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## The Disease Called Fear: Reading Narayan Ganguly's Short Story "Pushkara"

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### Abstract

The fatal shadow of an all-pervasive epidemic may have become a distant memory for our generation because modern medicine and therapy have progressed and our longevity is blessed. Along came Corona virus and the proverbial world of our knowledge went through chaos. We witnessed a new threat along with the microscopic virus- the banality of post-truths. This fear rapidly gets transmitted into the psychology of everyone. And how that fear can infiltrate the common judgement of populace, is the focus of this paper through reading Bengali novelist Narayan Gangopadhyay's short story, *Pushkara*. The story is set against the cholera epidemic in rural Bengal, where a priest prepares for a midnight Kali Puja at the cremation ground to ward off the evil of Cholera. The offal offered at the altar is consumed by a local vagrant woman, but the intoxicated and hyper tensed priest and his acolytes assume the woman in the dark to be the corporeal form of the goddess itself. Out of abject psychosis, a divine myth is born. Death and disease mark our existence as Susan Sontag called our duality as realm of night and realm of well-being. To attain the realm of well-being, we are often seen to give in to sad repercussions to mete out our existential dread. This essay will show how that fear is no less powerful than the disease itself.

**Keywords-** Epidemic, Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, Fear, Divinity.