

# Visions of the Pandemic in the Bengali Science Fiction Webzine *Kalpabiśva*

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## Abstract

The return of traditional practices as means to cope with the trauma of the pandemic in India shows that people are drawn to existing repertoires of myths and significations associated with epidemics. Yet the global dimension of this viral outbreak is unprecedented, having generated a transcultural imaginary of “pandemic” that is deeply entrenched in the authority of science and rationalism. I analyze three contemporary science fiction stories from the Bengali webzine *Kalpabiśva* (2020) to see how this genre has engaged with ethical and cultural problems related to the “pandemic” (*atimārī*) in India. The stories contain typical ingredients of a transcultural imaginary of ‘disease’: international scientific collaboration, bio-laboratories testing vaccines in Calcutta, but also man-eating fungi, housemaid robots, and vaccines developed out of ritual offerings to Hindu gods. I argue that these stories reinvent a post-pandemic world in a utopian rather than in a dystopian fashion to help make sense of the trauma of Covid-19 by stressing the power and authority of science and biotechnologies.