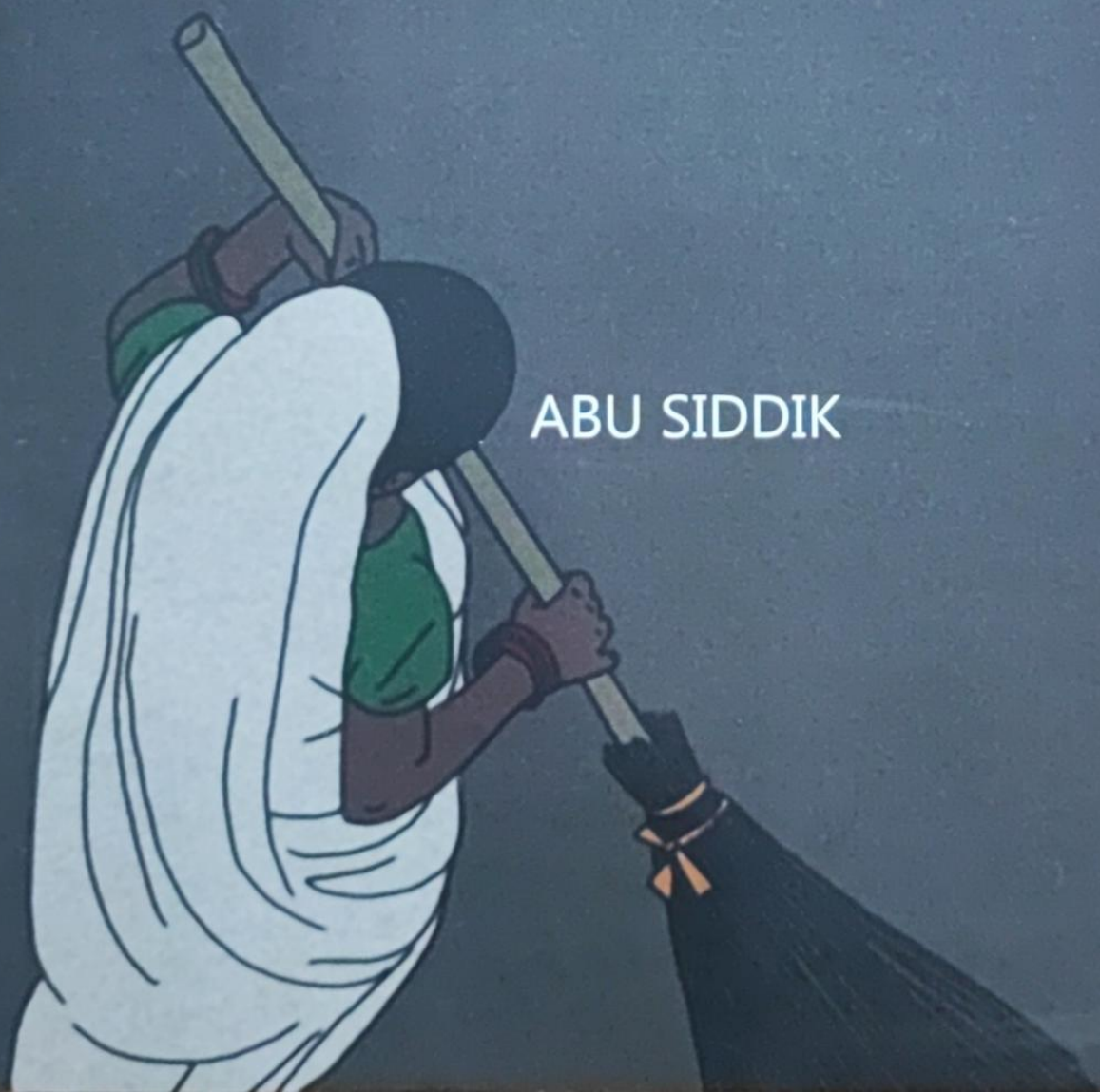




# *Aakhir* and Other Stories

ABU SIDDIK



Aakhir  
and  
Other Stories

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## CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	9
1. A Maid under Corona-Cloud	13
2. A Man of Barisal	17
3. A Sabjiwali	25
4. A Shirtless Man at a Graveyard	32
5. A Winter Evening	40
6. Aakhir	44
7. An Aaya in Trap of Corona	50
8. At a Barber's Shop	54
9. Baloo	58
10. A Burning Pyre	62
11. Dukhi	66
12. The Headmaster of Fatehpur	71
13. In Memory of Bhasha Shahid Abul Barkat	77
14. Jabu's Rickshaw	83
15. Kali Dashi	87
16. Maa	92
17. Orphaned Once Again	97
18. Our Caretaker	102
19. Rendezvous with a Leader	107
20. Sherman's House	117

## A MAID UNDER CORONA-CLOUD

A 2020 March morning at a banker's house in a suburban town in West Bengal.

The world is shaken with the spread of deadly, highly contagious corona virus. Over one lakh fifty thousand people of different nationalities are reported to have been infected across the globe, and thousands have died in its wake. Countries have shut down malls, multiplexes, public gatherings. Checks, screenings, and quarantine facilities are being installed at airports, ports, borderlines. Citizens are warned, barred from travelling to foreign countries. Schools, colleges, offices across the country are partially closed for a fortnight. Business houses have ordered workers to work from home. Religious places are also closed to avoid congregation.

People are scary. They prefer to be confined within four walls. Streets are deserted. Trains, buses run irregularly and especially for emergency services. The town is cheerless. Parks, tea shops and restaurants are closed.

"Mala, go straight to basin, take hand wash and clean hands first," the mistress of the house yawns and orders while unlocking the door.

"Madam, daily I do," Mala retorts with a proud look.