

The Literature Exposing Senses of Pandemics

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Abstract: *Epidemics or Pandemics as the case may be are proved to be mass murderers. The diseases like Plague, Small pox, Influenza or the cholera inviting Epidemics or the Pandemics ruin families, destroy towns and leave the victim generation sacred. The literature the mean of transmit from one victim generation to the succeeding generations, includes novels, plays and poetry, besides also the printed material on a particular subject i.e. the body of written works by the experts with expressions containing the ideas of permanent and universal interests and characteristic. Etymologically, the term derives from Latin litaritura/litterastura, "Writing formed with letters along with some definitions, including spoken or sung texts, more restrictively, it is writing that possesses literary merit, The devastation caused by outbreaks of such Epidemics / Pandemics had impacted many major writers across India like Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Prem Chand, Surya Kanta Tripathi "Nirala", Faquir Mohan Senapati and others, by giving birth to hunting poems, short stories and novels. Although literature may not explain away or fight off things such as epidemics / pandemics, but, even as modern science sometimes, couldn't, but it does becomes a source of consolation, a way of sharing our common human concerns.*

Keywords: Epidemics, Pandemics, Literature, consolation, pains and anxiety.

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of history, diseases in short spans out broke and revenged humanity. Sometimes changing the course of history experienced even signaling the end of entire civilizations. The repeated revisiting epidemic / pandemic as experienced for the last 5000 years is the disease namely plange being an acute infections one cause by the bacillus indigenus rodent population of south and North America, Africa and Central Asia. In epidemics plague is transmitted to humans by bite of oriental or Indian rat flea and the human flea. The primary hosts of the fleas are the black urban rat and the brown sewer rat. Plague is also transmissible person to person when in its pneumonic form. Yersinia pesits is a very pathogenic organism to both human and animals and before antiniotics had a very high mortality rate. Bubonic plague also has military significance and is listed by the centres for Disease control and Prevention as a Category, A bioterrorism agent The three great world pandemics of plague so recorded were in 541, 1347 and 1894 CE each time causing devastating mortalities of both people and animals across nations and continents, which irrevocably changed the social and economic fabric of society. In most human plague epidemics infection initially took the form of large purulent abscesses of lymph nodes, the bubo being called bubonic plague. When bacteramia followed, it caused haemorgangong an necrosis of the skin rapidly followed by Septicaemic shock and death was being called Septicaemic plague. If the disease spread to the lung through blood, it caused an invariably fatal pneumponia, called pneumonic plague and this form was directly transmissible from person to person.

Just as COVID-19, despite being a world-scale pandemic, is still referred to as "the Chinese virus" or "the Wuhan flu" Fratto in her explored Similar kinds of scapegoating in public health campaigns on "AIDS" ; Works by 19th century Italian author Alessandro Manzoni – who wrote about the 17th century bubonic plague, allegedly caused by people called untori, sent by the devil to grease the frames of people's doors with the infection ; and the Italian Renaissance physican – author Girolamo Fracastoro, who defined syphilis as "the French disease" ; and the mysterious "Asian Fever" that threatens Russia at the end of Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment".

II. ROLE OF LITERATURE

Literary works are works of art. Storytelling and plot-construction are tools that individuals and societies employ to make the sense of illness and health, to build meaningful totalities out of scattered events and phenomena. From Chekhov's William Carlos and Nawal El Saadawi's autobiographical "doctor stories" to Yin Lianke's 2006 novel "Dream of Din Village based on a real life blood-selling scandal in contemporary China ; from Gogol's and Luxum's "madmen's diaries" to Kazuo. Ishiguro's 2005 dystopic novel "Never Let me Go" ; from British neurologist –author Oliver Sack's "clinical tales" to Anne Fadiman's 1997 "The sprit catches You and You Fall Down : A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors and The collision of Two centuries" are the literary works worth quotation on the subject. The Devastations caused by outbreak of epidemics or pandemics had impacted many tall writers across India-RabinderNath Tagore MunshiPrem Chand, SuryakantTripathi "Nirala," Faquir Mohan Senapati, Takazhi Siva Sankara Pillai and others giving birth hunting poems, short stories and novels. Literature regards each individual with compassion and goes deeper than what statistics or historical records can tell us. "Literature may not explain away or fight off things such as pandemics or the epidemics, even as modern science sometime, can't but it does become a source of consolation, a way of sharing our common human concerns and in its own way provides the deepest, the most insightful record of the events" says Harish Trivedi, who taught English Literature in Delhi university. In India references to epidemics and pandemics can be also found in words some of the biggest names in Hindustani literature such as Panishwar Nath Renu, Master Bhagwan Dass, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Pandey Bechan Sharma, Harishankar Parsai, Suryakant Tripathi, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Malyalam novelist George Verghese Kakkanandan (Novel Vasoori 1968) and many others.

Tagoires long poem, PuratanBhartiya (The Old Maservant), tells the aching story of a much reviled house hel who nurses his master to health but succumbs to smallpox. The poem often recited at elocution contexts, endures in popularity as "You Tube" indicates. Small pox, which originates in encient times, killed around 300 millions in 20th century. On December 13, 2019, The WHO celebrated 40 years of eradication. A moving account of Spanish flue, which claimed an estimated 12 to 17 millions lives in India and between 50 million 100 million globally, is found in Ahmed Ali's novel "Twilight in Delhi". The Delhi born author who migrated to Pakistan, talks of how shroud. Thieves stole sheets from the graves and how grave-diggers raised their fees fourfold during the pandemic. "They did not bother to see that grave was properly dug or deep enough or not. They had so many more to dig" Ali wrote.

"Delhi became city of the dead. But the people Delhi, true to the tradictions of the past did not miss an opportunity of having a few dug at fortune. They made songs and sang them and leaflets containing them were sold for a price each. How deadly this fever is / Everyone is dying of it . The hospitals are gay and bright / but sorry is men's plight" Ahmed Ali further wrote in his novel as aforesaid.

Some writers coped up with personal tragedy as well. "The Hindi poet Surya Kant Tripathi "Nirals" lost his half of his family, including his wife and daughter, in the 1918 AD influenza outbreak. He described how there were not wooden logs left with which to cremate the dead, and how Ganga grew heavy and deemed exhausted with its burden of corpses" Says Trivedi, a scholar of post colonial and traditional studies. Several words by master story tellers mention pestilence in passing, which underlines that epidemics prominently occupied a writer's minscape, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. MunshiPrem Chand's Eidgah is one of his most remembered short stories. Some might recall that its protagonist, the five year old boy Hamid, had lost his father to "Haiza" (Cholera) in "DoodhKa Dam" a poignant tale on untouchability, one of the characters succumbs to the plague. Faquir Mohan Senapati also called as "Father of Odia literature" most relevant work on social prejudice during outbreak of an extremely virulent cholera epidemic. In the first ever shortly story published in Odia titled Rebat (1898) a story on Rebat girl from a backward village hit by cholera, who is determinal to get education. Extremely virulent cholera continues to kill thousands globally every year.

The writers of Malyalam have penned down epidemics. In imminent literature Thakazhi, Sivasankara Pillai's novel "ThottiyudeMaken" (Seavenger's son), a contagious disease sweeps through Alappuzha town. SahityaAcademi Award receipientMalyalam writer Kakkanadan's "Yasoori" (Small pox" explores the reactions of a sitant hamlet in Central

Kerala following outbreak of small pox. In Kannada writer UR-Anathamurthu's master-piece "Samkakara" one of the main characters, Naryanappa dies of the plague.

In medieval Europe too, plague and small pox killed millions. Hindi author Mridula Garg says writers all over the world, constantly wrote about the havoc outbreaks caused. They are the result of destruction of forests, closer contact with wild animals, consumption of viewer breeds of animals as food and consequent lowering of the biological barrier and keep the viruses prevalent in animals fro the effecting humans. We writers are concerned about phenomenon and some words should emerge from it" Mridula Garg says

The literature provides us deepest and insightful record of events during pandemics and epidemics and tries to bring home the impacts thereof coupled withby providing consolations in times of need and vigilance by taking the alarming dangers derived from the experiences of the past.

Our ancient ancestors were actually exposed to far fewer infections and diseases than us. Around 19,000 years back, even far earlier also based on sanatan philosophy people started living in major settlements primarily based on agriculture. As pivotal and revolutionary as these settlement were shaping in future of human civilization, they also brought new diseases in shape of pandemics and epidemics with them , because of their living style in close together in unsanitary communities which were perfect for prevalent animal diseases to jump species and an outbreak. The 10 epidemic / pandemic diseases that were common in the ancient words are said to be

1. **Bubonic Plague:** A deadly infection caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pestis*, which (bubonic plague) is also referred to as Black Death. For centuries plague has been synonymous with the disasters of the people of Asia, Europe and Africa, claiming a significant proportion of the population of the biggest empire like Rome having taken first outbreak in 541 AD.
2. **Small Pox:** Its origin has been associated with both Egypt and India for the last 3000 years i.e. from the mummified remains of EgyptainPharaocy Ramses V who died in 1157 AD.
3. **Yellow Fever:** A disease being similar to malaria in the sense that it also carried by the mosquitoes and is said to have originated in early 1500 years and its first outbreak took place in 1690 AD in United States.
4. **Tuberculosis:** The most lethal communicable disease is caused by bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, an organism whose existence pre-dated even the first human settlements. There are more than two million death an year from tuberculosis, mainly in developing countries.
5. **Measles:** The first description of measles dates back to ninth century A.D. When an Arab Physician first identified it as an infection, that was different to small pox. In 1757 a Scottish Physician namely Francis Home cane to his conclusion that such infection was caused by an agent in the blood.
6. **Malaria:** Malaria has been infecting various species for around 130 million years. Even it is said to be cause of death of Great Ganghi-Skhas that was Malaria disease. The documented description of Malaria dates back to 2700 BC. By 400 BC it was common epidemic in ancient Greece. This disease still infects about 300 million people an year taking death toll heavily on one year to the another.
7. **Typhoid:** An infectious disease caused by the bacteria *Salmoonellatyphi*. Typhoid is highly contagious and is spread easily through contaminated food and water supplies besides by close contact with infected people The most devastating typhoid epidemic took place between 430 BC to 424 BC, when one third of population of Allens in ancient Greece was wiped out.
8. **Influenza:** The cases of influenza among humans are said to be of the period back 6000 years Regardless to this history. The first documented records of a human influenza outbreak are from 1580 A.D. When an infection strikingly similar to it was reported in Asia and Northern Africa.
9. **Typhus:** There was at time when catching typhus almost guaranteed death unless victim (patient) had a surprisingly strong immunity and received proper nursing care. Although there was no record of any typhus epidemic before 1450 AD but upon its surface around that time, it was devastating to the inhabitants of Europe between 17th and 19th centuries.
10. **Chicken Pox:** An infection caused by the *Varicella Zoster virus*, these days chicken pox in usually considered mild illness, common among children. Before a vaccine to curb the same, the chicken pox was considered to

be a serious and wide spread infection. Many people in early 1500 years actually thought chicken pox was type of scarlet fever, until the Italian Giovanni Filippo Ingrassia, distinguished between two diseases scarlet fever and chicken pox.

11. Throughout the course of history, disease outbreaks have ravaged Humanity, sometimes changing the course of history and at times, signaling the end of entire civilization. 20 of the worst epidemics and pandemics, dating from prehistoric to modern times can be counted as;

a. Prehistoric epidemic : Circa 3000 B.C.

About 5000 years ago an epidemic wiped out a prehistoric village in China. The bodies of the dead were slotted inside a house, which were later burn down. The archaeological site is now called “HaminMangha” located in North-East China. Another prehistorical mass burial site of the same period called “Miazigou” in North East China Together both suggest that epidemic ravaged the entire region of China.

Plague of Athens : 430 B.C.

Around 430 B.C. after a war between Athens and Sparta broke out, an epidemic ravaged the people of Athens and lasted for five years, taking death toll of one lakh lives. The Greek historian Thucydides (460 BC-400) wrote that “People in good health were all of sudden were attacked by violent heats in the head and redness and inflammation in eyes, the inward parts, such as throat or tongue, becoming bloody and emitting an unnatural and fetid breath (Translated by Richard Crawley from the book “History of the Peloponnesian War” London Dent 1914)

Antonine Plague 165-180 A.D.

Antonine Plague, may have been smallpox, laid waste to the army of Roman Empire, after return from war, taking death toll of five million people in Roman Empire, wrote Pusey, a senior lecturer in Roman History at Manchester Metropolitan University (a paper published in Book “Disability in Antiquity” Routledge 2017)

Plague of Cyprian 250-271 AD

Named after St. Cyprian, a bishop of Carthage (a city in Tunisia), who described the epidemic as signaling the end of the world. Plague of Cyprian is estimated to have killed 500 people a day in Rome town. In 2014 archaeologists in Luxor found what appears to be a mass burial site of plague victims. Archaeologists found three kilns used to manufacture lime and remains of plague victims burnt in a giant bonfire. “Cyprian wrote in Latin in a work called De mortalitate” (translated by Phillip Schaff from Book “Father of the Third century : Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix” Christian Classics Ethereal Library 1885).

Plague of Justinian 541-542 A.D.

The Plague named after the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (reigned between 527-565 AD) ravaged the said Empire by the bubonic plague. It is estimated that 10% of the world population died.

Black Death 1346-1353 A.D.

Black Death travelled from Asia to Europe, leaving devastation in its wake. Some estimates that it wiped out over half of the European population, and changed the history of Europe. Studies further suggest that surviving workers had better access to meat and higher-quality bread. The lack of cheap labour may also have contributed to technological innovation.

Cocoliztli Epidemic 1545-1548 AD

(Aztec Ruins National Monument (Image Credit : USGS))

The infection that caused the Cocoliztli epidemic was form of viral hemorrhagic fever that killed 15 million inhabitants of Mexico and Central Asia. Among the population already weakened by extreme drought, the disease proved to be utterly catastrophic “Cocoliztli” is the Aztec word for “pest”.

American Plagues : 16th century

American Plagues are the cluster of Eurasian diseases brought to the America by European explorers. These ailments included small pox which contributed to the Collapse of the Inca and Aztec civilizations. It is estimated that 90% of the indigenous population of Western Hemisphere was killed.

Great Plague of London 1665-1666

The Black Death's last major outbreak in Great Britain caused a mass exodus from London, led by King Charles II. The plague started in April 1665 and spread rapidly through the hot summer months. By the time the plague ended about one lakh people including 15 of the population of London had died. Again on September 2, 1666, the Great Fire of London started, lasting for four days and burning down a large portion of that city.

Plague of Marseille 1720 – 1723 A.D.

Historical records suggest that Great Plague of Marseille started when a ship called Great – Saint – Antoine docked in Marseille, France carrying a cargo of goods from the eastern Mediterranean. Although the ship was quarantined, the Plague still got into the city, likely, through fleas on plague- infected rodents. It spread quickly and in three years duration took one lakh lives in Marseille and its surroundings.

Russian plague 1770 – 1772 A.D.

In plague – ravaged Moscow, the terror of quarantined citizens erupted into violence culminating with the murder of Archbishop Ambrosius, who was crowded together for worship. The epidemic took death toll of one lakh people. In 1773, Yemelyan Pugachow, a man who claimed to be Peter III (Catherine's executed husband), led an insurrection, resulting in the death of thousands more.

Philadelphia yellow fever 1793 AD

The disease is carried and transmitted by mosquitoes, which took death toll of 5000 lives in Philadelphia, the United States Capital of that time 1793 A.D.

Flue pandemic 1889-1890 A.D.

In just a few months, the disease spanned the globe, killing one million people just in 5 weeks to reach peak mortality. The virus spread rapidly throughout St. Petersburg before it quickly made its way throughout Europe and rest of the world.

American polio epidemic 1916 A.D.

A polio epidemic occurred sporadically in the United States until the Salk vaccine was developed in 1954. The last polio case in the United States was reported in 1979. Worldwide vaccination efforts have greatly reduced the disease although not completely eradicated as yet.

Spanish Flu 1918-20

An estimated 500 million people of South seas to north pole fell victim to Spanish flu out of which one fifth of those died, during World War I.

Asian Flu 1957-58

Asian flu with its roots in China was an influenza pandemic claiming one million lives. It is stated to have first reported in Singapore in February 1957, Hong Kong in April 1957 and coastal cities of the United States in Summer 1957.

AIDS pandemic and epidemic : 1981 to date

AIDS became a global pandemic in the 1980s and continues as an epidemic in our world, claiming 35 million lives. HIV, which is the virus that causes AIDS, likely developed from a Chimpanzee virus which transformed to humans in West Africa in 1920.

H1N1 Swine Flu Pandemic 2009-2010

In 2009 Swine Flu pandemic was caused by a new strain of H1N1 originating in Mexico, infected just in an year duration to 1.4 billion people taking toll of 575400 lives.

West African Ebola Epidemic 2014-16

Ebola ravaged West Africa between 2014-16 with reported cases of 28400 and 11,325 deaths, first of which was reported in Guinea in December 2013, spreading thereafter in Liberia, Sierra Leone besides smaller numbers in Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, United States and Europe as per report of CDC.

Zika Virus Epidemic : 2015 to date

Zika Virus is usually spread through mosquitoes of the Aedes genus, although it can also be sexually transmitted in humans. The types of mosquitoes carrying Zika flourish best in warm, humid climate involving South America, Central America, and Southern United States being prime places.

COVID-19

Covid-19 or SARS2-Cov 2 is still alive pandemically in 219 countries involving 9,59,89,887 cases till 18th January 2021 and death toll of 20,48,559 globally. The claimed fears are that the Covid-19 virus could have escaped from Wuhan Institute of Virology as early as October 2019. Between 2003-04 in the wake of SARS epidemic, laboratory acquired SARS-COV infection occurred in Singapore ; Guangzoh and Beijing, China and Tiwan. Covid-19 virus would appear to spread mainly via droplets from those infected whether show symptoms or not. These droplets may be large coming from moth, nose (sneezing) of infected and do not travel for ; or they can be small-aerosols-entering via mouth nose or eyes.

2.1 Lessons from the Literature

First lesson is that as so little is known about a particular virus, official communications are often vague or contradictory and exchange of information between official and frontline responders far from systematized and sometimes non-existent (Quammen 2013, p.164). Another way of putting this is that bureaucratic lethargy and government inertia are never ending blockages (oldstone 2010, p. 325)

The epidemics rank among the most destructive diseases that have claimed countless lives through many civilizations and settlements brought about decline of Roman Empire and many ways changes the course of human history. The great western writers like Nicola Griffith, N.K. Jemisin, Chris Adrian, Connie Willis, Chariottee Bronte and Normal Spinrad and alike besides great writers of Indian RavinderNath Tagore, Munshi Prem Chand, SuryakantTripathi “Nirala”, Faquir Mohan Sanapati Takazhi Sivasankara Pallai, Mridulla Garg and Amitar Ghosh have remained personalities to pen down the true mirrors of the epidemics and pandemics of the past to display the pains and sorrows having faced by our ancestors of past generations and source of consolations to the anxieties and pains of the past.

The lessons and recommendations to be learned from the literature, as a combined could serve as an excellent springboard for a needed much more comprehensive global plan for addressing future pandemic which potentially could prove more worse than COVID-19.

There are clearly huge anxieties like losses of business transactions, employment, income and educational opportunities, mental health care etc. How large losses for national economics and how large losses for national economics will recover and What kind of adverse consequences further are bound to visit. Admittedly some countries like India herself have taken bold steps to try and modify these effect International political and trade relations are fraught to come under pressure.

In a world where human population is still increasing, urbanization constantly on rise, travel becoming wider and frequent, sustainable development is under increasing stress. For those engaged in biophysical economics and assessment of resource quality COVID-19 should be of intense interest.
