

Literature and Life in the Era of COVID-19

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 YKING BOOKS

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1

Decoding Pandemic Dislocations in the Paradigms of English Literature

Prof. Bhagabat Nayak

Dislocation is a temporary or abrupt condition of causing gap or disruption in the material as well as physical existence. It is a defect in the direction of movement when people are unable to mobilize from one place to another. Although 'dislocation' is more a usable term in material science, applied physics and micromechanics where it is a defect caused by glide or slip under some influential stress or irregularities in stability. In literary perspective decoding dislocation is understood more in immobilization of people from one place to another due to pandemic at certain situation of mankind's suffering. Dislocations cause disruptions or reverse movements of life due to outside stress or pressure or due to pandemics like plague, cholera, tuberculosis and influenza, HIV/AIDS, Ebola or Covid-19 in our contemporary situations. It not only causes defects or disrupts life in its progress but also causes abrupt hazards in the phenomenal aspects of human life. In common perception dislocation refers to deformation in the natural process of developments. Natural functioning fails during dislocation and it causes defects in normal arrangements of life. In pandemic situations historians, scientists and writers decode and deconstruct pandemic vector energy while recording, experimenting and narrating the effects of pandemic bond in life, living conditions, and mutual relations

of people. Pandemics affect the meaning and magnitude of life creating tension and stress due to the lack of free movement, communication and coordination among the human beings with the posing of multiple irregularities. Pandemic is the buzz word for a disease which affects human life exceptionally usually due to a virus that spreads more than one continent and affects larger people with its common complications. It is broadly a global epidemic which generally confuses the world about its effects and impacts.

In the history of pandemics writers across the world write about the complexities caused by the pandemics in their textual productions. In their locatedness and existential situations they observe and realize life's experiences and present them in their narrative techniques. The paper is a humble attempt to explore pandemic dislocation in the subjective contexts of literature. It demonstrates perceptually the lethality of pandemics, causes of the fault-lines and the difficulties and defects in everyday life. Dislocation during pandemics causes stagnation in life. Science becomes the last hope to solve the pandemic crisis. Unless science becomes successful for its prevention or remedy in its inventory mission it becomes difficult to check its lethal strains on life. This causes societal dislocations due to voluntary choice or mandatory administrative policies. Dislocation in life and society prevents harms and reduces life psychologically and spiritually. In this context Bruce K. Alexander of Psychology Department of Simon Fraser University says:

Dislocation is the condition of great number of human beings who have been shorn from their cultures and individual identities by the globalization of the "free-market society" in which the needs of the people are subordinated to the imperatives of markets and the economy. Dislocation afflicts both people who have been physically displaced, such as economic immigrants and refugees, and people who have remained in place while cultures disintegrated around them. Dislocation occurs during boom times as well as recessions, among the rich as well as the poor, among capitalists as well as workers. Today, dislocation threatens to become, universal, as global free-market society undermines even more respects of social and cultural life everywhere (29).

Dislocation affects common man's life without essential services, normal living conditions, and creates social and psychological tensions making the people easy victims of it due to stress factors. Since the meaning and magnitude of life stop, normalcy of life gets hindered, irregularities affect the regularity of mutual relations, there takes place serious physical, social, psychological and spiritual dislocations. Countries across the world take wartime measures to provide basic knowledge to the people how to keep them safe and sustainable till the scientific community become successful to invent the right kind of medication for its prevention.

The paper analyses dislocation at the time of pandemic in the segments of human history with its fault lines, defects and periodic effects as well as the effect of Covid-19 that has caused a great havoc to the mankind in the contemporary context. Covid-19 menace has notoriously dismantled the philosophy of life, fractured the psychology of human beings and affected their lifestyle, health, economy, social conditions and cultural sensibility. Economy has become the worst causality of it. A long time stagnation, alienation, isolation has caused a wide scale social and psychological disruption. Like any pandemic in human history, Covid-19 has caused serious socio-psychological, economic and other disruptions in human life. It has almost brought a stagnation and pause in normal life. Like other pandemics Covid-19 has the "valence of change" in the social life, normative habits of the human beings, effect on their concept, personal and impersonal matters of cognition and attitude, perception, emotion, affiliation and other characteristics of life. Change is always welcomed in every society and every time as it is the sign of development and progress. Life is all about change and "all sociology is about change" (Sztompka xiii). One cannot definitely say that changes take place only due to revolution. In history revolutions bring change but pandemics bring abrupt changes either in macro sense or micro sense causing serious psychological consequences. This change due to dislocation or disruption affects interpersonal relationship, perception, memory, emotion, and destroys the stability in social continuity. The consequences of pandemics cause serious disruptions in human life, inertia due to destructive changes and disequilibrium in

epistemological estimation, orientation, frustration and helplessness in life.

Pandemic causes serious consequences. It causes gap in social and emotional relationships. During pandemics people fail to attend or meet their near and dear ones in need or difficulties. Often it happens that the close neighbours become distant members. Emotion is a normal pathological reaction that alleviates natural bond in human relationship during Covid-19. It becomes the first casualty during pandemics. In civic manners and normal human relationship shaking hands become contemptible, parents fail to embrace their children, and fear of death dominates the consciousness. Regulated environment either in the four walls of house, containment zones under medical supervision, and surveillance of administration make humans "a species of idleness", and "victims of grief". This helps them to take the pleasures of indolence, while educating the emotional hygiene or "drinking life to the dregs" through instrumental music and implied objects. Serious dislocations take place in trade and commerce, export and import, production and consumption. While this causes serious implications in human life, many migrate in search of engagements and income. Sometimes serious demographical changes cause mental stress, political struggle, crime and terror in normal living conditions. Unemployment due to lockdown causes division between rich and poor economic collapse, invites subordination, slavery, growing inequality, insecurity, poverty and turmoil.

Pandemic situation greatly affects the sentiment of the people and their emotional relationship. Emotions have been self-sacrificed in a very contemptible manner. Pandemic creates a kind of inertia in "absence of activity, a lack of capability ... and thus as an impediment rather than a desired condition" (Buchanan et al 190). The theoretical dimension of dislocation differs from its relative effects in the sociology of development. Pandemic causes economic dislocation in production, supply, economic capacity building, profit earning, business, and sustenance in life. Pandemic situation brings quick economic changes posing threat to industrial development and major economic planning. The outbreak of Covid-19 virus and lack of success in its treatment and cure has made humans untamed in emotions. Stress factors

due to lockdown, financial hardship, risk of unemployment, worry of loss of jobs and pay cuts, surge of misinformation cause disowning pets, discourtesy towards frontline workers and sorry condition of migrant workers. In the field of education and learning, emotional intelligence has faced serious difficulties due too much of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation and policy possibilities. E-learning and e-training are adopted to enhance intellectual and emotional development. Discourses on medications, yogic exercise, health tips and motivational classes are conducted to counter individual's emotional distress. Measures to provide psychological counsellings, social distancing, sanitizing are taken for good health and positive spirit to keep humans free from contagion.

Covid-19 like other pandemics in history has its myth which is not ascertained in scientific research. Since scientific analogies are inconsistent to break its myth it is difficult to say about its history, bond and cure. The scientific communities of the world are in search of the methods to break its bond in "socialization ambiguity" (McDade & Worthman 49) which rapidly leads to a profound social transformation and produces rapture in the equilibrium of the social and normative structures. Its serious impact on "emotions, values, perceptions, identity" (Wall and Louchakova 266) due to alienation, containment, isolation and dislocation creates the situation to internalize individual's nostalgia or an experience of amnesia. Covid-19 poses immediate threat to life which compels the stakeholders to suspend theatres, concerts, ceremonies, rituals, prayers and sports events, political and cultural events. People either voluntarily or mandatorily suspend their engagement and involvement in cultural events. In other words, this makes culture the casualty of the pandemic. Popular culture has become the worst sufferer as Covid-19 has destroyed the interest of the culture consumers. It is almost like the situation at the time of war or aggression when people restrict themselves from the outside world in order to "feel safe".

During the pandemics disruption affects the human life in manifold ways including finance, emotion and psychology and leads life to an uncertainty. As a great disrupter Covid-19 affects social dynamics as well as the dynamics of life. People are unaware, unprepared, inexperienced and unequipped to meet the

situations during the peak time of pandemic. Isolation becomes the only preferable, forcible and feasible method to counter the loss. In hassle, fear, tension they enjoy some loss in life and need some physical, maternal and emotional support. Pandemic affects human psyche in self-isolation. Pandemic causes a frightening situation when human ability is disapproved as the master of the universe. Social distancing has serious repercussions on body, mind, spirit and soul. It develops a sense of impotence, grief, loneliness, anxiety and distrust in life with different psychological complications.

Pandemics invite extreme sorrows, miseries, difficulties and dangers to life. People become psychedelic in their existential reality. They desire to get a quick respite from this. Past becomes a subjective aspect of nostalgia and future either gets suspended for sometime or remains in a self-willed amnesia. Fear of death makes the existential reality unbearable. Horror provides new experiences, changes the paradigms of human perspectives, human relationship and normative experiences of life. Meaningless deaths evoke unspeakable horror. Literature and fine arts provide pleasure and comfort to life. Psychological safeties act as an emotional oxymoron and cause uncertainty and anxiety. The Covid-19 pandemic has created an existential sequence of its reality which gets revealed in the context of pandemic literature. Like other fine arts, literature has its healthy features for learning the complex situations and experiences life. Literature provides human response to the creative feelings like positivism love, kindness, patience and compassion in life. Literature heals the several scars on human life. It communicates the experiences of life and creates a quick and direct response to the complications of life. Social paradigms, life's existential problems and psychological suffering during Covid-19 dislocation get its revelation in pandemic literature.

The vector effect of Covid-19 virus has its cold and cruel effect on human life. Feelings of love, kindness, patience, compassion and lack of communication have made human life unbearable. The effect of the virus attack has reduced the nature and functioning of human life. It has reduced human cognitive and somatic response by causing trauma, moral injury and grief. Loss of taste or smell, difficulty in breathing, tiredness and chest pain,

severe pressure, loss of speech or movement as the tendencies of human life during covid-19 lead life to uncertainty. The pandemic features may be new of its types but pandemic miseries both literature and history reveal the miserable condition of life more or less similar. Pandemic subject has been revealed in literature since 8th century B.C.

The *Iliad* written in Homeric Greek significantly refers to the pandemic plague as the main context of Book-1. The narrative of the epic poem begins nine years after the start of the Trojan War where Achilles the greatest hero has a quarrel with his commander-in-chief of the army Agamemnon. The most valuable warriors of Achaian army were successfully advancing in their mission. Agamemnon conquered some of the territories closer to Trojan. As his soldiers captured two beautiful maidens – Chryseis and Briseis and they were brought to him Agamemnon took Chryseis as his prize and Achilles claimed Briseis. As Chryseis's father Chryses was the priest of the god Apollo, he approached Agamemnon to return his daughter in exchange of enormous ransom. After Agamemnon's refusal Chryses approached Apollo for help. This made Apollo send plague to cause havoc on Greek camp inviting death to many soldiers. After ten days of pandemic suffering the Achaian army called for a soothsayer, Calchas to know the cause of it and its retribution. When Calchas revealed that plague was a vengeful and strategic move by Chryseis and Apollo, Agamemnon agreed to return Chryseis if Achilles would give him Briseis. In order to save the Achaian army from plague Agamemnon's demand humiliated and infuriated Achilles, who out of his rage threatened to withdraw from the war. When the two great heroes were in conflict over Briseis goddess Athena appeared there with the advice of Hera, the queen of gods to prevent the duel between the two. The reference of plague as retribution, its havoc and strategic measure of Apollo has greater dimension in the epic.

The great Greek historian Thucydides mentions about plague in his *Plague of Athens* (from 430- 427 BC). The book mentions about the four years of its devastation that had raged the city in the second year of the Pelopnesian war with Sparta. His mentioning of the horror of plague pandemic which had nearly killed one quarter of the people as well as Athenian army

towards the third year of its rampage. Even Pericles (443-420 BC) the very influential Greek statesman, orator and general was succumbed to plague during the twenty seven year war that had not only divided and destroyed Greece as a power in the ancient world but also drained their resources decimating the people failing to regain their preeminence in the ancient world. Thucydides himself had the first hand experience of plague and he has discussed about its signs and symptoms. His essential features of Greek terminology and familiarity with medical terms reveal his knowledge of the disease. His key observations of the individuals recovering from plague reveal body resistance of humans to future attacks. His reference to the nature of the contagion of plague in Athens is presumably small pox or some other type of diseases like influenza, typhus, bubonic and measles reveal enough to study the nature of future epidemics.

From 1300 to 1347 there were frequent cases of bubonic plague in Europe. It was suspected that the epidemic was brought and spread by the rats and fleas in the Black sea region from the Mongol traders. Giovanni Boccaccio, the Italian poet and scholar mentions about plague in his *Decameron* (1353), a collection of one hundred tales which narrate ten days' horror of plague and reveal the horror of the situation in Florence in 1348. Seven young women and three young men narrate the stories while sheltering in a secluded villa outside Florence in order to escape the Black Death which was afflicting the city. With the horror of plague, theme of love, eroticism and tragic elements are expressed in Florentine language with the local oral tradition, mercantile ethic, quick wit, stupidity and dullness. The narratives deal with philosophical outlook in the aftermath of the Black Death. While four of the women narrators represent—Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, three young men represent three theological virtues like Faith, Hope, and Charity supposedly the Reason, Spirit and Appetite. Boccaccio concludes with a conservative tone that the society itself has caused plague due to its sinful behavior. In his view plague is a cure for social fragmentation and sin. The swelling in the groin and armpits confirm the symptom of bubonic plague with other symptoms like fever, body aches and fatigue. Boccaccio's observation of the pandemic gives a horrific presentation which had claimed more than millions of human lives only across the Europe. The book

expresses the view that in the time of pandemic horror love as the only message can transform the human heart.

Although Geoffrey Chaucer portrays plague in "The Pardoner's Tale" in the late 14th century the pandemic has its reference in Elizabethan playwright Thomas Nash's *A Litnany in the Time of Plague* (1592). It presents the grim reality and talks about plague as the Black Death for killing nearly 200 million people during the time of Queen Elizabeth-I. For many of its unexplored causes even the Queen was terrified for her life. Nash's imagination of death is fixity with human morality and associated with salvation. He indicates that death is inevitable and nobody can escape from death after his observation of the pains of death everywhere. He says that nothing would be able to protect the humans from death. The wealthy and able people cannot avoid death. He says, "I am sick, I must die" like the rich and the poor, the beautiful and the ugly, strength and intelligent as nobody will be safe from plague. The description of powerful images have association with plague which make many the victims and enjoy a painful life becoming frail, repulsive, and sick while "stooping to the grave". In the poem Nash gives an apocalyptic expression revealing that sickness requires divine mercy.

Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) is a historical novel presents the return of the bubonic plague that had killed one quarter of London's population within eighteen months. Defoe describes about the families forced into quarantine due to infection and their shrieks for being terrified to death after seeing the condition of their dearest ones. The novel essentially presents the chronological details of the great plague that devastated London life in 1665 in a well-researched way. King Charles-II did not allow any trade and commercial relation with the Dutch in fear of its transnational infection. In its realistic portrayal Defoe presents the truth about plague that was killing people each week and people were paying desperately the medical bill. Defoe's observation of life's irregularities in his literary device is well observed when he writes:

I can go no farther here. I should be counted censorious, and perhaps unjust, if I should enter into the unpleasing work of reflecting, whatever cause there was for it, upon the

unthankfulness and return of all manner of wickedness among us, which I was so much an eye-witness of myself (18).

The narrative focus of the text centrally deals with bubonic plague, its causes and consequence. The bubonic plague time greatly affects the society and economy with the revealing of people's grief, sadness and death, spirit for survival, sin, redemption, hope and faith with all negative impacts on human life. The terrible calamity had affected foreign trade. The narrator probably Defoe's uncle Henry Foe, who is the H.F. in the novel gives his account on bubonic plague specially in East London when Defoe was only five years old.

Marry Shelley, the daughter of distinguished feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and philosopher cum political writer William Godwin, and wife of P.B. Shelley writes about the global pandemic in her novel *The Last Man* (1826). The novel in its futuristic perspective presents the horror of the pandemic that has killed almost everyone on the Earth, except a person Lionel Verney, the only survivor of the world. The novel appears to be a production of Mary Shelley's reaction to the death of her husband. Although she is very well known for her novel *Frankenstein* (1818), the present novel serves as a tribute to Shelley's deceased friends and her feelings of isolation after their loss which had created the loss of Romantic political ideals that they were standing for. Loss of friends is the loss of ideals for Mary Shelley which creates a metaphorical plague effect causing the flaw in human nature. The crushing sense of loneliness of the novelist has the killing effect of plague for the intellectuals like her. While the novel deals with the themes of the anxiety of illness, national isolation and ethical aspects in human nature the author justifiably presents that the personal loss of utopian ideals create the plague effect. She views that the loss of ideals is the loss of ethic of a society and this becomes the cause to decimate the mankind. The novel as an apocalyptic and dystopian science fiction presents a plague-ravaged world in the medical theories of disease transmission. The plague serves as a metaphor of failure of the utopian ideals which support the traditional needs of the family. The novel in its biographical and political sketch helps to understand the ideals of her husband, father and Lord Byron's political ideals and their subsequent failure to support her and her children.

Influenza as a pandemic during the World War-I had greatly affected life, love, sentiment. Katherine Anne Porter's novella *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939) narrate a classic story, all set around an event from her personal life during the World War-I when she was working as a reporter in Denver and fell in love with a lieutenant. The story centers on Miranda, a woman who survives the influenza pandemic during 1918. When her lover Adam died of influenza, Miranda became sick and delirious but finally recovered becoming exceptionally pale. The author enabled her to be contracted to Spanish flu in this autobiographical story but depicts that the epidemic is a conqueror on a horseback, death appears to be on a pale horse. The 'pale horse' is influenza and the 'pale rider' is Death. She symbolizes that the horseman is a conqueror and the rider of death. The novella in its historical and literary contexts presents the Spanish flu that had killed more than five million people living in over-crowded areas. The deadliness of the flu was almost a pandemic due to malnourishment and poor hygiene. The story presents the illness which caused the burial of the dead in common graves. It grapples the consciousness and alienation which are commonly found in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, (1922), and George Oppen's *Of Being Numerous* (1968). After Miranda's miraculous recovery she realizes that she is familiar with death from her experience of suffering and from the death of her near and dear ones which was causing "a clamour of pain" in her.

The bubonic plague pandemic has seriously affected the philosophy of life in Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1947). The novel presents how philosophy of life is meaningless during the time of pandemic which causes meaningless suffering and death. Plague causes the absurd condition for the existence of life. The archetypal title of the novel is a metaphor for the horrors of fascism and as an allusion to cholera epidemic in Algeria in 1849. Camus presents the nation's point of view in the plague sweeping French Algerian city of Oran. The novel is a snapshot of life in Oran during the wide spread of the invincible silent disease that kills and destroys life. The pitiless situation of life is viewed in the town of Oran where the gates of every house are closed due to the rage of plague. Camus consciously constructs the consciousness of the people who have isolated themselves in

"human decency" (151) for "doing one's job" (146). Dr. Rieu the narrator reveals his reason for writing what had to be done and to what against the relentless onslaught of plague. He narrates the scourge of plague which has become a murderer. He remarks that plague is "the very angel of death", a Whitman's phrase during quarantine when "the soul of the murderer is blind" (124). The citizens of Oran have become the prisoners of death without "freedom" as the very reality that amalgamates our ideas of existentialism and humanism. In the novel plague represents human suffering due to alienation as well as an allegory of the rise of Nazis in German that caused suffering of the Jews and Europeans during the World War II.

Barbara Wertheim Tuchman the twice Pulitzer Prize winner presents the idea of death and suffering due to the 14th century plague in *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (1978) which has similar repercussions and effects during the World War I. The novelist narrates the horror of war as plague effect that has "no sense of an assured future". The novel presents pandemic situations in the European experience of fourteenth century when the Black Death had its rage. Narrating the twentieth century situation in fourteenth century consciousness she presents the Hobbesian condition of human society. The novel as a fantasy fiction of love and corrupting-weaknesses of elites presents exciting times on commoners' "plague pillage and taxes". Apart from the Black plague the novel covers the other matters like the papal schism, pillaging mercenaries, anti-Semitism, socio-political and religious classes, and events related to nobles, and mercenaries.

The chronicles of human immune deficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired immune Deficiency syndrome (AIDS) have been addressed with the policy and political implications of the government in Randy Shilt's *And the Brand Played On* (1987). The author emphasises the horror of the pandemic virus as well as the political infighting in the United States during its spread. The novel analyses author's concern for the horror of the disease and the factors and biological agents that make it uncontrollable. The author explains how the disease exploded among the people in gay community's who were the victims of public apathy. In his journalistic reportage, investigative approach and extensive

analysis the author gives coverage of the disease when the gay communities were the victims of public apathy. The novel not only sounds an alarm on the dimensions of the AIDS and delay of government actions which "fundamentally disappointed" the probe on the broader questions of intravenous drug users, gay men homosexuals but also present "the pain and courage of individuals confronted with AIDS". It presents the human side of the crises. The horror syndrome of AIDS, its high impact on the people, its emergence and different orientations of the people are narrated in a meticulous documentation.

The spread of Ebola virus in Liberia and Siera Leone was an alarm to the people of the continent of Africa. The outbreak of Ebola as a pandemic in Kenya in late 1980s is traced with the true events and surrounding in Richard Preston's *The Hot Zone: the Terrifying True Story of the Origins of the Ebola Virus* (1994). The novel accounts Preston's concerns for the spread of Ebola as a pandemic with other viral diseases in 1970s and 1980s. As a scientific thriller the fictional work presents the factual view of terrifying events which had posed a greater threat to human life due to the virus like AIDS. The symptom of Ebola virus has its exposure with the death of the French expatriate, Charles Monet. The novelist presents how at the time of Ebola spread several American scientists and military personnel were spending their lives wearing space suits and doing research on the lethal virus for developing a vaccine for its cure, Preston's visit to *Kitum Cave*, the hot zone in Kenya where Ebola virus was detected. It presents the developing symptoms of Ebola, its sources and worries to protect the human race. Preston gives an account of the history of the devastation caused by two central African diseases like Ebola and Marburg for which quarantine was the only possible method to check infection and control the fatality rate.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1995) narrates a sentimental story of love between Florentino Ariza a telegraph boy and Fermina Daza the daughter of a mule trader. There is no sign of cholera suffering in the novel but the novelist uses cholera as a metaphor of horror for pain causing impact in Florentino's longing for Daza. Florentino's lovesickness causes suffering which is as painful as cholera. Intense love and longing causes the similar pain of cholera. True love is enduring but

longing for love is infections one for a lover. In reality Fermina has married to Juvenal Urbino and they are perfectly happy after their marriage. But narrating Florentino's love for Fermina, Marquez states that love sickness is a literal illness for which Florentino suffers emotionally and realizes it highly infectious like cholera pandemic. Florentino, a poet by passion and emotion has dedicated his life to love in his sincere waiting for Fermina for fifty one year nine months and four days. Even after Fermina's marriage he waits for her for a long time and his love for her does not become pale for her. Fermina still appears as a "beautiful adolescent" with "almond shaped eyes" for him who walks with a "natural haughtiness in a journey of forgetting. When Juvenal Urbino dies an unfortunate death after chasing a parrot the situation changes. After Juvenal Urbino's funeral Florentino steps forward and declares- "Fermina", "I have waited for this opportunity for more than half a century, to repeat to you once again my vow of eternal fidelity and everlasting love". Marquez through his narration leaves the message that a man living with heart's eternal vow for more than fifty years was a kind of suffering from cholera which had plagued and made him precarious. Florentino's crazy love and desperate romanticism reveal the cholera symptoms in his emotion and heart.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995) is a medical thriller that dramatizes the advantages of people who are brought together by mysterious turn of events. The novel wonderfully blends the facts and fiction. It weaves certain historical events which led to the discovery of the killer malaria and its cure. The novel has a background of malaria pandemic and about the research of Nobel winning scientist Ronald Ross (1857-1932). The ground breaking discovery of the cause of malaria and its cause due to the bite of a mosquito, a female anopheles has been manipulated by an Indian 'counter-science' group which has "systematically interfered with [his] experiments to push malaria research in certain directions while leading it away from other". The novel investigates into some historical events that lead to the discovery of the killer malaria and its cure. It correlates other relevant philosophical and sociological issues central to the politics of science. In the enigma of science Ghosh narrates its impact in cultural practices of treatment of psyche of the character who discusses the strategies of development for this impending

disaster. The novel highlights protagonist's lifelong obsession with the history of malaria research, transmission of malaria, and epistemology of folk medicine in the economically poor community.

Influenza pandemic of 1918 took nearly twenty million lives. History reminds us more about the horrors of the World War I but few remember the loss of lives due to the virus that killed millions of innocent people in the world. Gina Kolata's nonfiction *Flu* (1999) narrates the horror of the pandemic that had chiefly killed the healthy middle-aged individuals between two world wars. Influenza had its origin in Spain. The fatality of influenza was not covered enough in newspapers. The book covers influenza epidemiology and costs of the influenza with its rapidity in progression and human suffering. The lethality of the disease had many perplexing aspects in collective consciousness as it killed the people of developing and developed regions alike. The writer touches the human side of the suffering in well illustrated vignettes. As a science reporter of the *New York Times* Kolata makes flu enjoyable and educational as it had passed from birds and pigs to humans and produced the most dangerous strains. The research investigated by the medical experts had to discover the causes of transmission and strains of the flu. Kolata has tried his best to trace the scientific discoveries during 1918 establishing its connection between animals and humans.

London epidemic of 1854 is well mapped in Steven Johnson's *The Ghost Map* (2006). It gives a detailed mapping of the dead due to cholera and a lot of background of London as the filthiest city in the world in 1850s. The condition of people, their seriousness due to the bacterial and waterborne cholera, its infection causing harm to small intestine, dehydration causing symptoms and vomiting are common in the narration of the condition of people in urban communities where dense population were there. The author narrates the nightmarish effect of cholera as a pandemic in Victorian London. It had created a horror as there was no scientific success to prevent it except electrolytes intake in clean water. Cholera was a threat to human life then and now in urban areas. The book documents the steps taken and performed through experiments in order to know about its outbreak and its effect explaining the human ability to fight and counter its spread.

In literature pandemics are narrated as mass murderers. In the history of pandemic it will not be proper to say that the writers across the world only write on pandemic horror in English. Many writers of continental, national and regional identities have attempted their best to narrate the condition and helplessness in their peripheral contexts. Often manmade crises like war, riots, racial and ethnic subjugations make them suffer like the suffering during pandemics but the authors narrate pandemic effects in destroying families and destroying cities with great intensity. Judging the pandemic horror at different times in history and the human side of love, suffering, bereavement, and loss a few Indian writers have written about pandemic devastation. Either in English or in their native tongues they have narrated human suffering and their struggle in combating the epidemic with insightful reports. Indian writers like their English counterparts narrate human condition and their miseries with much responsibility. In this context few Indian writings, including the translated works are taken into consideration for the pandemic discussion, at the time of plague, small pox, influenza and cholera.

The tentacles of diseases become virulent due to the human failure to contain the pandemic with medication or in the preferred methods of isolation, containment and social distancing from others. Human failure or lacks of knowledge about the disease make it more dangerous for which it poses threat to human life. Rabindranath Tagore's long poem *Puratan Bhritya* (1895), The Old Manservant narrates the aching story of a much-reviled house help who nurses his master to health but succumbs to small pox. Kestha, the manservant nurses his master to health in spite of his master's abuse but unfortunately succumbs to small pox. His master, the zamindar repeatedly abuses, scoffs, and periodically orders Kestha to go out of the household with the instigation of his irate wife but he refuses to leave his employer, for whom he holds an astonishing sense of devotion. During zamindar's pilgrimage to holy Vrindavan Kestha accompanies him instead of his more-preferred servant Nibaran. On his pilgrimage when the zamindar is deserted by his fellow pilgrims in fear of being contracted to small pox Kestha provides him exemplary service but unfortunately succumbs to the virulent small pox. Similarly one of the eminent Odia writers Fakir

Mohan Senapati in his story *Rebati* (1898) narrates the horror of cholera that had hit an Odia village killing thousands. He deals with the shocking life of a village girl Rebati, the protagonist of the story whose life and expectations are destroyed due to cholera pandemic. It kills her parents and leaves her in desperation. Her grandmother and tutor Basu become the only supporting members. The story has its shocking effect when Basu fails to come to support them, Rebati becomes the victim of Cholera, and the grandmother superstitiously believes that everything happens due to the wrath of deities due to Rebati's education. The writer in his imaginative perception thinks cholera as a "problematic reversal" of the aggressive act of subjugation by the colonizers.

In the early twentieth century Indian a number of writers have narrated the horror of pandemics in their writings. Eminent Hindi writer Suryakant Tripathi had seen the horror of influenza outbreak in 1918 that had left thousands dead. The poet after losing half of his family members including his wife and daughter had realized that unsourced material may be challenged and removed. In his poem *Nirala* (1922) he writes about the time of influenza, the Spanish flu that had hit hard to Nirala on his way to meet his wife at his in-law's place. Before meeting his wife Nirala fall victim to the deadly disease. The poet narrates Nirala's misery with scores of others who had their meaningless deaths and for this there were no wooden logs left with to cremate the dead. The river Ganga had even grown heavy and exhausted with the burden of corpses. The poet conveys deep emotion, shock, loss, horror of death around his life.

Eminent Hindi writer Munshi Premchand's most remembered story *Eidgah* (1933) written under the pen name of Nawab Rai narrates the very moving experiences in the life of a five year old boy Hamid who has lost his parent due to the spread of *Haija* (Cholera). The writer in his artistic endeavour narrates the role of Hamid's grandmother who tells him that his father has left to earn money and his mother has gone to Allah to bring some lovely gifts for him. When the whole village is filled with happiness and celebrating the festival of Eid and Hamid's friends Mohsin Noorey and Sami are enjoying the day, he feels the absence of his parents and has no shoes or cap to go out to wish

his friends 'Happy Eid'. The writer presents how cholera has snatched away the happiness of a small boy who is too immature to understand the effects of pandemic on human life. Premchand's other story *Doodh ka Dam* (1934) exposes the injustice of the rigid social hierarchies that relegate Mangal, a bhangi, a sweeper who barely lives as a human as his sole protector, his mother nurses the rich village landowner's son Suresh who enjoys a lion's share of his mother's milk but treats Mangal as inferior. In the story the writer sensitively handles the miseries of the untouchables which is equally harmful and dangerous like cholera that has killed many in the village.

Indian born writer Ahmed Ali migrated to Pakistan has expressed his deep concern for the horror of 'Spanish flu' in his novel *Twilight in Delhi* (1940). The story narrates how the pandemic had taken away the lives of twelve to seventeen millions people in India. Ali addresses very intimately the life of the people in India's changing social, political and cultural climate when colonialism had its pandemic effect on Indian life. He presents how at this crucial time thieves were stealing sheets from the graves and the gravediggers were raising their fees four-fold during the pandemic. It presents how the people of Delhi were true to their traditions and not ready to miss an opportunity of having few digs at fortune when flu was deadly. The novel presents the sorry state of affairs in human condition due to the flu as everywhere human beings were dying meaninglessly.

Thnkazi Sivasankar, the eminent Malayali writer presents about a contagious disease that causes death to many in the town of Alappuzha. The reality observed by the novelist is well sketched in the life and career of a scavenger's son in his novel *Thottiyude Maken* (1947). It portrays three generations of a working class family engaged in Alleppey as scavengers who inspite of their sincere service to the society and people are oppressed, ostracized, and prejudiced. Even during the pandemic these *thottis* (cleaners of night soil) serve others but nobody cares for their suffering especially in the life and struggles of Mohanan, the third generation member of the *thotti* family.

The pandemic Kala-azar is a visceral disease caused by the parasites and transmitted with the bite of female sand flies. It generally affects the internal organs like liver and spleen, cause

anaemia, weight loss and sometimes darkening of the skin. This fatal disease had its horror causing effect on the life of the people in few districts of Bihar. Phanishwar Nath Renu's Hindi novel *Maila Anchal* (1954) the soiled Border presents the spread of Kala-azar in rural Bihar, in the village Maryganj. Although the novel centres on an English woman Mary, the wife of an Indigo-planter Martin during her living there, the book narrates the dedication of Dr. Alakh Niranjana who helps the people and with the help of people fight against Kala-azar as well as other diseases in the locality. Renu projects how pandemics pose threat to human life as well as the unity of people which make them able to fight untidily against the deadly disease.

The outbreak of small pox as a pandemic in George Varghese Kakkanadan's *Vasoori* (1968) narrates the story of disease that takes away love, lust, vengeance and everything in human lives. It explores the pandemic small pox in a hamlet in central Kerala where it had created a macabre atmosphere with the loss of human life, physical degradation, fragility of relationship, and a swaying side of melodrama.

Kannada writer U.R. Anantha Murthy gives reference to the deadly plague in his masterpiece *Samskara* (1996). No doubt the novelist has presented the causticity of caste as more harmful than the bubonic which has caused death to Narannappa who had reviled the purity of Brahmin caste. Even before this his wife had died of plague. The novelist had experienced the story of the plague in his hometown where the upper castes were getting the treatment of the doctor and lower castes were in perpetual fear and waiting for the soullessness of the system of caste in the *agrahara* of Durvasapura. The novel symbolically presents plague as a powerful symbol of doom for the sinful conduct Narannappa. Author's narration of the plague effect is a scientific progress that governs the metonymy of caste that outbreaks the myth of unbroken continuity with reality. In his enlightened view he makes Brahminism that has grown decadent, hypocritical and back-ward looking in the rite for a dead man. In his critiquing technique the novelist conveys the message on the epidemic either to modernize or perish for extreme cultural austerity. Epidemics make people helpless and kill them without discrimination and annihilate all.

The year 2020 is important for the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic at Wuhan in China for a new type of virus that caused fever, tiredness and dry cough. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected millions of people across the world causing death and dislocation in human life. Although it has snatched away more than a million human lives, no scientific success is made to prevent it and protect the prospects of human life. When Covid-19 has created an atmosphere of horror in many countries in the world numerous writers write good number of poems, stories, and novels expressing the reality of life during this pandemic. Like every pandemic it makes human life uncertain and generates numerous problems in human life. Literary creations during Covid-19 become available both on the soft media and print media and have become a source of stress reliever for millions of readers. Realism, horror, tension, stress, superstition and conservatism become the prominent modes of expression in pandemic literature. Ashoke Mukhopadhyay's novel *A Ballad of Remittent Fever* (2020) narrates the story of three generations of doctors who attempt their best to fight against the diseases in the city of Kolkata. The novel takes the readers back to Bengal in 1884 where the generations of doctors of this family were combating the diseases like Cholera, Malaria, TB, and Spanish flu in the spirit of true medical profession. The book has a stunning revelation that the medicine for a pandemic serves as a miracle and the physicians as messiahs take their profession in true and tested spirit. Dr. Dwarikanath's daily life is propelled by a fierce desire to vanquish the diseases through his obdurate determinations.

To conclude, it is observed that pandemic paradigms in literature chiefly deal with the miseries and catastrophes of life which deeply affect human thoughts, emotions and concerns. It reveals different forms of human miseries, monotony, chaos and uncertainties in life. Writers of pandemic time express their concern for the meaningless martyrdom of many eminent persons as well as their near and dear ones. They deal with the changes of human behaviour, attitude, manners, habits, concepts and finer feelings like love and compassion in their writings. When esoterics believe pandemics are due to God's retribution on the human evils on the earth the writers of different countries foster every hope in their emotional resilience.

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