

## **A Comparative Study of Food as a Necessary Crisis Depicted in Select Contemporary Poetry**

**P. S. Kavin Molhy, II M.A. English**  
**Dr. B. J. Geetha, Assistant Professor of English**

---

---

Food is a common ground for all living beings. It is a universal experience and it is a basic necessity such as clothing and shelter. It is a central activity of the human mind which also holds a society together but in modern times food is projected as a symbol of luxury and fashion. People who live glued to computers at work and home do not think about the wastage of food. Though food brings people together at different levels on the one hand, it also makes people to fight and struggle for food on the other hand. At modern times, People are surrounded by choices of food. They eat according to their convenience but do not care about the shortages of food. During the Second World War there were serious food shortages which led to food crisis. This aspect can be illustrated by comparing the present-day conditions of food and attitudes towards food. People at present consider food as an entertainment.

The poems taken for analysis in this paper are written by modern poets like Elizabeth Padiolla Oleson's "We Cry for Food they Gave Us Bullets", Slyvia Lovina Chidi's "Slaves of Food", Veeraiyah Subbulakshmi's "Don't Waste the Food", and Ashok Chakravarthy's "The Crisis Within". There are over eight hundred million people who are suffering from hunger and every five seconds a child dies of hunger. In literature food poetry plays an important art to understand emotions, deep feelings, and aesthetical sense about people who suffer from hunger and it also condemns the attitudes of the minds who used to waste food. The poems are set to deal with a comparative study of food as a necessary crisis in the prevailing situation of economic disparity within a given society and among countries at global level.

Elizabeth Padillo Oleson, is a poet and a prose writer and some of her works are "A Talk to The Night", "A mother", "A Plea For Forgiveness". Elizabeth Padillo in her poem "We Cry for Food They Gave Us Bullets" (Padillo 95) begins her poetry by "Food! Food! Food! / It is all that we need" (WCFTGUB1-2). As food is the basic necessity of all living beings. It is all that is needed for survival and it helps to calm down inner spirits. The poet says that food fills hunger pains which are caused by the contraction of the stomach. The poet here refers to emotions that are very deep which cannot be understood. It leads to the worse condition and also makes people

not to sleep. It is stated in these lines as, “But cannot sleep / ... / That make our saliva / Taste sour and acidic” (WCFTGUB 9-13). The people are psychologically affected which makes them not to sleep and cannot express through vomiting. People cannot taste food because their taste buds have become completely acidic. They were unable to torment their state of being.

The poet compares the mental condition of the people who suffer from a food crisis. She compares it to a child. A child weeps and cries out of hunger but is speechless. It cannot express its feelings but there are also a group of people who stand on the streets to promote that they are helpless and left uncared. They cry for food like a little child. Their cry cannot be neglected because it is for food, which makes them to calm their soul. People cry for food, but they get only bullets in return. They were deprived of basic rights. It is expressed by the lines, “But you gave us bullets / On the street where we stage/ Our cry for food” (WCFTGUB 23-25). People cry for food as long as they are hungry. They cry forever like to get food.

Slyvia Lovina Chidi is an author and had published books such as *After Red Wine* and *Beautiful Selected Poems* which is a collection of fifty-seven poems. Her poem “Slaves of Food” (Lovina 20), conveys the reality of human beings. She begins by writing that the poem with the line, “Thick red blood veins bath in anger / The stomach grumbles of idiotic anger” (SF 1-2). The human body which is composed of blood and veins arouse out of anger, it is because the stomach complains, for an unreasonable anger. The poet expresses the pain of hunger that pricks the stomach. Hunger can be understood mentally but the human body cannot understand the feeling of an empty stomach. It can be clearly stated as that, “We are all but slaves of food” (SF 6).

People who belong to different races guzzle and wear different costumes according to their social construction, but food is a common thing that unites everyone together. Food gives a mental stimulation and satisfaction to fill appetite yet, but by people’s dismay is food and their hope for good is completely lost. The poet says that, people are filled with joy after a meal. Their inner delight is cheap but is real. It gives satisfaction to the soul and stomach which is unknown to anybody but has a real value. The poet says, “I conclude with fluctuating moods / There is a food for romance / ... / Hungry mouths elsewhere regularly wait for its rescue” (SF 20-24). People call themselves as human beings, but they are all just slaves to food. Food is prepared for romance, party and for several other occasions and it is available to fools but food is not available for the people who are really hungry. There is a crisis for food and hunger mouths regularly wait for their rescue.

Veeraiyah Subbulakshmi has written about thousand and five hundred poems, she is a modernist poet. Some of her works are “A Child’s mother”, “A Fruitfly”, “A Broken Heart Always Weeps”, “A Dramatic Lover”. Her poetry “Don’t Waste The Food” depicts the wastage

of food and it also condemns certain habits people do. The poet condemns through these lines, “Dusty roads are many, where gusty people walk” (DWF 1). The poet says that, there are many roads with full of dust and dirt, but people are with dusty minds and they are irresponsible towards food. People throw food into dustbin without knowing its essence. The poet examines the life cycle, to demonstrate the reality of the world. In a life cycle every species is dependent on the other species. If the life cycle is disturbed it leads to several crises.

The poet views the atmosphere of the river bank to show the natural occurrences. A canal was built on the river bank for drainage, water supply, irrigation, and transportation where every species is dependent on the other species. Likewise, every species in the world are dependent on the other for their food, water and shelter. People have to survive a long way, but their end is not very short. It is stated in the lines that, “We are though species to conquer any other species, / We have to come a long way not to make it a short exit/ Let us celebrate the victory of mother earth” (DWF 6-8). People must celebrate and preserve the nature because it is a treasure. The treasures of the nature is being stolen just for people’s pleasure. Food wastage happens everywhere such as a school, farms, restaurants, and grocery stores. It also affects people who are living in seashores. People dump the food wastages in seas and rivers which affect tiny species and it collapses the entire life cycle.

The attitude of the people towards food became more fashionable. People tend to order pizzas or other fancy eatables through their modern gadgets despite the fact that ample of food are already made available to them. People do not bother about the food wastage. Subbulakshmi clearly catches the trending mindset of the human mind by stating that, “We human, hurt our fellow human for our greed, / Millions roam on the urban jungle for the food, / Millions throw the food into bin as a fad” (DWF 10-12). Human beings hurt other fellow beings for their own greed. Millions of people roam everywhere in search of food in jungle, forests and so on but another million people throw their foods into dustbin without knowing its importance.

Ashok Chakravarthy a poet and a review writer, has composed a thousand two hundred poems. Some of his poems are “Charismata of Poesie”, “The Chariot of musing”. On his “The Crisis Within” he has stated that, “Big nations vie to occupy a supper- power level / While small nations struggle for own survival” (TCW 1-2), many developed countries provoke their superior power by strength, but they do not care about small nations who struggle for their daily basis.

The poet here questions that whether humanity can elapse the crisis within the country and among a global level. Whether humanity will save the crisis or it gives a usual defeat for common people. Huge developments were made in the field of technology. It was made in the name of people’s security and welfare but there are no concern made for people’s crisis. The

poet says that, people are made to stand mute during wars because wars display real faces of human beings. They were like tramps of love and equality. Wars made a mass of destruction of people. According to the poet, “Food, the life-saving precious commodity / If invites a human disaster its scarcity/ ... / To show and share humane concern and pity” (TCW 17-20), food is the lifesaving process. It gives a direct impact physically and it also gives the ability to enjoy life. If a disaster occurs through external forces, people must show concern and care for every living being. Humanity is essential for humans.

The poet highly condemns that, “Showing the least concern for life- giving ecology / We are but creating advanced warfare technology/ In the process we are destroying the origin of life” (TCW 25-27). The poet argues that, people destruct the origin of life by creating advanced technological features which is harmful to humans. People do not care about the environment and pollute the surroundings.

Thus, all these poems talk of how food is seen in a different perspective through the modern day poets of the contemporary period. Making the readers not to waste food the next time they order or buy something to eat.

---

### Works Cited

Lovina Chidi, Sylvia. 51 Poems New & Selected. Agents and Publishers, 2010.

Padillo Oleson, Elizabeth. Spirituality for Peace and Justice. Author House, UK, 2014.

Subbulakshmi, Veeraiyah. “Don’t Waste the Food”. Poem Hunter, Dec 2018.

[www.Poemhunter.com/poem/don-t-waste-the-food/](http://www.Poemhunter.com/poem/don-t-waste-the-food/)

Chakarvarthy, Ashok. “The Crisis Within.” Blogspot.

[www.apoetsconcern.blogspot.com/2008/05/crisis-within-poem-on-food-crisis.html?m=1](http://www.apoetsconcern.blogspot.com/2008/05/crisis-within-poem-on-food-crisis.html?m=1)

---

P. S. Kavin Molhy, II M.A. English

Periyar University

Salem 636011

[blossomkavin04@gmail.com](mailto:blossomkavin04@gmail.com)

Dr. B. J. Geetha

Assistant Professor of English

Periyar University, Salem 636011 [geetprem05@gmail.com](mailto:geetprem05@gmail.com)

---

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 19:1 January 2019

**Editors: Dr. V. Sangeetha, Dr. B. J. Geetha, Dr. K. Sindhu, Dr. S. Boopathi and Ms. S. Sneha Sri**

**Food in Literature: Papers Presented in National Seminar on Food in Literature, 2019**

**P. S. Kavin Molhy, II M.A. English and Dr. B. J. Geetha, Assistant Professor of English**

**A Comparative Study of Food as a Necessary Crisis Depicted in Select Contemporary Poetry**

112