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LOCATING EPIDEMIC IN COLONIAL BENGAL: CHOLERA IN SARAT CHANDRA
CHATTOPADHYAY'S *PANDIT MASHAI*

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Abstract

Human history is replete with illness, fear, trauma and death resulting from recurrent outbreaks of various virulent epidemic and pandemic diseases. Many a times human beings have memorialized the traumatic, scarring and dreadful events caused by these killer diseases by referring them in numerous works of literature and visual art. From classics to contemporary literary scenario, creative writers often, throughout ages used epidemics or pandemics as the prominent subjects of their literary creation. Cholera, which is considered as one of the deadly epidemic diseases also occupies a significant place as long as pandemic in literature is concerned. This present paper aims to discuss how cholera epidemic captured the creative imagination of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, one of the most phenomenal Bengali novelists of the 20th century Bengali literature and how he depicted misery, death, suffering and illness as a result of cholera epidemic in his fictional narrative. For this specific purpose, Chattopadhyay's novel *Pandit Mashai* has been taken as primary text and discussed critically in this present paper. Attempts here also be taken to discuss the nature of the disease called cholera and the politics associated with the disease in colonial Bengal.

Keywords: illness; classics; contemporary; epidemic and pandemic; cholera; colonial Bengal;

Introduction

Human history has always been shaped by frequent appearances of a host of dreadful diseases like- bubonic plague, cholera, malaria, AIDS and more recent Covid 19. These recurrent outbreaks of devastating pandemic and epidemic not only have threatened human civilization constantly to its core but also remained a regular reminder of our mortality and vulnerability. From Athenian plague to Black Death and from cholera to current Covid 19, various pandemics of recorded human history have

always succeeded in showing us the 'limitations of human knowledge'. These epidemics caused by deadly contaminated diseases continue to surprise humanity and cause immense harm to the world and its populations (Venkatesan et al. 01). While talking about the connection between humans and viruses, Cumming states, "From the earliest days of recorded history, bacteria and viruses have stalked humans. Lurking in dirty corners and sewage-filled streets, stowing away on ships and aeroplanes, they waited for their chance to attack" (03). Scholars, diarists,

journalists down the ages attempted to document these epidemic and pandemic diseases in various modes be it in diary or journal, or in other forms of documentation. However, such apocalyptic discourses were not restricted to physicians, statisticians, and journalists. Literary authors or Creative writers from different ages have also engaged themselves with the problem to preserve the stories of collective and individual crises upon humanity as a result of the pandemic. In this context David Steel opines in an essay that “in literature there is an order of attraction where illness is concerned” (88). He continues further by stating that from Sophocles and Shakespeare to Dickens and Gide, writers have been ready to seize the opportunity of writing about disease and illness. Rachel Finnegan also throws a similar opinion in an essay. She says “that man throughout history has displayed a morbid fascination for both disorders of the human body and great disasters, natural or man-made, is evident from the extent to which he has dwelt on such themes in literature and has maintained this interest through the modern media of cinema and television” (23).

So, in addition to multiple historical documentation of these various types of diseases we have in our disposal many fictional texts that capture the stories of human suffering, despair, sorrow, grief and also stories of fighting against them. They also show how social stratification based on race, class, and ethnicity affects how well-prepared a population is to ward off pandemics and epidemics.

The main concern of this paper is to explore how colonial Bengali vernacular literature was affected by the cholera epidemic and how Bengali authors represented the disease and responded to the disease in their fictional narratives. For this endeavor my principal focus will be on one particular novel from colonial Bengal and that is Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Pandit Mashai*. A considerable amount of attention here, will also be given to understand the nature of the disease and the politics associated with it. Furthermore, it also aims to discuss the misery, death, suffering of the poor natives caused of cholera as portrayed in the novel.

Understanding Cholera in Context of Colonial Bengal

Cholera is known today as “the classic epidemic disease of the nineteenth century” (Rosenberg 01, Arnold 01, Evans 151-52). Today, we have a complete understanding of cholera. *Vibrio Choleare*, a comma-shaped bacteria that primarily spreads by tainted or contaminated food and water, is the disease that causes it. The human body's small intestines are where the bacterium enters, forcing the sufferer to lose fluid through vomiting and, to a lesser extent, diarrhea. This consistently results in significant electrolyte imbalances and dehydration, which in turn impairs bodily and neurological functions. An infected person develops weakness, confusion, and lethargy as a result, struggles with reasoning, and gets unpleasant cramps (Guerios 66).

Since the cholera pandemic's first outbreak in the Bengal Delta in 1817, the world has already undergone or is currently experiencing seven phases or waves of the epidemic. The last one started in 1961 and is still having an impact on people around the world. It is now regarded as one of the most virulent diseases that Bengal and gradually the world has ever witnessed. However, David Arnold, a renowned historian of cholera, in the essay “Cholera and Colonialism in British India” writes that demographically cholera is far less cataclysmic than the Black Death with which it was often compared (118). In fact, most European historians while doing study on the effects of cholera on European history and populations seem to underestimate the dreadful consequences of cholera. For an example, Charles Rosenberg in his brilliant essay “Cholera in nineteenth-century Europe: A Tool for social and Economic Analysis” comments that the disease had no ceaseless or lasting impacts on European political and administrative structures (461). However, Arnold also agreed that it was no way a less dangerous vile bacteria in creating extreme fearsome effects on the population of the globe (ibid).

In his widely acclaimed book *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*, Snowden claims that researchers from all over the world have been discussing whether cholera existed

in the Indian subcontinent before it first emerged as an endemic in the delta region of Colonial Bengal in 1817. (233). However, a substantial number of historians and academicians seem to concur that cholera has existed on the Indian subcontinent from its inception (Arnold, *Colonizing the Body* 172). It is mentioned in numerous ancient Sanskrit texts where it was named such as *Sitanga* or *Vishuchi*. (Samanta 55, Siddiqui and Cash 1) Nevertheless, it is in the year 1817 that it took its most virulent form and appeared as an endemic affecting 37000 civilians of Calcutta and adjoining localities within just two months of the outbreak in that very year. (Arnold, *Colonizing the Body* 163).

It would be correct to proclaim that cholera since its emergence as one of the most virulent diseases, remained a highly politicized disease due to multiple interpretations and theories regarding its origin among the colonizers and their victims, the natives. On the one hand, the colonizers were busy labelling it with terms like 'Asiatic', 'Indian' etc. They had the tendency to blame the natives for their 'dirty' or 'filthy' habits in spreading the dreadful diseases in India including cholera (Goswami 374; J'Nese Williams 2). Williams continues further by saying that even Florence Nightingale who is known today as a revolutionary social reformer and also the founder of modern nursing considered that bringing cleanliness into India is one of the duties of the so-called 'civilizing mission' of the British Empire. Later on, when cholera spread out of the Indian subcontinent and started showing its power to the European world, Europeans without giving it a second thought blamed Hindu pilgrimages and Muslims hajj for spreading the disease out of India.

The poor general natives on the other hand believed and claimed that cholera was never present in India. They did witness a connection between 'cholera and conquest' but completely in a different outlook. (Arnold, *Colonizing the Body* 171) It was more religious than rational. To many Indians, cholera was the inevitable outcome of the direct violation of Hindu taboos or indirectly through the disruptive effects of their military intervention on the Hindu cosmos. In other words, according to the native population of India the sole cause of the disease was nothing but the blatant transgression of

Indian religious sentiments and sensibilities. Nonetheless, in contemporary vernacular journals, periodicals and also in the newspapers, many articles blamed criticizing the British Raj for the alleged neglect of sanitary and unhygienic conditions in this regard which was the cause of the disease. So, a kind of blame-game was going on in colonial Bengal regarding its origin and causes.

Traces of the cholera epidemic in Bengali Literature:

It is apparent that whenever pandemic diseases like plague, malaria, cholera try to ravage human existence by their dreadful nature, a considerable number of cultural texts rise up as a reaction or response to them from and in every part of the world. Colonial Bengal, if we look back at the history, had been ravaged time and again by various dreadful diseases mentioned above. And like an obedient follower of other parts of the world, colonial Bengal had also produced a bunch of fictional narratives based on the theme of epidemic. These cultural accounts, in contrast to disease historiography, which lacked 'human connect,' are significant for giving a clear or vivid picture of the sufferings and plight of the average natives. They are also significant as key documents for comprehending the nature and effects of epidemic diseases. From Rabindranath's *Chaturanga* to Manik Bandyopadhyay's *Putul Nacher Itikatha*, Sarat Chandra's *Srikanta*, Pandit Mashai to Hasan Azizul Hug's fictional stories, the images of epidemics appear again and again in the writings of Bengali creative authors. However, a close scrutiny will make the fact clear that in those narratives epidemic or pandemic never become the primary concerns of those stories. Those narratives treat the epidemic just as a mere 'looming background presence' (Snowden 240); as a subplot; they never appear as the main content of the entire story like Garcia's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or Albert Camus' *The Plague*.

In Bengali literature there are ample references of incidents and characters suffering from the rages of cholera and eventually pass away. But again, like other epidemic narratives, the importance of it in the plot is limited to that task only

as cameo appearance in a film. The cholera epidemic does not seem to be a topic that writers wanted to focus on or put to the forefront probably because, as Snowden says that "Cholera is just too disgusting to depict" (Snowden 240). In this context, McNeill's observation about the nature of cholera seems to justify Snowden's comment. He writes about the disgusting and ghastly nature of cholera thus-

"The symptoms were peculiarly horrible: radical dehydration meant that a victim shrank into a wizened caricature of his former self within a few hours, while ruptured capillaries dissolved the skin, turning it black and blue. The effect was to make mortality uniquely visible: patterns of bodily decay were exacerbated and accelerated, as in a time lapse motion picture, to remind all who saw it of death's ugly horror and utter inevitability" (231).

Another possible explanation to this treatment was colonial Bengali writers' extreme eagerness or obsession to represent the sacrifices and selfless contribution of fictional characters towards the nation and its people ruled by the colonizers. They wanted to show through these characters that to help the natives during epidemics was to help the nation or state which is already under control of the colonizers. In other words, it can be said that epidemics came to the narratives repeatedly only to justify the selfless work needed to be done for the dependent nation and its poor folks. As a result, in those epidemic-based storylines, diseases were never exposed as the main issues, but rather, the good deeds of those characters' depicted as altruistic were (Mukhopadhyay). Even Bengali authors often, as it can be observed, numerous times utilized these pandemics and epidemics as metaphors for colonialism or British domination.

In Rabindranath's fiction *Gora*, Harimohini's husband and son die because of cholera after suffering for four days. Similarly, Sashi dies in the short story "Didi" due to cholera. In the major fictional works of Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay, the readers can trace the recurring shadows and influences of the cholera epidemic. Page after page of Tarashankar's *Dhatri Debta*, first published in 1939, is filled with the account of the misery, poverty and suffering of the impoverished lower-caste or

Dalit villagers who are also hit vehemently by the cholera epidemic. The protagonist of the novel, Shivnath, an archetypal member of rural gentry is presented as a 'good samaritan, fighting epidemics' with the help of two other medical student volunteers who come from the city (Samanta 34). Casual references of cholera are found in the fictional narratives of Manik Bandhopadhyay as well. In the novel *Putul Nacher Itikatha (The Puppet's Tale)*, Shashi, the protagonist, is himself a physician, who comes back to his village to settle there and wants to cure the disease along with existing superstitions and orthodoxy affecting the uneducated villagers. In another novel, *Arogya*, we hear of the cholera epidemic from the mouth of Lalana, who says that the village is ravaged by the deadly cholera and as a result people are preparing to worship goddess Kali, the savior. Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's famous novel *Aranyak* tells another cholera-stricken village, namely Shuarmari, of Bihar situated on the banks of the Kushi and Kalbalia. Here we find Satyacharan, the protagonist, saying "such large numbers of people died every day that there were always corpses floating on the Kushi and there was no means of cremating the dead" (75-6). This novel also displays the sufferings, misery and unfortunate predicaments of the rural folks.

Now talking specifically about Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, references of epidemic diseases occur again and again in the fictional works of him. In fact, it would be no exaggeration if we say that casual references of these various types of diseases can be found almost everywhere in his literary creation. Born in 1876, he is known today as one of the greatest novelists and short story writers of 20th century Modern Bengali Literature. His writings mostly address issues such as caste-based atrocities, child marriage, feudal exploitation, persecution of zamindars, and restrictions on widows' right to remarry. Along with the many topics he discusses and constantly critiques in his writings, he also frequently brings up the numerous epidemic diseases including malaria, cholera, and plague. However, as I already mentioned, these issues are never his writings' main focus.

In his novel *Pallisamaj*, Sarat Chandra presents malaria as the inevitable segment of

contemporary rural life. He depicts how the dreadful impacts of malaria has confined people to bed for weeks and sometimes for months but no one is actually showing any concern to cover up the rotten ponds which are the main sources of the disease. It is Ramesh, the protagonist, who being an engineer and environmental conscious individual only realizes the significance of the depuration of dense forests, importance of well-organized drainage and also covering up the stagnant ponds. In *Grihadaha*, Suresh, one of the protagonists of the novel, passes away due to plague while serving for the others during the epidemic. In first and second parts of the novel *Srikanta*, occasional references to cholera arise frequently. In the first book of the novel, when Indranath and Srikanta find a dead body of a child floating in the water who probably dies of cholera, Indranath cannot control his emotion. He says emotionally "There's a lot of cholera about. The poorer villagers can't afford to burn their dead. They just touch the bodies with a flaming tussock and throw them in the water" (Chattopadhyay 263). This reveals the pathetic situation of the poorer classes of colonial Bengal during the cholera epidemic, they could not even afford the last rites of the deaths satisfactorily. In another instance, it is seen that one of the characters of this particular novel even directly blames British Colonization and their indifferences towards the natives as the reasons for various types of epidemics diseases like cholera, malaria etc.

Cholera in *Pandit Mashai*: An Analysis

Sarat Chandra was deeply moved by the various types of pandemics that Bengal had been experiencing during his lifetime. Sarat Chandra was deeply moved by the various types of pandemics that Bengal was going through during its colonial period. His loss of his wife and a child passed away due to plague pandemic in 1908 speaks volume of his chosen topic for creative writings, such as this present topic. Therefore, it would not be an overstatement to say that he, who was someone much, if not more, familiar with the pandemic disease and its tragic repercussions than his contemporaries. But even after that most of the narratives of him that feature pandemic, treat the subject just as 'looming background presence'.

However, the present novel *Pandit Mashai* is significantly different from other epidemic narratives written in Colonial Bengal. Here, Chattopadhyay uses cholera more than just 'a looming background presence'. In this novel we come to know the deadly effects of cholera both on a collective and individual level. According to Samanta cholera appears in the novel "with such a force that it becomes a character itself, pulling events in and out, and finally forcing the novel's inevitable end" (70). In other words, the novelist treats the epidemic like a visible character that controls directly or indirectly each human characters in the novel. Moreover, it would be no wrong to proclaim that Sarat in most of his novels uses various epidemic diseases metaphorically, just as Shakespeare did with plague in many of his plays. He uses diseases as metaphors to narrate the country's pathetic condition, as a result of British colonization.

The novel revolves around the outbreak of cholera in a rural region of Bengal. It begins with the usual tone of a complex relationship between pandit mashai and his former wife Kusum. They are married off while they are just children and they get separated because of a misunderstanding occurred previously between their families. Later Brindaban marries another girl from the village and they also have a son namely Charan. But soon with the outbreak of ola utha or cholera things start getting more complicated and unbearable for the people of that village. It starts to dismantle the usual ways of rural environment that Bengali authors are so fond of depicting in their creative fictional tales. Sarat Chandra, however, deviates himself from this traditional way of portraying the rural environment, and presents his village as a place where epidemic disease brings havoc and death.

According to Arnold "In India one of the principal modes of disease transmission was through reservoirs and watercourses which provided water both for drinking and for washing and bathing" (*Colonizing the Body* 185). In other words, unhygienic living conditions, poverty and lack of clean drinking water were the pivotal reasons for transmitting the disease throughout the ages. Similarly, it can be observed that the probable reason for the outbreak of cholera in the fictional

village of Sarat Chandra is the consumption of the contaminated water in the only tank in the village owned by Brindaban, who is popularly known in the village as pandit mashai (school master). The water of the pond is contaminated probably because the villagers used the water for washing purposes as well.

Since the beginning of recorded human history, as found in many religious texts as well as in ancient literature, people have often believed God's retribution to be the reason of invisible disasters or terrible diseases and even consequently sought assistance, comfort, or solace in His grace. Similarly, in Indian or more specifically in Bengali context, popular beliefs found amongst general country folk reinforcing the idea that diseases are some kinds of unnatural or rather supernatural phenomenon. Therefore, if someone to suffer from any disease it is believed to be due to the wrath of the angry deities who supposedly might have been neglected by the villagers. For that reason, worshiping those deities or other saviours with proper rituals thought to be the only alternative way for them rely on to be free from such disease. In Bengal *Olai Chandi* is considered the epidemic goddess of cholera. However, in some parts of Bengal people worshiped *Sitala*, who is particularly known for the Smallpox goddess, as the goddess of cholera. The present novel also captures such a scenario of supernatural interferences of Goddesses. When the whole village start witnessing the tyranny of the virulent cholera epidemic, they worship and seek the blessings of goddess *Sitala* as their way to survive, believing cholera to be the result of her wrath.

Sarat, like in many of his other novels, also touches upon the subject of medical practice and public health of his time. The colonial rulers were not much concerned about the infected natives, they mostly remained indifferent to their health issues and sanitation and had a tendency of blaming the natives for the outbreak of epidemics like cholera, malaria, plague etc. And even if they sometimes transferred their thoughts in wiping out the disease it was because they were more concerned about their own people- the company soldiers and officials. There was no well learned doctor or physician at that time in the countryside of the Bengal that these

indigenous people could get treatment. The only health practitioners of the time in the rural side were *hakims* and *vaidyas* or self-learned doctors who were probably somewhat influenced by the western medical thoughts and practices. In the novel the novelist also tries to throw some lights on this area. The novel tells us a similar story of an unfortunate abandoned village, where there are no medical practitioners, no colonial government that can help them out from an epidemic caused by the virulent cholera. The only self-taught doctor in the village is Gopal. However, he is described in the novel as a very money-minded individual who takes his charges even before treating his patients as he knows that the cholera-infected villagers will not be alive to pay his fee later on. Moreover, another important issue is that when educated individuals like Brindaban, the protagonist, try to reform the deplorable existing health and hygiene conditions, they have to face opposition from the upper class of the society. However, Brindaban knows the root cause of cholera in the village is the lack of purified water. And that is why at the end of the novel we see him donating his entire property to dig wells for the people of the village that can be used both for the cultivation and drinking purpose.

It is true that Bengali authors have an extreme fascination of depicting rural sides of Bengal as an idyllic heavenly land, very close to Mother Nature and a place free from greed and devilry (Samanta 70). However, in the novels of Sarat Chandra, villages are often portrayed with realistic tools rather than romantic touches. Here epidemic strikes and kills an uncountable number of people without giving any notice. Sarat's villages are cursed, destitute and abandoned. The infected village in *Pandit Mashai* is also depicted in the same fashion. Here the whole village is affected by a cholera epidemic killing people young and old within a very short period of time. Once talking about the deadly impacts of cholera Michael Durey rightly observed and wrote that it "unsettled the normal functioning of society, and brought to the surface latent social antagonisms" (Durey 1). The novel also seems to prove his statement perfectly. The villagers' regular way of life is completely altered by the abrupt appearance of cholera. People begin fleeing the

community in search of safer surroundings, while those who have nowhere else to go begin to wait for their inevitable death. Moreover, When Brindaban finds out that the clothes of a dead Brahmin are being washed in water of the pond, shared by the villagers, he immediately objects and asks to stop. He objects because he knows the consequences of this evil act upon the villager's public health and hygiene. However, the brahmins believe that according to Hindu scripture the water of a pond can never be contaminated. In reply to this foolish and irrational belief, Brindaban says, "this is the only pond in the village; I shall not let it get spoiled in this trying time (Samanta 71)." Realizing the situation is going out of control Tarini Mukherjee, the father of the dead Brahmin, requests another head of the village, Ghosal, who is also a Brahmin, to look into the matter. Ghosal, who thinks of himself as the protector of Hindu religious practices and activities, explodes in anger and proclaims "this is your wrong insistence, Brindaban; according to shastras pond water can never be polluted or made unholy! You may have read a few pages in English, but how can you disbelieve our shastras" (ibid).

Thus, the public health and safety discourse in the wake of the cholera outbreak soon becomes a complicated caste issue, as Brindaban is again and again reminded of his lower-caste tag by the Brahmins. As a result, even the only doctor of the village who is also a Brahmin in birth and a relative to Tarini, refuses to treat the cholera infected son of Brindaban just because of the 'violation of Brahmin authority'. Hence, the disease turns out to be the sole cause for the inter-caste tensions and animosities in the community. Or in Michael Durey's words it brings to the fore the 'latent social antagonism', in this context the implicit caste-animosities prevalent in Bengali society.

Pandemic spares no one, rich or poor. Mary Shelley writes in her 1826 dystopian novel *The Last Man* "The vast cities of America, the fertile plains of Hindostan, the crowded abodes of the Chinese, are menaced with utter ruin" to explain the vast impact of epidemic upon humanity (Shelley 224). However, it can't be denied that the degree of suffering varies historically on account of one's class, caste and gender and other social and economic parameters.

In fact, pandemic narratives keep reminding us that social hierarchies, racial differences and wealth determine how much suffering one has to endure from the ravages of pandemics. And now talking specifically about cholera it has been recorded that from the start "cholera affected the poor more than the well-off or the rich, and the widespread middle-class view that the poor only had themselves to blame was hardly calculated to mollify the apprehensions of the poor" says Richard J Evans in the essay "Epidemics and revolutions: Cholera in nineteenth-century Europe". He continues further by saying the disease continues to reiterate the common bourgeois belief that Cholera spread mostly amongst drunkards, layabouts, vagabonds and the idle, 'undeserving' poor. While cholera also infected the middle classes and rich sections of society, the proportion of infected poor were much higher. Ranger also writes-

The rich could flee from outbreaks with relative ease, their occupations did not usually bring them into contact with contaminated water, and their special employment of servants and ownership of spacious accommodation made it easier for them to maintain strict standards of hygiene and cleanliness. (157)

In this novel Sarat Chandra also succeeds in portraying the two classes of Bengal society, the rich and the poor when the cholera pandemic hits the village. He also records the different responses of these two different classes of the society to this time of crisis caused by the cholera. Samanta writes that Sarat Chandra projects malaria as a deadly disease but cholera appears in his writings as a great killer. (ibid, 35) With the sudden outbreak of cholera, most probably the well-off families of the village start running away from this infected place. On the other end, the poorer section of the village who do not have anywhere to go stay there and start counting their last days. They die due to cholera without minimal medical treatment as they were unable to afford the charges of the doctor. They are so poor that even after the death of their family members, the living ones suffer to do their last rituals of the dead ones. To perform the last ritual either they have to mortgage their whole possession or they

have to seek the help of the benevolent rich people like Brindaban. Even Brindaban, the zamindar and the altruistic protagonist of the novel, once made his mind to leave the contaminated zone along with his widowed mother and his only son when he hears that his close neighbors are also dying because of the epidemic. However, it is only because of Brindaban's mother's refusal to the proposal that they do not leave their village. Moreover, it is clearly depicted in the novel that the poorer section suffers and die without any proper medical treatment in this village. Whereas Brindaban's son, when he is affected by cholera and does not get any help from the only doctor of the village because of some previous disputes between them, Brindaban's friend brings a well-specialized doctor from the city. However, Charan does not live long because it is too late for him. that's altogether a different issue. What I am trying to argue and explain here is that the rich people, as presented by Sarat Chandra, at least are in the position to do the needful for their infected family members. However, this is not the case for the poorer class. Here we can see the disease infects the poor more than the well-off families.

Conclusion

The mass media, such as the internet, television and radio, as well as print media such as magazines and newspapers are the primary sources of information gathering available today. However, throughout the colonial era, the only resources for learning about the spread of an epidemic were mainly literature and periodicals. In addition to showing the fatal and fearsome effects of the cholera epidemic, Sarat Chandra has succeeded in imparting some significant lessons on health and hygiene that always help us to eradicate fearsome diseases like cholera. And this current study's fascinating commentary also resembles the present Covid19 pandemic situation, where we are witnessing that the poorer classes are suffering more than the wealthy or upper classes, bringing home the brutal reality of life. The paper demonstrates the foundation of social structure. Moreover, it explains how social hierarchy based on one's class and caste determine one's efficiency to defend from the ravages of such of calamities like cholera. Thus, in conclusion, with the ruptured

period of covid, and along with all the unheard tales of suffering, sorrow and despair and survival one can only expect of brilliant captivating narratives about pandemic from contemporary Bengali authors which Sarat Chandra produced during cholera epidemic in Bengal much earlier.

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