
The Literature on Pandemics Illuminates the Presence of Trauma and the Holocaust.

G N Rohitkumar

Guest Lecturer

Department of English

VSKU P.G. CENTRE

KOPPAL.

Article Link: <https://aksharasurya.com/2023/09/g-n-rohitkumar/>

ABSTRACT:

The pain brought on by the virus makes German philosopher Theodor Adorno, who branded poetry as barbarous after the Holocaust, despondent. Disasters still occur, though, and literature is still debating how to handle them.

We will not draw lessons from the past as the coronavirus epidemic has already killed over 500,000 lives. Cold facts that detail the number of lives lost, jobs destroyed, and economic collapse indicate how harsher reality is. The number of positive instances became a chilling term in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic is compared to the 1918 Spanish flu, which killed millions globally, especially children and young adults. T.S. Eliot, a victim, experienced anxiety and unease during the outbreak. In *The Waste Land*, he used these personal concerns and fear of dying to portray the absurdity of the post-war era.

KEYWORDS:

Epidemic, Pandemic, Covid-19, Literary Fiction, Isolation, Wars and Plague.

OBJECTIVES:

- » To explore the relationship between nature and literature.
- » To analyze the concept of contemporary challenge
- » To build a foundation of realism
- » To analyze the vision for the future.
- » To relate reel with real.
- » People we have lost in our life.
- » From earlier Pandemic to new kinds of Pandemics.
- » Authors use to sit and write down their stories.

Introduction

Epidemics significantly impact literature and our responses to them. Literature provides a deep and insightful record of events during pandemics, offering solace during times of need. Covid-19, for example, has led to isolation, street closures, and new communication methods like virtual meetings and screen-based communication. As we navigate these challenges, literature plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of infectious diseases and providing solace during times of need.

Global epidemics like malaria, cholera, plague, Black Death, smallpox, and influenza killed millions. These devastating events impacted writers worldwide, who published stories, poems, and novels to provide realistic insights into the constraints and changes they brought. These literary creations

offer solace and comfort, helping readers understand difficult situations and recognize they are not alone.

Homer's, Iliad, and other works provide insights into human response to epidemics and political commentary on public crises. These stories offer a narrative and a framework for understanding the consequences of human behavior. The Iliad serves as a guide for understanding the future and the consequences of public crises. From Homer's, Iliad and Boccaccio's Decameron to Stephen King's The Sand, and Ahmad Ali's Twilight in Delhi, stories about epidemics offer much in the way of processing Catharines.

Predicted on Virus in Literature:

- * A book titled End of Days: Predictions and Prophecies about the End of the World, written by Sylvia Browne, also predicted the global outbreak of the coronavirus. The book was first published in 2008.
- * In a 1981 crime-thriller novel, titled The Eyes of The Darkness, suspense author Dean Koontz wrote about a virus called Wuhan-400 which was created as a bio-weapon in a laboratory. which seemingly predicted the coronavirus almost 40 years ago.
- * An American film shown in 2011 speaks of a Corona virus-like virus that begins spreading from China to spread to the rest of the world! The strangest thing is the end of the movie it shows the cause of the infection is the bat, which is the same reason that the disease is currently spreading!!

The Decameron (1353) by Giovanni Boccaccio; tells the story of ten people who isolate themselves in a village during

the Black Death epidemic. The story explores morality, love, sexual politics, trade, and power, introducing social structure and interaction in the early Renaissance. The story offers ways to rebuild daily lives disrupted by the epidemic, emphasizing the importance of storytelling in times of disaster. Greed and corruption are linked to moral and physical death.

One of the first apocalyptic novels, *The Last Man* (1826), set between 2070 and 2100 in futuristic Britain, chronicles the life of Lionel Varney, the last man standing after a devastating global plague. The novel emphasizes the importance of friendship and pets in times of crisis, reminding readers that pets can provide comfort and stability. *Que of the Red Death* (1842) depicts power failures and governance in response to tragedies like the Red Death. In *Cantari*, Prince Prospero built an iron gate, organized a masquerade ball, and assembled courtiers. Poe describes the feasts and the disease as a guest, ultimately causing the prince's death and his court.

“And one after another bid farewell in their weeping streams of blood, and each died in their fallen postures of despair”.

A recognized creation of T. S. Eliot's world, *Wasteland*, not only depicts a disintegrated world but also influences an infectious world, a picture of a distorted world. Eliot finds expression through his painful feelings, his wife suffering from an infectious disease, finds expression in his poem through this poetic phrase:

“April is the cruelest month”. W.B. In Yeats's famous poem *The Second Coming* he closely observes his pregnant wife approaching death in an epidemic. Albert Camus's, *The*

Plague (1942) and Stephen King's, *The Sand* (1948) brought readers' attention to the social consequences of plague-like epidemics, particularly isolation and state failures that plagued or moderated post-panic. Self-Isolation in Camus's novel is the epitome of the plague-stricken Algerian city of Oran. Causing an anxious awareness of the value of human connection and relationship:

“This intense, clean-cut deprivation and our complete ignorance of what the future holds in store has taken us un-awares; we are unable to react against the silent appeal of the presence, still so close and already so far, that haunts us all day long.

Stephen King's *The Sand*; A post-apocalyptic novel based on a bioengineered super flu named “Project Blue” leaks into an American military base, warning of the danger of an epidemic.

Some other interesting literary works worth mentioning are American novelist Catherine Anne Porter's short novel “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” in which she depicts her severe pains and her difficult recovery from influenza. The novel unfolds a ravaged picture of an epidemic that killed a large number of people.

Even in Indian literature, we find several illustrations of epidemics. Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math* depicts a pathetic picture of nothing less than famine, natural calamity, and epidemic.

But Rabindranath Tagore's long poem *Puratan Bhritya* (The Old Servant) tells the painful story of an old servant who, while serving his master, succumbed to smallpox, a dreaded

viral disease that originated in ancient times. 300 million in the 20th century.

Ahmad Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi* contains a devastating description of the 1918 swine flu, which claimed an estimated 1217 million lives in India and between 50 million and 100 million globally. An extract from the book:

“They did not bother to see whether the grave was properly dug or deep enough or not. He had many more to dig up.

The book calls Delhi the city of the dead and how people stick to their traditions and sell songs and chants. Half of his family including his wife and daughter “Saroja”. The poet describes how there are no logs left to bury the dead and how the Ganges has grown heavy and exhausted with its load of corpses. Their leader, Hamid, a five-year-old boy, had lost his father to Haija (cholera). Based on the narrative of untouchability, “Dad Ka Dum”, a character succumbs to the plague.

Similarly, the literature of various Indian regional languages presents a devastating picture of the epidemic like the Odia short story *Rebati*, by Fakir Mohan Senapati; Malayalam writer Kakkadan Vasuri (smallpox); Kannada writer U.R. Samskara by Ananthamurthy, etc all gives us an excerpt from the book:

“After the first two weeks of the cholera epidemic, the cemeteries were overflowing and there was no room in the churches.” The stories, *The Daughter That Bleeds*, and the novel, *Escape*, by Manjula Padmanabhan are notable for their sense of dealing with issues relevant to the current context. Taneja's story is the story of a woman who became infertile due to biowars. Fertile women are rare and auctioned for mar-

riage to the highest bidder.

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape* envisions a future in India where women are "insects" because technology has provided an alternative means of reproduction.

In addition, several other books and novels depict outbreaks of various diseases and trying times. Some of them are George's *Angle of the Earth*. R. Stewart; *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson; *Oryx and the Crake* by Margaret Atwood; *Station Eleven* by St. John Modell; *Gum*; *Germ and Steel*. Jared Diamond et al.

Human's unquenchable greed for natural resources made them ruthless and sensitive to our ecology, which ultimately led to conflicts with ecosystems, animals, and humans, and disturbed health and ecosystems. Hindi writer Mridula Garg has consistently written about the outbreak of writer's block around the world. But he believes that the emergence of a new breed of infectious diseases is related to human behavior; He says:

"They are the result of deforestation, close contact with wild animals as food, and consequently reduced biological barriers preventing viruses prevalent in animals from affecting humans. We writers are concerned about this phenomenon and some work should emerge from it".

Narratives and writings reveal that humans are resilient and capable of enduring suffering. They help eradicate misconceptions about epidemics and traditional beliefs, enabling better understanding and management of disasters. This reduces the burden on the government and public exchequer, ultimately enhancing the resilience of individuals

The current COVID-19 pandemic has been compared to an influenza pandemic a century ago, the Spanish flu of 1918-19, which killed millions of people worldwide, especially young people. It broke out soon after World War I, causing already unprecedented destruction and death. One of the people who caught the flu during the epidemic was TS Eliot. He was oppressed by constant worry about his health, and his home life, and worried that his mind was affected by illness. Later, in *The Waste Land* (1922), he transformed these personal worries, a sense of uncertainty, and the constant fear of death into an atmosphere that captured the essence of the absurdity and absurdity of the post-war epidemic era.

Amitav Ghosh recently said that there is likely to be a “big wave of novels about epidemiology”. Although fiction can be followed, some novelists have readily responded with nonfiction. Arundhati Roy’s, *The Pandemic is a Portal*, is an insightful essay on the current crisis the world is facing. Another well-known novelist, Zadie Smith’s series of essays in *Intimations*, is deeply personal and profoundly moving. Closer to home, surgeons Kalpana Swaminathan and Ishrat Syed, who together write, *Kalpish Ratna*, combine science and history with a human story called *Crown of Thorns: The Coronavirus and Us*. It is not surprising that the poets captured the spirit of the time more intuitively. K Satchidanandan and Nishi Chawla have brought together more than a hundred poets from around the world in their collection *Singing in the Dark: A Global Anthology of Poetry, Under Lockdown*.

Conclusion:

Even a casual look at the epidemiology-focused litera-

ture speaks volumes about how people, societies, and regimes have perceived and responded to disease outbreaks. Stay with it long enough and you'll realize if it's contagious. While it seems to have started as a biological phenomenon, it always has a political, social, and economic context. It describes how it behaves, how it is handled, and who lives it

Reference:

1. Camus, Albert, *The Plague*, Published (in French, La Peste Gallimard, 1947).
2. Ali, Ahmed., *The Twilight in Delhi*, Published in English by the Hogarth.
3. Premchand. *Edgah* (short story), Published in Chand, Periodical 1938.
4. A. Gosh. "How Literature has Helped"- Times of India.
5. Aneeta Paul; "Explore Pandemic Through the Lens of Literature".
6. Chelsea Haith; "Pandemic from Homer to Stephen King; what we can learn from Article: Britain in 1940.English; Hamish Hamilton, 1948.
7. <https://www.peepultree.world/livehistoryindia/story/living-culture/pandemics-through-indian-literary-lens>
8. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2022/sep/05/pandemics-in-literature-2494936.html>
9. CORONAVIRUS: These books and movies PREDICTED the outbreak of the deadly corona virus years ago! Here's the complete list By - TIMESOFINDIA.COM