

A Report on the International Webinar Entitled *Darkness Visible: Explorations on Disease, Pandemic and Redemption* held on 16th to 17th July 2021

Organized by Sri Ramkrishna Sarada Vidyamahapitha

Presented to

The Principal

By

Subham Amin

Convenor

August 09, 2021

Introduction:

An International Webinar entitled *Darkness Visible: Explorations on Disease, Pandemic and Redemption* was organized collaboratively by the Departments of English, Sanskrit, History and Philosophy of Sri Ramkrishna Sarada Vidyamahapitha under the aegis of Internal Quality Assurance Cell, SRS Vidyamahapitha on 16th to 17th July 2021. An organizing committee, consisting of 14 members was formed with Dr Mousumi Ghosh, Principal as the Chief Patron and Mr Subham Amin as the Convenor.

Registration:

The Organizing Committee has published a flyer of the Webinar with registration details and circulated it in academic groups and other virtual platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and college website. The registration was done via google form and more than one hundred participants have registered for the Webinar.

Detailed Report of the Proceedings:

Inaugural Session:

The Webinar consisted of four sessions preceded by the inaugural session and followed by the valedictory session. The programme began at 10:30 am on 16 July with *Mangalacharan*, prayer by Dr Sumanapal Bhikkhu, Guest Faculty, Department of Languages, University of Calcutta. Sri Jagabandhu Ghosh, President, Governing Body of Sri Ramkrishna Sarada Vidyamahapitha addressed the Webinar and wished success of this academic endeavour. In her welcome address, Dr Mousumi Ghosh, Principal of the institution has provided the prologue of the Webinar. She has spoken about the relevance of organizing such Webinar in the milieu of the worldwide pandemic. Mr Subham Amin, Convenor of the Webinar welcomed the honourable guests and the audience. Mr Tanmoy Pandit, Coordinator, IQAC has conveyed his best wishes for the success of the endeavour.

Session I:

The Session I was entitled as *Implications of Pandemic on Global Society* and consisted of two speakers: Dr Shubhamitra Das, Assistant Professor, Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Mr. G.S Charith Priyadarshana, Lecturer,

Department of Religious Studies and Comparative Philosophy, Faculty of Buddhist Studies, Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka. The session began at 11 am.

In her presentation, Dr Das has spoken about the 'Implications of Pandemic on International Relations'. She has given a brief overview of the shifting terrains of the global politics, interrelations between states, the threats of growing militarization and rise of unitary policies and far-right ideology. She has also spoken about the Indian scenario and the shifting paradigms of politics in South Asia and the SAARC region.

Mr Charith Priyadarshana has given an account of Buddhist rituals and practices to redeem the world from the curse of the pandemic. He has also spoken about the importance of *Vipasana* meditation and the ways to maintain mental equilibrium during the periods of lockdown. The presentations were followed by a lively interactive session with the audience.

Session II:

Session II was entitled as *Ideas of Sanitation and Public Health in Sanskrit Literature*. It began at 2 pm. The session consisted of two presentations by Dr Didhiti Biswas, Professor (Retired), Department of Sanskrit, University of Calcutta, Kolkata and Dr B. K. Swain, Professor and Head, Department of Sanskrit (Retired), Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University, Puri. Dr Rubel Pal, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Sanskrit, SRS Vidyamahapitha moderated the session.

In her presentation entitled *Diseases and an Approach to their Healings: An Overview from the Vedas*, Dr Biswas has given accounts from *Vedas* about the medicines and rituals of treating different diseases and healing wounds.

Dr Swain has talked about *Dosha: Theory and Pandemic: An Overview from the Smruti Shastra and Ayurveda*. His presentation comprised concepts of Dosha and the loss of equilibrium in body and its consequences and ways of healing. The presentations were followed by a lively interactive session with the audience.

Session III:

Session III began at 11 am on 17 July 2021. This session was entitled *Morality and Mental Health in pandemic* and consisted of two presentations by Dr Laxmikanta Padhi, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of North Bengal and Dr Somdeb Mitra, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Calcutta. Mrs Bhaswati Basu, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Philosophy, SRS Vidyamahapitha moderated the session. The session began with greetings from Dr Mahitosh Gayen, Assistant Professor, Department of History, City College, Kolkata and member of the Governing Body, SRS Vidyamahapitha.

Dr Padhi has delivered a comparative study of the concepts of morality in Indian and Western concepts.

Dr Mitra has talked about the problem of depression because of home isolation due to lockdown during pandemic. He talked about the problems of communication in a virtual classroom and suggested remedies to overcome the crisis.

The presentations were followed by a lively interactive session with the audience.

Session IV:

Session IV was entitled *Pantheon of gods and goddesses of disease and pandemic in Indian tradition* and consisted of two presentations by Professor Arabinda Samanta, Retired Professor and Head, Department of History, University of Burdwan and Mr Pema Wangchuk, Lecturer and Dean of Academic Affairs, College of Language and Culture Studies, Taktse, Trongsa, Bhutan. The session began at 2 pm. Mr Saumya Bose, Assistant Professor, Department of History, SRS Vidyamahapitha moderated the session.

In his presentation entitled *Revisiting Smallpox Epidemics and the Cult of Sitala in Colonial Bengal*, Professor Samanta spoke about the colonial policy of vaccination of smallpox in Bengal in the colonial era and the responses of the two religious communities to the policy. He also talked about the worship of the Goddess Sitala as part of the belief that the Goddess would cure the deadly smallpox.

Mr Pema Wangchuk spoke about the Buddhist Gods and Goddesses of the pandemic. He talked about Avalokitesvara, Hariti, Mahamayuri and other Buddhist Gods and Goddesses of healing. He also provided a brief overview of the healing rituals in India, Bhutan and Tibet.

The presentations were followed by a lively interactive session with the audience.

Valedictory Session:

Mrs Bhaswati Basu, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Philosophy, SRS Vidyamahapitha delivered the Vote of Thanks.



SRI RAMKRISHNA SARADA VIDYAMAHAPITHA
Kamarpukur, Hooghly, West Bengal, India

CORDIALLY INVITES YOU
To a Two Day

INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR

On

**DARKNESS VISIBLE: EXPLORATIONS ON DISEASE,
PANDEMIC AND REDEMPTION**

Organized by

Dept. of English, Sanskrit, History and Philosophy

Under the aegis of the IQAC

On July 16-17, 2021

In illness words seem to possess a mystic quality. We grasp what is beyond their surface meaning, gather instinctively this, that, and the other—a sound, a colour, here a stress, there a pause—which the poet, knowing words to be meagre in comparison with ideas, has strewn about his page to evoke, when collected, a state of mind which neither words can express nor the reason explain.

(On Being Ill, Virginia Woolf)

The Pandemic brought upon the world in 2019, has rendered a paradigmatic shift not only in our mode of living, but also in the pattern of our thoughts. It has emerged as a novel phenomenon because neither we, nor our immediate predecessors have witnessed any such catastrophic event in their lifetime. The pandemic has not only created havoc in the realm of our physical health, but also reshaped our experiences, thoughts and aspirations. We do exist and do not, like the uncertain fate of Schrödinger's cat, by virtue of our gradual dissolution into an abyss of uncertainty. However, the advantage is, as Virginia Woolf has observed in the previously mentioned observation, this pandemic has endowed us with a new vision. We go into a realm where the connotations of reality and the metaphors to define it have metamorphosed into something profound, encoded empathic participation. We need to delve even deeper to find a way to redeem ourselves, to live in a world, which, perhaps, will never be as it was before. This is the perspective of webinar, entitled "Darkness Visible: Explorations on Disease, Pandemic and Redemption".

INVITED SPEAKERS



DR. SHUBHAMITRA DAS,
Assistant Professor,
Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India



MR. G.S. CHARITH PRIYADARSHANA,
Lecturer,
Department of Religious Studies and Comparative Philosophy Faculty of
Buddhist Studies, Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka



PROF. DIDHITI BISWAS,
Professor (Retired), Department of Sanskrit,
University of Calcutta, Kolkata
Kolkata, India.



PROF. BRAJA KISHORE SWAIN,
Formerly, Professor and Head,
Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University,
Sri Vihar, Puri, India



DR. LAXMIKANTA PADHI,
Associate Professor,
Department of Philosophy,
University of North Bengal



DR. SOMDEB MITRA,
Assistant Professor,
Department of Psychology,
University of Calcutta



PROF. ARABINDA SAMANTA
Retired Professor and Head,
Department of History,
University of Burdwan



PROF. PEMA WANGCHUK
Lecturer and Dean of Academic Affairs,
College of Language and Culture Studies,
Taktsé, Thimphu, Bhutan

16/07/2021: Day 1
Inaugural Session

10:15 am to 11 am (GMT+ 5:30 hours)

Mangalacharan: DR. SUMANAPAL BHIKKHU, Guest Faculty, Department of Languages,
University of Calcutta
Inaugural Address: DR. MOUSUMI GHOSH, PRINCIPAL, S.R.S.V.M
Welcome Address: MR. SUBHAM AMIN, CONVENOR OF THE WEBINAR
Message from IQAC: MR. TANMOY PANDIT, IQAC COORDINATOR

Session 1
Implications of Pandemic on Global Society

11 am to 1 pm (GMT+ 5:30 hours)

Speakers:
DR. SHUBHAMITRA DAS
Title: Implications of Pandemic on International Relations

MR. G.S. CHARITH PRIYADARSHANA
Title: Buddhist Rituals and Blessings in Pandemic

Video call link for June 16, 2021, Session: 1
<https://meet.google.com/of-dubu-zqu>
Or dial: (US)+1-234-714-0167 PIN: 659 887 1518

Session 2
Ideas of Sanitation and Public Health in Sanskrit Literature

2pm to 4 pm: (GMT+ 5:30 hours)

Speakers:
PROF. DIDHITI BISWAS
Title: Diseases and an Approach to their Healings: An Overview from the Vedas

PROF. BRAJA KISHORE SWAIN
Title: Dasha : Theory and Pandemic: An Overview from the Smriti Shastra and Ayurveda

Video call link for June 16, 2021, Session: 2
<https://meet.google.com/qef-jvzy-utm>
Or dial: (US)+1-573-559-1276 PIN: 111 468 0298

17/07/2021: Day 2

Session 3:
Morality and Mental Health in pandemic

11 am to 1 pm (GMT+ 5:30 hours)

Speakers:
DR. LAXMIKANTA PADHI
Title: Why we be Moral in This Pandemic? An East-West Analysis

DR. SOMDEB MITRA
Title: The Role of Morality in Attaining and Maintaining Well-being

Video call link for June 17, 2021, Session: 1
<https://meet.google.com/cxm-koj-uxj>
Or dial: (US)+1-518-460-5271 PIN: 247 438 8268

Session 4:
Pantheon of gods and goddesses of disease and pandemic in Indian tradition

2 pm to 4 pm (GMT+ 5:30 hours)

Speakers:
PROF. ARABINDA SAMANTA
Title: Revisiting Smallpox Epidemics and the Cult of Sitala in Colonial Bengal

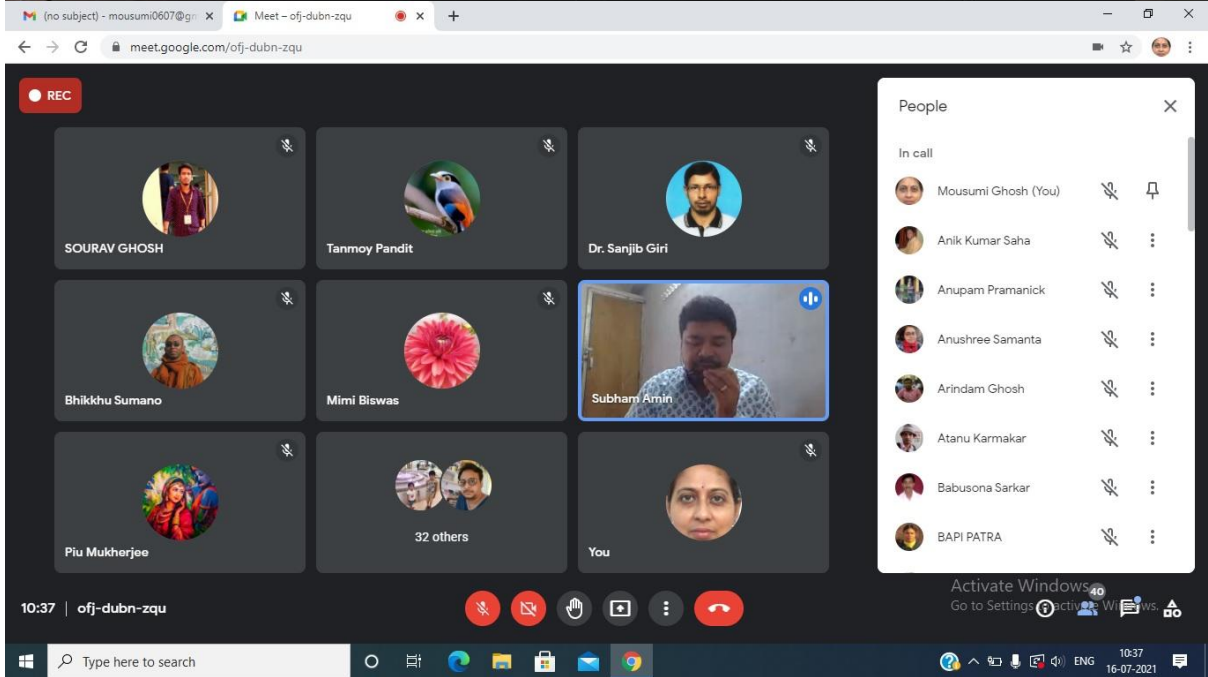
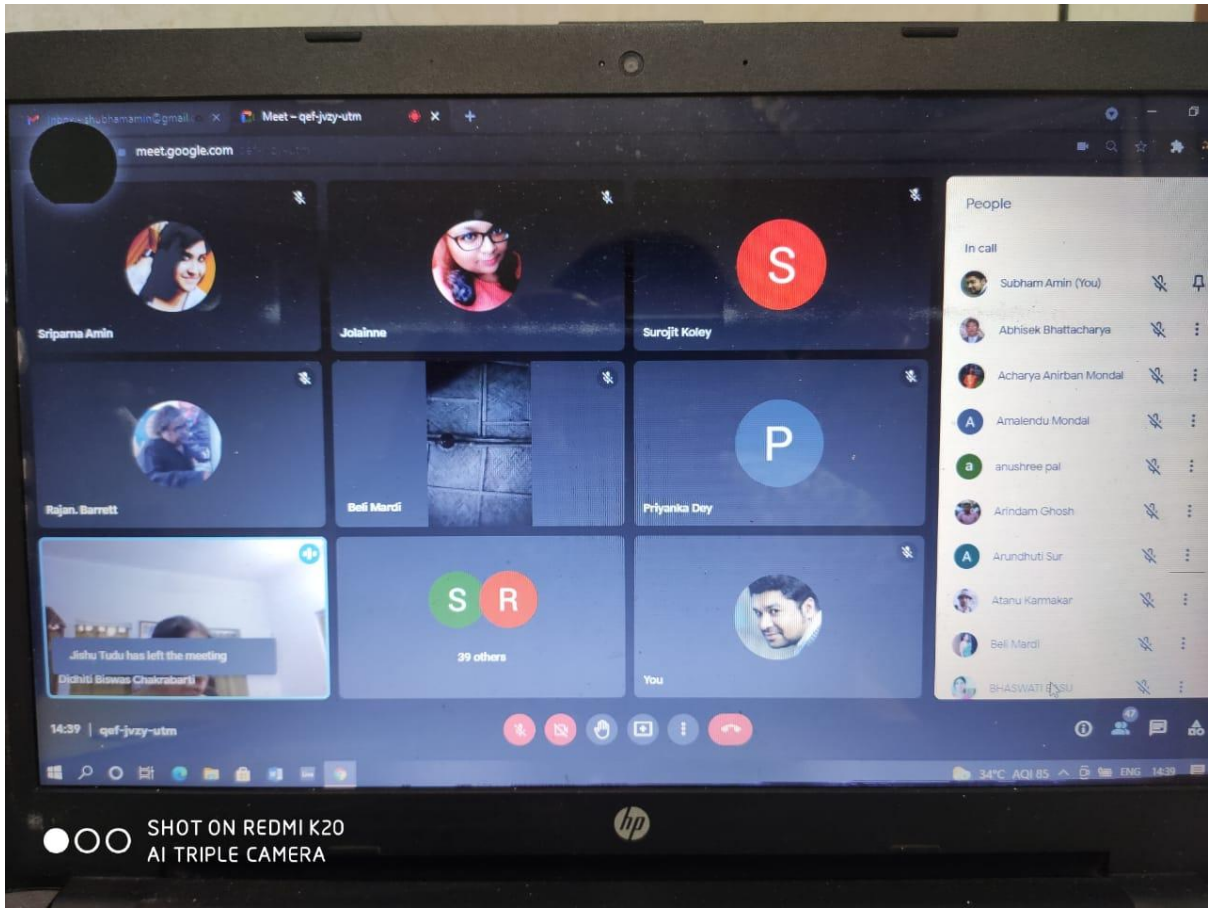
PROF. PEMA WANGCHUK
Title: Pantheon of Gods and Goddesses of Disease and Pandemic in Buddhist Pantheon

Valictory Session:
Vote of Thanks: MS. BHASWATI BASU
Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy
Member, Organizing Committee

Video call link for June 17, 2021, Session: 2
<https://meet.google.com/xwj-nuic-cct>
Or dial: (US)+1-302-866-0302 PIN: 803 625 3258

The Webinar will be conducted on google meet platform.
The participation will be free. All are welcome.

Link for Registration:
<https://forms.gle/fXvwdP4RBuNoThvg9>

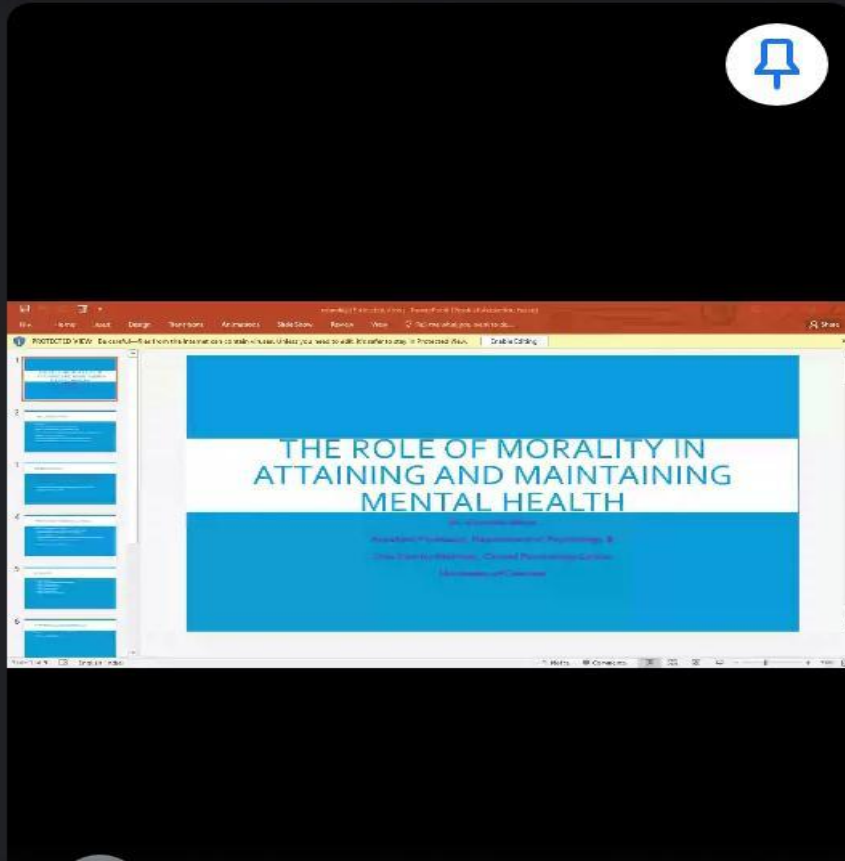




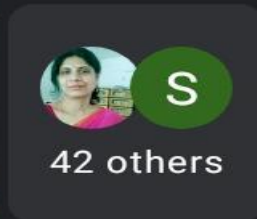
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41 others

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-  ADWAITA DAS  
-  ajmira khatun  
-  Angelina Guruaribam  
-  Anirban Mondal  
-  Anusrita Mandal  
-  Arundhuti Sur  
-  Aum Pathak  
-  ayeesha antao  
-  Bhagyeshree Pujari  
-  BHASWATI BASU  

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|  | SRS Vidya Mahapitha |  |  |

People

Info



Shreyasi Datta



Sidan Murmu Official



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Sneha Bhukta



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SRS Vidya Mahapitha



Stuti Pandey



Subham Amin



Suman Ghosh



Sushmita Ghosh





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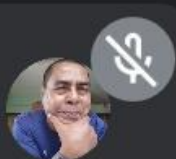
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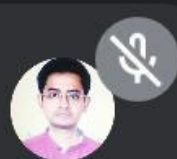
Pema Wangchuk



You



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28 others