

RESEARCH ESSAY: THE TRAUMA OF COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

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Covid-19 is a global epidemic that began in China's Wuhan region and has since spread worldwide. The whole world is experiencing this kind of pandemic for the first time, and the virus has wreaked havoc on social life. Every one of us has been affected by Covid-19, which influenced our social lives. In the twenty-first century, this pandemic is a big challenge. People have died from plagues, black-death, SARS, Ebola, H1N1, and horse flu in the past. A pandemic is a difficult time for humans to live through and endure. Every pandemic causes trauma and chaos in a well-organized society. Caruth argues that "trauma is an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occurred in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucination and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth, 1996, p. 5).

During Covid-19, most of us have had first-hand experience with the trauma of a pandemic. That is why facing it and controlling our emotions, feelings, and behaviours were challenging. It is for the first time something so serious has happened to us in our lives. Nothing has been spared in the viral storm: the global economy, intricate webs of international relations, individual mental health, and the pitter-patter of ordinary life (Prideaux, 2021).

Pandemic and Literature

As the COVID-19 outbreak expanded over the world, many people looked back to see how the disease had affected us and how our forefathers had dealt with similar issues and challenges. In shaping our responses to the Covid-19 outbreak, literature plays a critical role. Writers and historians who have experienced pandemics throughout history have chronicled their effects and presented us with an important history lesson on how not to repeat past mistakes. Pandemic texts can also be used to analyse the trauma and chaos of

the society. In his *De Rerum Natura*, Latin poet Lucretius (c. 99–55 BCE) described the public's uncontrollable fear of infection. *De Rerum Natura* is represented as a real event (the well-known Athenian plague during the Peloponnesian war) Lucretius describes in great detail and examines it in a metaphorical dimension, in the light of Epicurean thought.

Homer's *Iliad* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Stephen King's *The Stand* and Ling Ma's *Severance* provided a lot of catharsis, and political commentary on how people react to public health emergencies. The epic of Homer begins in the ninth century BCE with a plague devouring the Greek war camp at Troy. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* set during the Black Death demonstrates the importance of storytelling in a calamity. In the twentieth century, Albert Camus' 1942 novel *The Plague* and Stephen King's 1978 novel *The Stand* drew attention to the social consequences of plague-like pandemics, particularly isolation and the State's failure to either contain the epidemic or temper the resulting hysteria (Haith, 2020).

Human reactions to the epidemic are also key themes in historical works like Daniel Defoe's (1659–1731) *A Journal of the Plague Year*, a long, detailed account of events, anecdotes, and statistics surrounding the Great Plague of London of 1665. *The Last Man* (1826) by Mary Shelley depicts a future society destroyed by a plague, with only a few people appearing to be immune and avoiding touch with others. *The Scarlet Plague* (1912) novel by Jack London is set in America, and the story takes place in 2070, sixty years after the Red Death, an uncontrollable pandemic that depopulated and nearly devastated the globe in 2013. One of the few survivors, James Howard Smith, alias Granser, explains how the virus spread over the world and how people reacted to death and contagion to his astonished and near-savage grandkids. Even though the novel was published over a century ago still it invites modern readers to reflect on the international fear of pandemics, which is still very much alive (Augusto, 2014).

Trauma is a far more nuanced term than many of us are aware of. It is a common term for a tense situation, acute shocks such as vehicle accidents, terrorist assaults. The impact of events on the mind is what trauma is all about. For Freud, the central issues that constitute the area of trauma studies include psychological trauma, its representation in language, and the function of memory in defining personal and cultural identities. Trauma is widely considered a highly disruptive experience that significantly impacts the self's emotional organisation and perception of the external world. To build a trauma model based on Freudian theory, consider an extreme experience that pushes the boundaries of language and even breaks meaning. According to a plural-

istic trauma model, the perceived unspeakability of trauma is one of many responses to an intense incident, rather than its defining trait. The study of shock and hysteria in the nineteenth century spawned psychoanalytic beliefs on the origins and effects of trauma. In his early work, *Studies in Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud argues that traumatic hysteria arises from a suppressed idea. Notably, the traumatic experience is only comprehended after a period of delayed action (Nachträglichkeit), which allows the impacts and significance of the past to be delayed. The act of remembering causes psychological distress, and gives worth to a previously suppressed experience in the unconscious mind (Mambrol, 2018).

Psychological Impacts

Everyone's psyche is shattered and fragmented due to experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic for the first time in their lives. The psychological disorder neurosis has been developed and has generated trauma among people. They have anxiety, depression and fear during the pandemic. The most common disorder found by the psychiatrists is the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which triggers the mind of the survivors.

Impact on Women and Children

Women are more likely to be victims than men. In India, during Covid-19, the majority of women suffered significant challenges. The pregnant women were denied admission to the hospital to give birth to their children. Many of them perished as a result of ambulance inaccessibility and a lack of competent doctor treatment. During the pandemic and lockdown, they encountered numerous challenges.

Border and the Covid-19 Trauma

One of the sources of trauma is the border. Border dwellers experience trauma due to the concerns and obstacles that exist on both sides of the border. They suffer from worry and fear, as well as tension and borderline personality disorder. Usually, there are various restrictions on the border side. At the time of Covid, these restrictions intensified during the lockdown period. Fence gates work as mending walls and these gates were locked for a few months. Entries for civilians were allowed from limited fence gates. Coolies were not allowed from army posts during the outbreak. During Covid-19, many of them lived at fence gates. They were not permitted to return to their separate homes in the villages. Coolies stayed for more than a year at army posts during the pandemic.

In the pandemic, urban areas were also more affected as compared to rural areas. Because urban areas are densely populated, and the spread of the corona

virus was more likely in urbanised areas. Villages are scattered and dispersed, so there is less chance of the spread of Covid in rural areas. The digital revolution has been ushered by Covid-19. Throughout Covid-19, there was less physical interaction among people. Mass gatherings were restricted, people were not allowed to gather at public places.

Impact on People's Behaviour and Attitudes

Due to the loss of everything during Covid-19 pandemic, people have changed their behaviours and attitudes. Some people are more aggressive and rude as compared to their prior ways of behaving before the pandemic. The majority of the people are in grief for their loss, as well as sad and worried about their future. People will sometimes believe in rumours and share false information regarding corona- positive patients. During the epidemic, few people have a negative attitude toward corona- virus survivors.

Impact on Health

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the key challenge was human health. Doctors believe that those with a strong immune system can survive during a pandemic. Many people's mental health might be significantly impacted by grief over the death of their loved ones. Everyone was tense and frightened about the Corona virus during the lockdown. Collective trauma occurs when a single event, or a set of events, traumatises a large number of people at the same time. With Covid-19, every individual was affected, and the entire society became a victim of the pandemic's suffering. Everyone was in psychological trauma and uncertain about their lives. According to WHO statistics, over five million people have died. People are constantly traumatised by death as a result of the death of a family member, therefore, they become survivors. The death of a loved one causes trauma in the family. Family members are heart-broken by the death of a loved one. People were unable to celebrate holidays with tremendous joy and happiness due to family tragedy.

Fear of Covid-19 transmission exists in everyone's thoughts. As a result, individuals are afraid to visit the Covid wards of hospitals. When they see the oxygen cylinder in the Covid wards, some patients become worried. People are also afraid of being tested. During the testing, they encountered numerous challenges. They are afraid of a positive test result. People were scared to travel during Covid-19 because they were afraid of being tested. For more than two years, the majority of the population attempted to avoid travelling. During the outbreak, even aeroplanes and international corridors were shut down. Everyone is in a dilemma.

The trauma of Covid-19 Waves

Following the first wave in India March 2020, survivors of Covid-19 faced a second wave in March 2021, which traumatised the people and resulted in a double loss. The third wave of Covid-19 caused havoc in some areas, such as Kerala. Because of the fear of Covid waves, educational institutions have been closed for almost two and a half years, causing distress among students. Many new students enrolled in the new university, but little physical interaction was possible. A mask culture has developed. After the Covid-19 pandemic, everyone became accustomed to wearing masks, resulting in the emergence of a mask culture. Mask culture impacts an individual's identity; it can be challenging to recognise another person under a mask.

Impact on Students' education especially nursery and elementary level children education

The Covid-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc on children's physical, social, and material well-being around the world. School closures, social isolation, and confinement raise children's risk of malnutrition, expose them to domestic abuse, increase their worry and stress, and limit their access to essential family and care services. Although widespread digitization reduces the impact of school closures on education, the poorest students are less likely to have access to good home-learning environments with internet access. Immediate government action is required to guarantee that children have access to nutritious food, are protected from child abuse and neglect, continue to have access to physical and mental health services, and can securely browse the internet (OECD).

The current moment presents an opportunity to think boldly and to imagine a better world beyond the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, many people became bankrupt, unemployed, and unskilled. University students are stocked at home. Covid-19 will undoubtedly disrupt economic systems and long-standing institutional processes, as evidenced by the shift toward remote learning in colleges around the world, to name just one example. Nothing can be uniform in a traumatic situation. Everything is fragmented and there is dissociation in thought. We will not find organic unity, everything is scattered.

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