

**SHOOLINI
UNIVERSITY
SOLAN, HP**

**21st International MELOW Conference
Illness, Healing and Literary Imagination**

November 12-14, 2021



**Shoolini University of Biotechnology and
Management Sciences**

REPORT OF THE 21ST INTERNATIONAL MELOW CONFERENCE
Illness, Healing and Literary Imagination
12-14 November 2021
Held at Shoolini University, Solan



The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World

**21st INTERNATIONAL MELOW
CONFERENCE ON**

**ILLNESS, HEALING, AND THE
LITERARY IMAGINATION**

**In collaboration with the
Dept of English, Shoolini University, Solan
12-14 November 2021**

Participating delegates from
India, Japan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Poland,
Turkey, Bangladesh, Nepal, Italy, Hong Kong,
Canada, UK, and USA

As you take a stroll into Shoolini University's sprawling, immaculate and aesthetically laid-out campus you breathe in the uncontaminated freshness, impregnated with the heady essence of the tall pine trees, where nature is so readily accessible in all its variable moods. Yet another dream was resurrected by the Department of English and School of Liberal Arts by hosting the 21st International Conference MELOW, the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World. The theme of the conference is apropos to the present scenario: **Illness, Healing and Literary Imagination.**

The conference brought the issues and challenges of pandemic, disease, isolation, loneliness, vulnerability, regeneration, and hope, to the fore. Scholars from India and abroad deliberated upon the history and etymologies of diseases that have plagued humankind for millennia and have almost become coterminous with human evolution. Over the course of three days, over 70 papers were presented on the said theme. From Tuberculosis, Bubonic Plague, Cholera Epidemic, to the recent Covid-19 pandemic, the paper presenters spoke on a wide array of topics. The scope of the conference was widened further with discussions on speculative fiction, film adaptations, web series, and population studies.

Inaugural Session

The Inaugural session opened with a short but crisp introduction to the event, its theme, and the introduction of the dignitaries by Prof. Manpreet Kang, Secretary (MELOW), followed by Prof. Manju Jaidka, President (MELOW) who apprised the audience about society and the Dept. of English, Shoolini University.

The chief guest of the day was Mrs Saroj Khosla, President, Shoolini University, who graced the event with her benign presence and words of encouragement. Prof. P.K. Khosla, Chancellor, Shoolini University, acknowledged the role of literature in one's life and congratulated the Department of English for adding another feather to its cap of achievements by organizing this conference. Prof Atul Khosla, Vice Chancellor, formally welcomed all the dignitaries and participants from various parts of the country. He also wished the conference success and promised his continuing support for future conferences.

Prof. Tej Nath Dhar welcomed and introduced the keynote speaker of the day, Prof. Rajeshwari Pandharipande from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In her address, Prof Pandharipande elaborated on the theme of the conference and proposed that "looking forward

is going back.” She explained how the current crisis has been a powerful catalyst for creativity by citing examples from the lives and works of various authors.

The inaugural session was followed by the book launch of Prof Manju Jaidka’s latest novel, *Gumshoe Mania* by the chief guest, Chancellor, and Vice-Chancellor. Suhail Mathur, the Head of Operations of The Bookbaker Agency, and Vishal Soni the literary representative of Vishwakarma Publications were also present during the launch. After the inaugural, the dignitaries and guests proceeded towards the two venues—Alpha (A) in APJ Hall, and Beta (B) in Bosch Skill Development Centre for the following sessions:

Day One: 12th November 2021

Session One (A)

11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

Chair: Gyorgy Toth, University of Stirling, UK

Jason S Polley presented a paper on “*Bombay Fever*, the *Toujours Vu*, and Our Plague Era: A Phenomenology of Reflexivity.” In his paper, he discussed the speculative medical thriller by Sidin Vadukut and how it has gradually become a reality in the new normal.

Stephanie Laine Hamilton presented a paper on “Skepticism in Belief: Pandemic, Procopius and Political Schism.” She discussed the 6th century Justinian plague that is mentioned in the extant works of Procopius of Caesarea, a noted Byzantine historian from the same era, and talked about scepticism as an alternate system of belief to address the political schism in society.

Sunanda Sinha in her paper “The Mirror Crack’d from Side to Side: Re-reading *The Lady of Shalott* as a Socio–Economic Pandemic Construct” explained how the unprecedented term and devastating effect of the present pandemic have altered our lives permanently. Her paper reconstructed Tennyson’s famous poem “The Lady of Shallot” as a socio- economic allegory of human excesses and critically reflected on her isolation to draw parallels with the present.

Richa Dawar in her paper titled “Reading the Politics of Plague in British East Africa” referred to the memoir *From Jhelum to Tana* by Neera Kapur-Dromson and select texts by colonial explorers and administrators to read the politics of plague in British East Africa.

Session One (B)

11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

Chair: M. L. Raina, Professor Emeritus, PU, Chandigarh

Abhishek Sarkar in his paper “Illness as Resistance to Political Allegory: The Small Voice of History in Akhteruzzaman Elias’ *Chilekothar Sepai*” explained how the said Bengali novel by the Bangladeshi writer evokes illness to gesture towards the personal experience that defies and eludes co-option by grand discourses of public and statist history. Sarkar discussed about the protagonist Osman Ghani who is a young government clerk and falls ill and then total insane after people’s unrest and agitation against the authoritarian Pakistani rule and the military crackdown on it.

Abin Chakraborty in his paper “Anatomy of an Ailment: Examining Hansda Sowvendra Sekhar’s *The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey*” spoke about the trope of sickness in the novel that is used to explore the socio-political marginalization of Adivasis in post-Independence India and their multiple negotiations with urbanization and modernity. The speaker talked about the novel’s focus on beliefs and practices related to witchcraft with special reference to the Baskey family and the women who are portrayed as witches.

Aishwarya Singh in her paper “The Syphilitic Madwoman: The Racialisation of Madness in *Jane Eyre*” analysed four poems written by different poets on pestilence and explored how these poems, located in different Spatio-temporal co-ordinates, respond and deal with the theme of disease and death.

Fouzia Usmani presented on “Marguerite Duras’ *L’Amour*: Understanding Madness through Foucault’s Concept of ‘Biopower’ and ‘Biopolitics’.” The speaker felt that Marguerite Duras’ popular novel *L’Amour* presents madness as a result of the repressive thought process that exists in society. Her paper focused on madness through the lens of Foucault’s notions of biopolitics and biopower.

Session Two (A)

2:00 PM to 3:30 PM

Chair: Sushila Singh, Professor Emeritus, BHU, Varanasi

Payel Dutta Chowdhury in her paper “‘Wounded Bodies, Scarred Minds’: Reading Mental Illnesses in Women from Conflict Zones in Narratives from India’s Northeast” spoke about mental illnesses in north-eastern women. Focusing on the interdisciplinary study, the paper talked about the ways in which women from conflict zones deal with the same.

Kriti Kuthiala Kalia in her paper “The Politics of ‘Diseased Dreams’ in Yan Lianke’s *Dream of Ding Village*” discussed how the author has used an evocative fable to represent the succumbing to the AIDS pandemic owing to the relentless business of blood-selling in rural Henan province in China.

Lukesh Kalita in his paper “Pandemic as War and Weapon” discussed the devastating causes of the pandemic biologically, psychologically, emotionally. He also reflected on the prevailing sense of alienation, loss of sanity and cognitive ability as a result of the same.

Noduli Pulu presented on “Analysing the Diseased Body of the ‘English’ Opium-eater as the Site of European Imperialism in Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.” The paper discussed the politics caused by the imperialist diplomacy in medicinal science through the diseased body that De Quincey epitomises. It also focused on the delay in diagnosing opium’s injurious influence and its long-life span as a potent medical aid in Romantic literary imagination.

Richa Ahluwalia in her paper “Pandemic and the Politics of the Puissance” discussed the double-edged woes that afflicted women during the pandemic by drawing a parallel with Monika Ali’s novel *Brick Lane*. The protagonist Nazeen’s confinement by her husband echoes the mental and emotional turmoil that the majority of women suffered during the lockdown.

Session Two (B)

2:00 PM to 3:30 PM

Chairs: Mukesh Williams, Soka University, Japan and Manpreet Kaur Kang, GGSIP University, New Delhi

Serena Demichelis in her paper “*Hypochondriac notions: the Language of Disease in J.D. Salinger’s ‘Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters’*” discussed the 23 years old protagonist, Buddy Glass, who functions as Salinger’s alter-ego in the short story. The speaker also discussed the “topos of disease” and through that talked about the notion of a “writer in distress.”

Priya Meena in her paper “Representation of Illness and Death in Bollywood: A Comparative Analysis of *Devdas* and *Dil Bechara*” discussed how Bollywood negatively depicts diseases like cancer and tuberculosis as untreatable. She compared the two movies and felt that *Dil Bechara* is more optimistic of the two as it gives hope to the audience and cancer patients. She also mentioned that Bollywood should give accurate knowledge about diseases instead of scaring the audience.

Thakurdas Jana in his paper “Comics and Infertility: Visualization of Medical Autobiography” discussed the representation of infertility by comic artist Alison Wong, cartoonist Jessica Olien, and Christine MacDonough. The paper drew a necessary connection between art, infertility, and medical humanities.

Nujhat Nuari Islam in her paper “Representation of Diseases in *The X-Files* through Fox Mulder” discussed at length about the protagonists, Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, who became forensic alien experts in the TV series. The speaker speculated that the infection spread by the mysterious “black oil” is a representation of a pandemic.

Session Three (A)

3:45 PM to 5:15 PM

Chair: Kamaluddin Ahmed, Jagannath University, Bangladesh

Nilak Datta and Neha Yadav in their paper “Pandemic Woes, Undead Foes: A Case Study of the CDC’s *Zombie Pandemic Graphic Novel*” outlined the disaster preparedness strategy for citizens. Their paper demonstrated the graphic novel’s affiliation with the mainstream middle-class and a broad neo-liberal ideology.

Arnab Chatterjee in his paper “Performance and Public Health: The Case of the Introduction of the Theatre of the Oppressed in India” addressed the implications of integrating medical issues related to theatre studies in India. The paper also focussed on the ideology of Augusto Boal who believed that theatre can be an effective medium for social change.

Monali Chatterjee in her paper “*Contagion*: The Compelling Thriller of a Prophetic Narrative” drew parallels between the current Covid-19 pandemic and the film to show how the latter prophesied the mayhem with keen scientific observation. The paper also elaborated upon the positive human values and traits that the film chooses to focus upon as a means of preserving human values.

Masrat Yousuf presented a paper on “The Healing Power of Poetry: A Study of the Select Works of John Keats” and voiced the healing and therapeutic power of literature in personal and collective adversities while focusing on the works of John Keats.

Anindita Chatterjee in her paper “Panic, Pain and Pandemic in Popular Cinema” used the prompt of pandemic movies that have become lessons about survival, saying how one needs to stay connected as a society to deal with the threat in unison.

Session Three (B)

3:45 PM to 5:15 PM

Chair: Amy Lee, Open University, Hong Kong

Sakshi Sundaram and Purnima Bali presented a joint paper on “Loneliness, Isolation and Tuberculosis in Krishna Sobti’s ‘Badalon Ke Ghere.’” The paper focused upon the physical, emotional and psychological plights of the protagonists, Manno and Ravi, which are as much due to the nature of the disease and medically prescribed rest-cure as due to the familial perception and fear of the illness.

Samrat Sharma in his paper “Surviving AIDS and Fighting Discrimination in the TV Series, *Pose*” examined how LGBTQ+ People of colour in *Pose* fight for better access to medical institutions and preventive care while battling other problems such as homelessness, hunger, mistreatment from police, discrimination and violence daily.

Hemant Kumar Sharma in his paper “Survival, Guilt and Hope in Three Pre-Partition Narratives of Disease” explained the theme of survival, guilt and hope in the writings of three exceptional writers from the Indian subcontinent.

Day Two: 13th November 2021

Session Four (A)

9:45 am to 11:15 am

Chair: Stephanie Lee Hamilton, Alberta, Canada

Daniel Kalinowski in his paper “How to Heal a Nation with Freud? On the Treatment of National Defects According to Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz” talked about the healing of the Polish Nation’s flaws which according to Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz is possible through the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud.

Navdeep Kahol’s paper on “*Pale Horse, Pale Rider: A Modern Take on War and Pandemic*” detailed and discussed the extensive use of Symbolism and psychological treatment of death and disease in the modernist novel *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* by Katherine Anne Porter.

Navreet Sahi in her paper “Death, Disease and Disillusionment: Logotherapy and Survival Motivation in Somerset Maugham’s *The Painted Veil*” juxtaposed Frankl’s Logotherapy on Somerset Maugham’s *The Painted Veil* to analyse the theme of hope and find meaning and purpose of life.

Nida Ambreen’s paper on “Stigmatization of Mental Illness: Analysis of Women’s Condition in ‘The Yellow Paper’” looked at Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s short story “The Yellow Paper” to explore mental illness in form of post-partum depression.

Session Four (B)

9:45 am to 11:15 am

Chair: Roshan Lal Sharma, Dharamshala

Awasthy R presented on “Plagues and Monsters in the Gothic Stories of Poe” which explored contagious illness as a significant motif in Gothic literature and its effect on past and present. The paper also focused on the depiction of plagues in the stories of Poe and how they are significant in the present scenario.

Gurpreet Kaur in her paper “Existential Anxiety and Fear in the Covid-19 Scenario: A Study of the Role played by Literary Heroes” analysed the effect of Covid-19 along with the feeling of hopelessness and existential crises and how tragic literary heroes can become a medium through which people can answer to existential questions.

Mary Mohanty’s “Socio-cultural implications of Cholera Pandemic: Revisiting Fakir Mohan Senapati’s *Rebati*” discussed Senapati’s depiction of various socio-cultural implications of the cholera pandemic along with the transition of colonial Odisha from a superstitious society to a modern one.

Kuldeep Singh in his paper “Mirroring Human Destruction in Lawrence Wright’s *The End of October*” deliberated upon the reason behind the destruction of the world in Wright’s novel. The novel which was written during the pandemic and discusses the evolution and spread of the pandemic virus is a haunting reminder of the fall of social, economic, and political structures that one witnessed in real life.

Session Five (A)

Time: 11:30 am to 1:00 pm

Chair: Nilak Datta, BITS Pilani, Goa

Indrani Das Gupta’s “Planetary Entanglements, Health, and the Pandemic: Examining Netflix’s Show *Sweet Teeth*” explored a multidisciplinary world of *Sweet Teeth*, where a health emergency opens the threshold of de-anthropomorphic socio-cultural revolution.

JapPreet Kaur Bhangu in her paper “Amidst the Pandemic: A Study of Katherine Anne Porter’s *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*” looked at the individual and social experience of disease in Katherine Anne Porter’s novel while relating it to the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Pratima Agnihotri’s “Conspiracy Narratives and Pop Fiction” examined conspiracy narratives and how they are depicted with special emphasis on Foucault and human reflex where individuals feel vulnerable which in turn feeds to the conspiracy.

Nitika Gulati’s “Unresolved Experience and Unrealised Imaginings: Reading Re-narration as Disnarration in Gayathri Prabhu’s *If I Had to Tell it Again*” attempted to understand the linguistic phenomena in Gayathri Prabhu’s text which uses Gerald Prince’s concept of the “disnarrated.”

Session Five (B)

11:30 am to 1:00 pm

Chair: Payel Dutta Chowdhury, REVA University, Bengaluru

Sonika Thakur's "Loss of Humanistic Values: A Critical Study of Selected Short Stories by Indian Writers" examined the effect of 1936-37 plague in India through the works of Harishankar Parsai, Master Bhagwan Das and Rajinder Singh Bedi. In all these texts, the human values of concern and sympathy get undermined the moment fears and insecurities take over.

Saurav Shandil's paper "Identity Crises, Depression, Death and Political Allegory in Salman Rushdie's *The Golden House*" examined motifs such as identity crises, depression, and death in Salman Rushdie's novel with an emphasis on the inability of the protagonist Dionysius Golden to conform to gender binaries which leads to their depression and subsequent suicide.

Suman Swati's "Exploring Socio-cultural Impact in Camus's *The Plague*" addressed epidemic as an agent of regeneration by referring to the people of Oran in Camus' novel who come together to resolve the problems of pain, suffering, separation and exile and turn it into a story of the victory of the human spirit.

Swarnim Subba's paper "Narratives of Spiritual and Emotional Illnesses: Paradigms of Recovery and Healing in Indigenous Women's Poetry" explored the issues of illness as evoked in the Native American and Northeast Indian indigenous women's poetry by a close examination of poems by Linda Hogan and Mamang Dai.

Swati Vijay's "A Coping Mechanism in Pandemic" tried to examine how music and literature can be used as an art form to reduce the suffering of humans. It explored how fear and trauma during distressing times are dwindled by the use of songs in real life and literature.

Session Six (A)

2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

Chair: Daniel Kalinowski, Pomeranian University, Poland

Vibha Sharma and Fatema Sultana in their paper "Survival of the Select Bangladeshi Theatre Artists in the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic: A Perspective on their Role in Reviving Society's

Hope and Creativity” spoke about the socio-economic sufferings and survival of select Bangladeshi theatre artists during the pandemic. The paper also focused on the resilience of the performers who at first underwent severe psychological trauma due to lockdown but then found a ray of hope and rejuvenation through the online platforms.

Samrat Khanna’s paper “Caught Between Past and Present: A Study of Rajinder Singh Bedi’s ‘Quarantine’” discussed the spirit of philanthropism in the short story, which breaks the confines of disease and diseased.

Sudipta Chakraborty’s paper “An Analysis of the Notion of Dis/eased Body from the Shakta Tantric Perspective” discussed the unique epistemology of Shakta Tantra which offers the possibility of redefining the concepts of health and sickness.

Tanupriya’s paper “Social-cultural Impact of COVID 19: Understanding Pandemic through Literature and History” contextualized epidemics and pandemics through classics such as Camus’s *The Plague* (1947), Jack London’s *The Scarlet Plague* (1912) and Marquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985) as well as contemporary films on OTT platform like *Pandemic* (2020) and *Coronavirus Explained* (2020).

Session Seven: ISM Award Session

4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Chair: Meenakshi F. Paul, HPU, Shimla

In memory of the late Prof. Isaac Sequeira, MELOW annually awards a prize for the best paper presented by a young scholar at the conference. The award comprises a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 5,000. The competition is open to Indian citizens who are members of MELOW. The competing participant/delegate should be below forty years at the time of the conference. The three finalists of 2021 were Hem Raj Bansal, Sowmya Srinivasan, and Sudipta Saha.

Hem Raj Bansal’s paper “Blindness as a Trope of Moral Depravity and Divine Retribution in Jose Saramago’s *Blindness*” discussed the metaphorical and literal blindness in the novel whereby losing one’s eyesight becomes akin to becoming short-sighted. However, even in the face of governmental and bureaucratic apathy, listlessness, hopelessness, and existential angst, the female protagonist of the novel shows extraordinary courage and resilience.

Sowmya Srinivasan's paper "Progeria and the Stigma of Aging in Fitzgerald's "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" discussed the stigma of ageing as perceived in human society and the invincible potency of progeria to demolish it with reference to Fitzgerald's short story. The case of Benjamin Button is a fictionalized case of Progeria where Benjamin suffers reverse ageing. The paper also questioned the idea of normalcy, diseased condition of the human body, and ageing with its sociological, psychological, and ontological implications, along with the credibility of medical advancements devoid of humanitarian concerns.

Sudipta Saha's paper "'Blindness' as a Trope: Probing the Metaphorical Illness and Understanding the Social-Political Reality in Jose Saramago's *Blindness*" explored the epidemic of blindness as an allegory to comment on human weakness and immorality. The paper argued that the novel becomes a kind of Tiresias (the soothsayer in Dante's *The Divine Comedy*) of the Western civilization which is falling apart and is incapable of rapidly responding to pandemic situations.

Session Eight: ISM Special Lecture

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Chair: Richard J. Cohen, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA

The ISM Special lecture titled "Interrogating Isolation: Ways of Writing, Recollections and Recreating New Times" was delivered by Dr Krishnan Unni from Delhi University. The lecture was a kaleidoscopic view of isolation through the ages that also took into account "political isolation." From 3rd century BCE to contemporary Guantanamo Bay accounts, Dr Unni's lecture had the range and breadth of a real-life encyclopaedia that ultimately sought to answer as to how one can restructure the post-pandemic/new normal era using literature. According to the speaker, the innate human imagination and the paradoxical human imagination will always be in a state of conflict with each other. The real change will be when the layman or the real person at the grassroots will take over as a form of new literature and the centre so as to create a new world order.

The concluding remark was by the Chair, Richard Cohen. Commenting on history he said, history refuses to change. It is impossible to write history because it is like an hourglass. We are in the middle, the future is the top and the past is the lower half. Still, we have not owned up to our mistakes and misuse of the human bodies for human labour. He concluded by bringing

attention to the unexplored and under-represented literature from the Indian Ocean region as a means of expanding our understanding about the same.

Shortly after the remarks, Hem Raj Bansal was adjudged as the winner of the ISM Award for the best paper.

Day Three: 14 November 2021

Session Nine (A)

9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Chair: JapPreet Bhangu, Sant Longowal Institute, Punjab

Amrapalli Mohan Sharma in her paper “The Mortal Condition: Epidemic in Five Hindi-Urdu short stories” talked about five Hindi/Urdu short stories that explicitly represent plague, cholera, and influenza outbreaks from the late-nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth.

Charu Ahluwalia in her paper “The Paroxysm of Pandemics: Human Mutation from Dysphoria to Euphoria” dwelled upon *The Plague* by Albert Camus and his theory of Absurdism to prove that pandemics can cripple a human body but not the soul by showing how at the end it is love and hope that triumph over the pandemic.

Aarifa Khanum in her paper “Loneliness and Solitude: Reference to Paul Auster’s Masterpiece The New York Trilogy” explored the opinion of Auster on the function of loneliness in the postmodern society and attempted to establish what the term signifies for the latter.

Amirtha Devarajan in her paper “Disease, Desire and Death in Gita Hariharan's Remains of the Feast” attempted to read disease and the fear of death as means of liberation in Gita Hariharan’s short story “Remains of the Feast” through the figure of its 90 years old widowed protagonist, Rukmini. The realisation of Rukmini’s private desire of eating forbidden food sharply contrasts with the denial of her public wish of wearing a red sari at her funeral by her daughter-in-law.

Session Nine (B)

9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Chair: Jason S Polley, University of Hong Kong

Amy Lee in her paper “Detecting the Self: Dis-eases and Spirituality in Contemporary Popular (Japanese) Literature” looked at select stories from the large *Onmyoji* collection which Yumemakura Baku published over the last 30 years, to examine the meaning of dis-eases as depicted in the contemporary popular fiction that in turn re-interpret the practices and beliefs of the Heian period (794-1185). Baku re-fashions the Heian yin-yang master Abe no Seimei (921-1005) into a Sherlock Holmes figure and re-interprets human diseases as psychological mysteries.

Nishi Pulugurtha in her paper “Literary Responses in These Times” examined select poems and short stories that speak of responses to the new normal. The speaker proposed that literary texts which deal with pandemics act as examples of how things were managed in times of similar crises in past and give us ideas about how one might restructure one’s society in the aftermath of pandemics.

Neepa Sarkar’s paper “Illness Narratives, Popular Imagination and Literary Criticism” explored the genre of illness narratives in the contemporary context using the work of certain theorists like Susan Sontag, Bruno Latour, Andreas Weber among others to look at the concept of illness and its effect on the imagination and literary response. The paper also examined a range of practices that emerge in writing about illness and in critical work informed by concepts of embodied suffering, mortality and loss.

Aishwarya Das Gupta in her paper “Diseased Bodies, Diseased Minds: A Representation of Illness in Poetry Belonging to Different Spatio-Temporal Co-ordinates” examined four poems on pestilence viz. Mary Latter’s “Soliloquy XVI” (1759), Christina Rossetti’s “The Plague,” Rabindranath Tagore’s “Puraton Bhritya” (“My Old Servant”), and Indulekha Agnihotram’s “Will the Door Ever Open?” (2020). The paper also explored how these poems, located in different spatio-temporal coordinates, respond and deal with the theme of disease and death.

Sarvesh Kumar Pandey and Ajay K. Chaubey in their joint paper titled “Locating Epidemic and Pandemic in Selected Hindu Scriptures: A Critical Study” reflected upon the nature of epidemic and pandemic through the lens of Hindu religious texts while simultaneously trying to underscore their cause and outbreak prevention and impact on various dimensions of the society at large. The paper also explored the root cause of death, disease, suffering, and salvation through Manu's critique of the invention and excessive usage of “Mega Machines.”

Session Ten (A)

11:15 AM to 12:45 PM

Chair: Hem Raj Kafle, Kathmandu University, Nepal

Gönül Bakay in her paper “A Novel Approach to Life and Sickness: Science vs. Arts in Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*” explored how McEwan successfully probes the dualities of life: arts versus science, emotion-reason, sanity-insanity to help the reader face the mystery of life in his novel *Saturday*.

Neeraj Pizar in his paper “Hope in Despair: A Study of Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend* and its Film Adaptation” critically reflected on the similarities and divergences between the Sci-Fi novel and its screen adaptation by Francis Lawrence (1997) to reflect the way in which both the texts hold the crucial element of “hope” against the all-pervasive death, destruction, and loneliness.

Shruti Das and Deepshikha Routray in their paper “Disease, Stigma and Representation: Mental Health in Alice Munro’s *The Progress of Love*” applied Cathy Caruth’s trauma theory to read Munro’s stories. The speakers elaborated upon how Munro’s narratives foregrounds the stigma and related cognitive behaviour that leads to stress disorder in the fictional characters.

Jasajit Ashangbam presented a paper on “The Phenomenon of Anxiety in Henry Melville’s *Bartleby*” which aimed to decipher the abnormality seen in the protagonist, Bartleby, whether it be an act of utter freedom, rebellion as an ascetic, or a grotesque aberration of existing in a conformist society.

Session Ten (B)

11:15 to 12:45 PM

Chair: Nishi Pulugurtha, Brahmananda Keshab Chandra College, West Bengal

Nilakshi Roy in her paper “Healing as Narrative Strategy in Fiction” examined healing as a holistic solution to cope with prolonged illness and the resultant suffering endured in Rabindranath Tagore’s *The Post Office* and Roopa Farooki’s *The Way Things Look to Me*. The paper also emphasised the unique connection between healing and storytelling in these texts.

Mridu Sharma's paper "The Pangs of Suffering: Theme of Nostalgia, Plague and Survival in Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague*" looked at leitmotifs of suffering and survival, the memory of gruesome horrors of the plague and nostalgia and yearning for the past or pre-plague times as experienced by Granser in the novel, *The Scarlet Plague* with special emphasis on environmental degradation and the deterioration of human values and fall of civilization in such horrific situation.

Somrita Misra in her paper "The More You Remember, The More You Are Lost': Memory, Loss, and Healing during a Pandemic in Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*" analysed the effects of a pandemic through the loss of loved ones borne by the characters and their coping mechanisms. The speculative novel oscillates between the pre and post pandemic world to talk about healing, hope, art, and human resilience.

With that, the three-day conference concluded and overall was a great success. It was also covered extensively in the local and national media.
