competition on the theme

Food and the State:

The Politics of Starvation, Deprivation and Protest

Food, among other things, is a window into how we sustain ourselves, remember our pasts, define ourselves and others, resist or comply. Behind morsels and tastes, hide changing demographics, ideological shifts and evolving identity of a nation, a region and most importantly the people who live or have lived there.

The patterns of consumption and culinary practices of a place tell us much about its people; their history, exchanges, trade and beliefs. These practices and choices do not remain stable over time but are constantly mediated, negotiated and controlled, whether through policies or propagation of narratives, by the State. The State maintains and exercises power by controlling the very means of sustenance and through processes such as banning or promotion of certain foods, limiting and controlling access or cultural appropriation; food politics reflects the power dynamics and hierarchies, both visible and invisibilised, embedded within the social fabric.

The weaponisation of food by the State is not a new phenomenon. History provides us with various instances of such violence, from the Potato Famine in Ireland, the Bengal Famine in colonised India to the starvation and blockade of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation as part of its ongoing genocide, are all examples where food is effectively utilised as a weapon of control and occupation. Apart from weaponizing lack of food, the State also fails to supply food to most of its working population despite a surplus of food being produced. The State has often failed in curbing hunger whether it is through cutting down

funding for food stamps, or the failures of the PDS / ration distribution system. It is often seen that even when no drought or famine occurs, people still starve.

In India, this State-led violence reflects in the banning of food along communal lines, instances of lynching and violence against minority communities or those that refuse to comply with the arbitrary laws and sanctions issued in the interest of a few. Therefore, the relationship between food and the State needs to be viewed in the larger socio-economic and cultural frameworks within which it operates.

However, the “weapon” of the State takes on a different meaning when passed into the hands of the common masses. They forge it into a tool of resistance against the very forces who have so far utilised it in their oppression. Hunger Strikes have influenced historical events, whether it was Gandhi’s hunger strike or Anna Hazare’s fasting in the anti corruption movement.

From Sharmila's steadfast resistance against the Indian State by refusing food for 16 long years remains a primary example of such defiance. More recently, the decision of students and activists, such as Sonam Wangchuk, to fast in support of the protesting students at Jantar Mantar became another example. There are many such examples worldwide, which we invite you to explore. The question of whether or not hunger strikes are an effective tool of resistance against oppressive institutions and the factors which dictate the State's response to such defiance, has been, and continues to be, extensively debated.

Jabberwock, as part of its Annual Paper Presentation Competition, invites papers delving into these questions, and more, enquiring into the intricacies of the relationship between food and the State, and how their interaction shapes our understanding of food as a tool for oppression, resistance and compliance worldwide. How is taste determined, what food is seen as acceptable, what histories are overwritten or overlooked and who is really openly allowed to consume, cook and talk about food, are some other questions we ask.

Jabberwock invites papers on the following, and related, themes:

- Caste, Food Purity and Segregation.
- Weaponisation of Food by the State.
- Categorisation of certain foods as “impure”, “vile”, “anti-national”, etc.
- Banning and propagation of hate towards certain culinary practices.
- Food and the Construction of Ideology.
- Nation, Nationalism and Food Politics.
- The Great Indian Kitchen: Gendered Access to Food and Domestic Labour.
- Cinema, State and Representation of Food.
- Fasting and Body as a Site of Protest.
- Food as a tool of Resistance and Compliance.
- Aestheticisation, Commodification and Appropriation of Food and Culinary Practices.
- Food as a historical and regional Archive.
- Reification and fetishisation of food as a luxury product.
- The Pathways of Food from the Ground to the Plate.

General Guidelines:

- 1) All abstracts must be emailed to jabberwock.ac@gmail.com by 16th September 2026, 11:59 pm with the subject line “**PPC Submission_Your Name_2026**”.
- 2) Do not mention any of your personal information such as your name, department, college, roll no, gender etc. in the abstract. Mention your full name, contact information, department and institutional details in the email body.
- 3) The submissions must be sent in a docx format with access set to view for all.
- 4) The abstract should be submitted with a tentative bibliography of at least 5 works.
- 5) The participants will be informed of their selection or rejection two-three weeks before the competition. The papers must be submitted strictly according to the deadline to confirm participation. The deadline will be communicated with the acceptance email.

- 6) The Paper Presentation Competition is open to all students across India. The physical presence of participants is required at Lady Shri Ram College for Women on the day of the conference. Transportation expenses would be borne by the participants themselves.
- 7) On the day of the conference, the participants may use presentations and images to better explain their paper. This will be done through screen sharing. Participants are requested to email their presentations and images at least a day before the conference.
- 8) Each participant will be given 10-15 minutes to present their submission followed by a Q&A round by the audience and judges.

Rules and Formatting:

- 1) The abstracts must be in **Times New Roman font, size 12 and formatted justified**. **Include** the tentative title of your paper with the abstract and in the document name.
- 2) All abstracts must have a **tentative bibliography and up to 5 keywords**. The tentative bibliography must be formatted according to the Works Cited page according to the MLA 9 format.
- 3) The title of the paper must be center aligned, font Times New Roman, size 14 and bold.
- 4) If the papers are selected they must be within 2500-4000 words (excluding citations and bibliography) and formatted according to the **MLA 9 format**, Book reviews and Academic Essays should also be formatted in the same manner. The word limit excluding citations and bibliography is 2000-3000 words.
- 5) Please check carefully for **any grammatical or structural errors** and ensure that all citations are as per the MLA 9 format.
- 6) Participants must provide footnotes and not endnotes.
- 7) Divisions and sub-divisions are to be in Times New Roman, size 12, bold, with the text not centre aligned and not in all capital letters.
- 8) All final submissions should be in Times New Roman, font 12, justified and with double indentation.
- 9) **No AI usage will be tolerated in the submissions**. AI cannot be used for grammar checking, citations or writing the papers.

10) Use only British English conventions and spellings in the submissions.

We encourage submissions from students across departments, colleges and universities. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us at jabberwock.ac@gmail.com

Happy writing! We look forward to receiving your submissions!