

## THE REVIVAL OF ART AND LITERATURE IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19

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Dr. Shama Khan\*

### ABSTRACT

*With wild imaginations, manufactured by our very own sci-fi pop culture references, of the 'world-ending', COVID-19 did indeed come as a disappointment for many. Not only did it shatter our expectations, it shattered them well, for in a couple weeks all of us were out struggling for hope. But come to think of it, that's what is bound to happen when we get a global lockdown imposed by a pandemic instead of a zombie apocalypse involving romanticised heroics and spiced up action. It's funny how, all that it took for our entire species to be reduced to nothing but birds locked away in cages, was a pandemic. With no enemy to fight, we improvised and became our own very enemies.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, World-Ending, SARS-CoV-2, Culture.

### Introduction

11 March, 2020 is perhaps a date that shall become a black spot in the entire human history. It was when Coronavirus or COVID-19 outbreak was declared a global pandemic. A newly identified coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, has caused a worldwide pandemic of respiratory illness, called COVID-19. With a mutated virus on the loose, the intelligent human kind was forced to submission. All our scientific might was broken like a twig, and even with all technological wonders and achievements we could do nothing but watch as we lost millions of our own kind. Our lives became a colossal wreck of shame of our desperation in the face of something that we had no solution for, something that we couldn't defeat, made us lock ourselves away in closed four walls we were forced to call home.

As eccentric as it may seem but the systematic mechanisms of social and economic slavery disguised as career, goals, lifestyle and what not had us corrupted till the core. In this age of (dis)information, all of the human kind had fallen prey to a vile lust for narratives. For content, for lies that made us comfortable, that gave us a sense of belonging. A false identity. An identity that we didn't choose for ourselves. All of it just to fit in.

And when this elaborate arrangement of lies and slavery broke down, we snapped out of our false realities. COVID-19 struck, for a moment, it seemed that we had been reminded of the materialistic existence of our species, rather abruptly, and perhaps, of the gap between the essentials we were quickly reduced to and the lofty principles we had been trying to stand for. Suddenly, the ideas that we were proudly enshrining in verses, became mute. Or so it seemed. The gears had changed certainly, the direction had spiralled but only because the destination had become enlarged, so enlarged that it became inclusive.

They say you can see what's beneath the water when its stagnant, the way everything came to an immediate stop made us realise the importance of what we in our daily lives took for granted. The making of a human bone by bone, the planting of each emotion in our head and to then reap it on a paper is what a poet, artist, musician and art is made of. The way we look at this world weaves a story and we tell and forever mark our stories in what we call literature. The intensity of human emotions has been stored in these literary forms throughout years.

A theory that Aristotle formulated and is now being used by many psychologists, known as catharsis, of how it is a concept in psychoanalytic theory wherein the emotions associated with human existence came to the surface. The word has its origin in a Greek term for cleansing or purging, and catharsis is associated with the elimination of negative emotions, affect, or behaviours associated with the human existence, and how according to him we used our literary tools to cope with the emotions we all went through in these times.

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\* Associate Professor, Government Girls College Ajmer, Rajasthan, India.

The finding of our inner artist, earlier lost in the mundane and fast lives of the 21st century, began because of the pause we so suddenly entered into. Literature and art, no matter how deeply rooted, needs revival of its core, how each of us can tap into this small bone where the possibility of a great art work lies, a place we so often forget about or dismiss even the thought of its existence, as said by Croatia Kent "Creativity belongs to the artist in each of us. To create means to relate. The root meaning of the word art is "to fit together" and we all do this every day. Not all of us are painters but we are all artists." The Shakespearean literature is not what we solely talk about here, the density with which we are looking at the beads swoon with the literary thread, takes in all of the segments of this vast society, how being forced to shut everything from industries to the tailors shop down the lane, it damaged the life of the poor sectors the most, how economy of even the world powers came falling down like this huge domino effect. The literary consumption took us back to the old golden days like the Ramayana and Mahabharat on the DD national or the pink Floyd concerts online, how creation was combined with the revival of the golden age literary master pieces.

Here is an extract from a Hindi article which talks about 'yug' which reflects on the formation of literary eras throughout down this lane.

यह सच है कि साहित्य किसी भी प्रकार की आपदा और अन्याय के विरुद्ध प्रत्यक्ष हथियार नहीं है किंतु जिस विचार शक्ति और समझ के बल पर मनुष्य अपराजेय जीवनी शक्ति प्राप्त करता है, उसका उत्सव साहित्य ही है। कोई भी कवि, लेखक अपने समय को तो जीता ही है, युगों युगों से संचित ज्ञानानुभवों के माध्यम से ऐसे साहित्य का प्रणयन करता है जो समाज को साहित्य का वास्तविक दिशा बोध कराए, प्रतिरोध की ताकत पैदा करे तथा नए युग के निर्माण की पृष्ठभूमि तैयार करने में अग्रणी भूमिका निभाये। साहित्य को वह साधन रूप में नहीं अपने अस्तित्व के रूप में नहीं अपने अस्तित्व के रूप में महत्व देता है।" (संपादकीय, शब्दिता, जुलाई – दिसंबर 2020 ने फोर्ड प्रकाशन, अलीगंज, लखनऊ –18 )

Tragedies and sorrows are a part of human life since time immemorial, it can be called the nature's way , how this pandemic which forced us inside our houses and confined our lives from vast streets to four walls , which seeped the seeds of uncertainty in all of our minds and souls. It called for the actions of our leaders which in a delusional sense portrayed the power of our government to lock us down as the social animals we are ,not only this The horrifying events on the street of Minneapolis amidst the dark times of this pandemic , where the truth came smashing on our faces, on how deeply we have rooted hatred in the forms of either white supremacy , migrant disparity , communal violence etc , where we all united in the strength of art and literature , where young poets came rushing down to save their communities , where supporting black businesses became a big thing , influential artists like lady gaga , Jenifer Lo also manifested literature through their melodies in support of the morals we as humans took a stand for.

As according to Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, what it all comes down to is surviving through it the next day, how life is all but a huge instinct of survival, which we often forget about in the luxuries of lives we have provided ourselves with, but this time has not only reminded us of our feeble existence but also of our terrible and fail attempts to meddle with the uncertainty of our lives.

#### "Until the Revolution"

I have a lot to offer  
to this sweetly damned world.  
if only it was worthy enough  
to make feel compelled  
to invest my currency of life  
my precious time  
into dialogue and people  
all but to liberate them  
to unchain them, to free them,  
the way I'm free  
freer than  
most would ever be.  
free of this play

free of this unfunny comedy show.  
 if only they make me feel  
 they're worth  
 my utterances,  
 worth enough  
 to make me speak and preach.  
 For I'm a revolution.  
 A revolution of my own  
 of love and romance,  
 of rage and dark.  
 Yet worry not  
 for I'll write away my revolution,  
 until the time comes.  
 Keep waiting.

(Ikyjot Gujral)

As it said "Music is the literature of heart, it commences where speech ends" – plphonse se Lamartine as even In this time of massive transition and unprecedented challenges, we try to get the rhythms of life to get its source from the flowing tunes of literature. Because literature is the tools we have been using to not only give meaning to our lives but to also give it a direction and even use it as a source of evolution in the roots of our very beings – love and romance, the things we live and die for "We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race, and the human race is filled with passion. Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for."(the dead poets society)

तुम्हें पता है कितना अकेला और कमजोर होता है  
 मरीज कोरोना की ICU में  
 तुम प्ल- में होती तो जानते हुए मौत के खतरे को भी  
 मैं आता और लिपट कर तुम्हें चूम लेता  
 अर्थव्यवस्थाहीन नहीं  
 प्रेम प्रेम भी नष्ट हुआ है कोरोना में  
 फुसफुसा रहे थे मंगलेश।  
 विनोदविद्वल

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the vulnerabilities of individuals, societies, and economies, calling for a rethink of how economic and social activities are organised. This crisis calls for strong responses based on solidarity, co-operation and responsibility.

How the pace of development was shown a big red light, everything from schools and colleges to malls and theatres which basically defined our lives as well as created a lifestyle were shut down. COVID continues to be a fatalistic enemy to the entire human population, not to mention the utter chaos and pain into which it has turned the lives of the less privileged sections of our society. Nonetheless, it wasn't long before the news regarding the positive impacts of the pandemic or rather the lockdown, started trickling in. Air, water, animals- nature in all of its entirety, heaved a sigh of relief, breathed a little freer, stretched its spine and moved with lighter steps.

Looking at how quickly nature could be restored to its former glory if human activities could be regulated sensibly proved to be a wake-up call for all those people who till now, could afford to turn a blind eye towards the damaged ecology and the reality of climate change. The ease with which the effects of the lockdown could be perceived would have definitely tempted the millennials like Greta Thunberg and similar climate activists to shout 'I told you so!' To be able to enjoy cleaner air, views unhampered by smoke and a general connection with nature brought home quite effectively, what we all had been missing out on (The Purge Of COVID-19By Seerat Chauhan in CQ the literary magazine)

COVID-19 has heightened human suffering, turned the world upside down , affected everything starting from health , economy , environment , social domains etc. "social economy actors have assisted the recovery from the crisis by providing innovative solutions that are aimed at strengthening public services to compliment government action"[OECD policy responses to coronavirus COVID-19 crisis: current and future roles]The COVID-19crisis class for a re – balancing of efficiency and resilience throughout the economy , traditionally , the purpose has been seen to 'repair' social problems . post COVID-19 phase to inspire transformation to a more inclusive and sustainable society.

Hence if we take a long deep look at it all in retrospect we'll gradually come to the realisation of how after every few centuries, there comes a time of great difficulty and hardships but that is essentially how we as the human kind keep evolving on the lines of literature and society and subsequently initiate the revival of our own selves. This revival of our own selves undoubtedly manifested through literature, be it the age of enlightenment after the dark ages, or the age of revolution after the Spanish flu, or this 21<sup>st</sup> century where we have strived hard to survive through this pandemic and fight for the morals and values and emotions that we idealise. How we have marked our existence in this making of a history with what we call as our own perspective of literature.

May the revolution live by.

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