



Pandemics and Literature

Regional and Global Perspectives

Edited by Kamlesh Mohan and Saurav Kumar Rai

PANDEMICS AND LITERATURE

This volume provides a literary-cum-historiographical analysis of epidemics and pandemics. It looks at folklore, tribal folktales, eyewitness accounts, memoirs and missionary writings from India and the west to explore the history of some of the major outbreaks in history. The chapters focus on the impact of outbreaks such as plague, cholera, malaria, tuberculosis and COVID-19, upon the material life of people, their social dislocation and their complex responses to such crises.

The book studies the role of pandemics in pushing scientists, social actors and littérateurs to develop new paradigms in knowledge generation, theories of environmental dislocation and the economic slide. It examines themes such as changes in the perception of epidemic diseases across different periods of history, popular responses to state intervention during epidemics, gendering epidemics, as well as the impact of rumours during epidemics.

An important contribution to the social history of health and medicine, the volume will be useful for students and researchers of cultural studies and medical anthropology, public health, literature, history of pandemics and epidemics, sociology of medicine and South Asian studies.

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*Edited by Kamlesh Mohan and
Saurav Kumar Rai*

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The initial idea of this book emerged out of a pandemic situation. The world-wide outbreak and spread of COVID-19 made scholars to rethink over the unseen natural forces driving human lives. The SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is invisible to naked human eyes, brought the entire world to standstill for a considerable period of time in the recent past. However, this was not the first time that an ‘unknown enemy’ unleashed a series of existential crises to human civilisation. History is replete with such instances. It was precisely from this vantage point that we planned to compile a volume bringing forth the human agony and response during pandemics through regional and global perspectives as documented in literature of the time. We express our deep appreciation to the contributing authors for their generous response to the initial idea of bringing this volume. Not only did they agree to contribute in it despite facing the distressful situation of an ongoing pandemic, that is COVID-19, but they also kept patience for long as the volume got delayed unexpectedly owing to various personal and professional reasons.

We are highly indebted to the litterateurs of different eras for brilliantly capturing the human pain and predicaments during pandemics which constitute the raw material for this collective enterprise. Without them, we would have lost a significant aspect of human history which has linked the past, present and future pandemics.

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In the end, we take this opportunity to appreciate the ingenuity and indomitable courage of human beings that has made the world around us resilient enough evolving new modes of facing the successive waves of pandemics.