

clearly expressed in her writings. Her works speak for the transformation in national and cultural consciousness. The theory Mahasweta Devi is presenting is anti-essentialist which calls for an ideological change in the masses. She works for the upliftment of the downtrodden and impoverished tribal people and emphasizes especially on the feminine anxieties presiding in these sections. Her language is subtle and powerful; her imagery robust. It aims at smashing belief systems and idiosyncratic stereotypical attitudes of domineering patriarchy. Mahasweta Devi aims at turning the tables and exploring female points of views. She attempts to dislocate gender roles while creating a feminine narrative. She works constantly towards the emancipation of women and strives to absolve women from their gender roles. Mahasweta's primary motive is to make the society more sensitive and mindful towards these issues. Feminine consciousness can become a part of cultural narrative only when we aim at establishing a cultural poetics that centres around women and their desires. Constructing a canon of gynotext or feminine narrative will be a massive step towards centralizing the decentralized women.

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Rajat Mitra's *The Infidel Next Door: Swimming Against the Tide of Prevalent Discourse*

JAGDISH BATRA

"WHEN a man fights for truth, he is the loneliest," (173) says Nitai, a character in this novel and this sums up the idealistic message which the author Rajat Mitra wants to give. A page turner coming from a psychologist may not be something new, but this debut novel from Rajat Mitra touches upon the issue of exodus of the Hindu minority in Kashmir—a theme that does not have many takers among novelists these days.

This is perhaps the only book from the genre of Indian English Fiction that has a very balanced perspective on the issue and does not seem swayed by the prevalent intellectual discourse. The writer has worked at the ground level for many years with criminal justice systems on cases of human rights violations. He has studied the emotional life of both—the victims and perpetrators of ethnic violence. Despite the author being from a domain different from literature, this novel has all the adornments of a literary piece. The way he has crafted characters and arranged the action shows him as a true artist. His prose style is simply endearing.

Of late, interest in Kashmir has risen and quite a few writers like Urmila Deshpande, Abhay Narayan Sapru, Anita Krishnan, Feroz Rather, Humra Quraishi, Nitasha Kaul, Ravi Dhar and Shahnaz Bashir have published novels based on life in Kashmir. Not long ago, Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* appeared, which, contrary to the title, presented a cynical view of things. Mitra's novel, however, ends on an

optimistic note, with engaging perspectives on historiography, politics and religion.

Aditya Narayan, born under auspicious stars to a family of Kashmiri Pandits who lost their forefather at the hands of the fanatic king Aurangzeb's men as they were piqued at the refusal of the tenth Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur to convert to Islam. Aurangzeb's forces let loose a reign of terror in Kashmir because Kashmir was supposed to be the stronghold of Hindu culture and the Pandit community had approached the Sikh Guru for help. Aditya's guru, referred to as Gurudev in the novel, demands as *gurudakshina* from him to rebuild the Adi Sankar temple near Srinagar, because "If this temple survives, Hinduism will survive in Kashmir" (59). Gurudev believes that when your dharma is under attack, it is the priest's role to "move away from doing prayers and remove *adharm*a from society" (61). Aditya, along with his parents, goes to Srinagar and starts the construction of the temple which is presently in ruins. Close to its boundary, is a mosque. In re-building the temple, he faces stiff opposition from the hotheads among the Muslim community.

The Imam of the mosque is a liberal Muslim and has adopted the orphan girl Zeba and brought her up along with his son Anwar who becomes a stone-pelter under the influence of Haji chacha, the villain of the piece, but due to love for his sister, he saves the life of Aditya whom he had, at first, tried to kill. His friend Javed loves Zeba but she develops a soft corner for Aditya drawing hostility from the Muslim community. However, Aditya, through his Gandhian ideals and gentle behaviour wins the heart of Zeba and is able to generate soft feelings in Anwar too. Javed, Anwar's friend is also soft towards Aditya.

Zeba, however, is married to Haji chacha's son Salim who is a terrorist. There are many twists and turns in the story that involves repeated attacks on Aditya and other Hindus. The time period is the 1990s, when the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus started. Finally, Aditya renounces the world. The story ends with Aditya's permission to Anwar to write on the ruins that the destroyed temple is a symbol of intolerance and his wait for friend Aditya represents hope.

Aditya Narayan comes out as an ideal person, too good to be true. He is deeply spiritual person and has no interest besides performing the rituals at the temple and keeping it in order. The intent of the novelist seems to be to have such a character to serve as a means to build bridges between the two communities. The novel reflects Mitra's knowledge of the philosophies of Hinduism and Islam as also his insight into corruption and political bungling that has brought the valley to this pass.

Kashmir Situation

As a newcomer to Kashmir, Aditya is pricked at the discrimination that the Kashmiri Pandits face in Kashmir: "Javed, I see pandits stop to give way to Muslims on the streets. I just wonder. Pandits and Muslims have common ancestors. A few hundred years ago, all were Hindus. So that makes us brothers. Then why the conflict?" (96).

The novelist details the misconceptions which the Muslims have about Hindu religion and way of worship. What comes out is that the education of the Muslim children in madrasas is partly responsible for a narrow vision of religion. For the teachers there, what matters is the difference between a believer and a non-believer called kafirs. They believe that the holy Koran "directs every true Muslim to deal in specific ways with kafirs" (41).

The public discourse outside school is controlled by fanatics like Haji chacha for whom *azadi* (freedom) means "when our land will be free of infidels" (53). He is seen spewing venom everywhere. The terrorists receive plenty of money from foreign countries. There are slogans written on the walls of houses of Hindus asking them to leave or face the consequences. The terrorists have double standards. They disallow shopkeepers to keep fancy clothes and cosmetics for women but as a shopkeeper says they themselves are the biggest customers because they purchase such stuff for their wives and mistresses (259).

The pandits come to the temple one last time before leaving Kashmir to save their lives and honour of their daughters. All this reminds one of the infamous Mughal King Aurangzeb,

during whose reign such oppression took place. The head of a Pandit family asks Aditya to hide his wife's jewellery in the temple as the militants are reportedly looting the people leaving Kashmir. The situation is akin to the one that prevailed during Partition in 1947. It is unimaginable as to how in free India, such discrimination and terror prevail in a corner of the country.

The army is often at the receiving end in Kashmir even when it is taking on the terrorists. However, the novel presents a positive picture of the Indian army. When a Captain treats the teenage boy like his son after the latter is caught throwing stones at him (64). Towards the end of the story, we find the same army man, now a brigadier, meeting Anwar and appreciating his work.

The invisible hand of the mischief makers supported by Pakistan is hinted at in the narrative at several places. Chicanery and deceit come in handy for the terrorists and their sympathizers. Some such persons, in the guise of army men, are seen beating Kashmiris on flimsy excuses and even abducting them. Anwar is surprised that in each case, Haji chacha would reach the home of the victim sooner than the incident took place (176). Clearly, he is the mastermind fomenting trouble.

The role of police under the command of politicians is suspect. When Aditya stages a protest *dharna* in front of the police station for not registering a rape case, the policemen try to dissuade him, but he is steadfast. When Javed and his other Muslim friends join Aditya, the political class is flabbergasted. Under orders from their political masters, the policemen stage an attack on Aditya and burn the tent. The Chief of Police's orders are clear: "Any act of solidarity by a Muslim toward a Hindu is not to be given publicity. Our instructions are that no pandits stay back in the valley, and they don't get a chance to be united, least of all with Muslims showing support for them" (228).

The peculiar situation in Kashmir makes some irritating practices a part of life there, like too many roadblocks where people would queue up for frisking and answer awkward questions about their movement. A little fumbling could be taken as a hint of something fishy and the fellow will be sent

to the interrogation centre. Once a person comes out with signs of harassment, he becomes an easy prey for the militants to bolster their number. People like Haji chacha even stage-manage highhandedness of police or fake army men to create militants in this manner. He has also objection to Anwar's sympathy for a Hindu boy being beaten by Muslims on suspicion of his being a police informer. When Aditya says that he could be innocent, Haji chacha observes: "How does it matter if one is innocent or not?" Anwar's query: "Chacha, in a revolution are we boys only numbers?" (241) shows he has identified himself with the Hindu victim.

There is the height of corruption in the police force. Even when you go to the police to find the whereabouts of your missing kin, you are asked to pay, and there are fixed rates! (330). Everything is rotten in a state like this, and people lay blame at their adversary's door just to implicate him and get him removed from scene, just like it happened in Javed's case who was betrayed by a friend.

Hinduism

The novelist does not go into details of Hindu rituals even though those forming daily routine of the priests are noted in a referential manner. Aditya is an ideal Hindu priest, working steadfastly for his spiritual progress and the re-construction and upkeep of the Adi Shankar temple. For this purpose, he drives away the emotions that are evoked by Zeba's interest in him. This is a trying period for him as he admits to Nitai, "I am a priest, Nitai. I can only say that the awakening of love has been far more tormenting for me than it has been in the discovery of God" (224).

Aditya is a personification of the Gandhian principles of dedication to non-violence and truth which requires courage of a rare degree and he refers to Guru Tegh Bahadur as endowed with that courage. The army general talking to Aditya is impressed and admits he is now in a position to tell his children why Hinduism could not be destroyed in Kashmir (176). When he is released after brief imprisonment following the fictitious case of trying to disrupt peace in Batt Mazar, he prays not just for those who died in that massacre but also for

the perpetrators of the genocide (187). His views on religion per se reflect his liberal approach. When Zeba asks Aditya if his religion makes a separation between believers and nonbelievers, Aditya replies in the negative.

To be fair to the writer, the writer does not shield Hinduism on the issue of intra-faith discrimination. He brings in the two siblings belonging to *dom* caste who are treated as untouchables by Aditya's father. It is the self-same Nitai, the untouchable, who saves the newly built temple from burning down after the fanatics among Muslims set it on fire. He also saves Aditya when he is attacked on the street by Muslims boys. Aditya's father Krishan Narayan is unable to reconcile to all this. Aditya tries to reason with him:

"It needs purification for prayers to start again."

"I won't sit in this prayer, Baba."

Krishan Narayan tried to argue with him. "The lower castes do such jobs. Don't get too emotional."

"Baba, it is we Brahmans who distorted the shastras to create untouchability, not the shastras." (149)

Aditya starts teaching Nitai Vedas and in this, his mother stands by him. When his father objects, Aditya states clearly, "Baba, the scriptures also say a Brahman is the one who searches for knowledge. That makes Nitai a Brahman too" (166). All this is too much for the orthodox Krishna Narayan, and so, after the death of his wife, he decides to leave for vanaprastha. Before proceeding, he bares his mind saying the temple belongs to his son and wife, was never his. Clearly, the older generation has difficulty in shunning the age-old practices even when these go against the core principles of Hinduism. Mitra rises above the divisions of casteism when we see his characters—a Brahmin and an untouchable finding common cause in fighting for truth. Says Nitai: "Dada, I thought there was no one more lonely than an untouchable. But now I realize, when a man fights for truth, he is the loneliest" (173).

Aditya is a liberal idealist who practises what he preaches and is very much qualified to tell Zeba that Hinduism treats all religions as so many rivers "which in the end lead to God like the rivers merge into the sea" (113). Her father, the Imam,

was of the opinion that "praying to deities led to pride, vanity and ego making one forget submission to Allah" (122). Aditya's mother Gayatri tells her about the Vedantic view of creation that locates God in all animate beings and even in inanimate objects. When Zeba sees her bathing and dressing the idol of the Lord, she discovers a different relationship between man and God (120).

Islam

If Aditya is icon of liberal Hinduism, Anwar becomes a liberal Muslim following interface with Aditya even though in the past he had been the pioneer of stone-pelters in the Kashmir of 1990s and meant to drive away Aditya and destroy his temple. The author's focus is on invoking the inner self because it is the only instrument to fight obscurantism and orthodoxy. Aditya tried to kill Aditya by throwing him into the frozen river but having done so, when he came home, he could not have sound sleep. He was confronted in that state by his sister Zeba after which he spilled the beans that he was coaxed to do this by his beloved Misba, a fanatic Muslim. Along with her, Anwar went out and saved Aditya from sure death. Thereafter, he was a changed man. He knew he would be mocked by the hard-core Muslims in the midst of whom he was hailed as an expert stone thrower, but his concern was more to avoid any aspersion on Zeba on this count.

As a practising psychologist having worked with cases of trauma and violence, Mitra comes across many psychological conditions affecting young people. As such, he is able to depict convincingly the change in Anwar who admits: "On the one hand, I feel I have let everyone down, on the other hand, I feel a lightness in my heart" (198). To this, Javed, his friend and the other pacifist who is converted through Anwar's example, explains: "You hear the voice of God in your ears, when you save your enemy from dying" (198).

Prof. Baig, the Vice Chancellor of Jammu University is a brave and upright Kashmiri intellectual who places the composite culture of Kashmir above religion. The Vice Chancellor tells Aditya about the island in the Dal Lake called Batt Mazar which means the graveyard of the non-believers

(Hindus). The darkest period of Kashmir history was during the Pathan reign (1752-1819) when untold oppression of Hindus took place. The Hindu families were taken to the island, given the choice between converting to Islam or mercilessly buried alive with head visible above ground, and left to die in that state. Surely, not many people have heard about it. The Vice Chancellor is a true historian who even after being questioned by the police, stands by his version and publishes full article on Batt Mazar. The meeting with the Vice Chancellor is an eye-opener for Aditya too who asks his mother: "Ma, when we pray to God, we call him by different names. Does it make a difference to God?" (83).

Mitra quotes Will Durant to note that the Islamic conquest of India was the bloodiest one in the history of mankind (79). The kind of Islam that the terrorists seek to impose in Kashmir is highly prejudicial, communal and a threat to the dignity and safety of women. The common slogan doing the rounds is "Will make Kashmir into Pakistan with pandit women without their men" (235). Anwar is shocked. "When did having Hindu women as your property become the idea of azaadi? This is not what I believed to be azaadi," he asks (243).

The author takes on the utopian dream of a pan-Islamic world haunting many Muslims. Anwar, a conscientious youth, is restless because some basic questions haunt him all the while, to satisfy which he visits a seminary. There a moulvi rightly observes: "These students only talk of how to make the world an Islamic place. They don't understand that for one thousand years our ancestors tried to do that" (275). This is as unrealistic as the dream of kings of past like Alexander, Genghis Khan, Napoleon or Hitler, to rule the world.

Women's Predicament

The novelist deserves kudos for journeying into the psyche of the women characters to lay bare the impact of terrorism in Kashmir. In fact, this is what places fiction, a genre of literature, above history, for while history gives bare facts and leaves the emotional part untouched, the novelist is able to bring out the true picture of the inner self of individuals. He may be accused of not going by the scientific method, by reason or

logic in describing things and depending on emotions, but the fact is that imagination has a big role here. While fictionalizing history, a novelist analyzes the past with emotions and tries to delve deep into the inner feelings of people belonging to past. Noted litterateur Khushwant Singh rightly asserts: "It is a simple formula: Use our heart not your head, your emotion not reason" (Singh, 2).

The novel depicts faithfully the state of the Kashmiri Muslim women. The chief female character, Aditya's love, Zeba suffers from double whammy, having been adopted by the Imam from an orphanage. Even though the Imam is not a fanatic yet he fails to assert himself under pressure from Haji chacha and others. Zeba watches Aditya and the construction of the temple. Aditya's radiance and pure lifestyle attracts her and she starts loving him silently. However, when the militants threaten Aditya and his mother also tells Zeba that love demands sacrifice, she marries Salim who had been chosen by her family. It is not a happy married life that she has because Salim is a confirmed militant who takes her as wife after he had murdered his first wife. Zeba feels that he comes only for sex to her but she remains loyal to him.

After coming back from police station where the cop leered at her and asked provocative questions, she mused that to both, the cop and Salim, she was "just a sexual vessel with no individuality" (258), which speaks volumes about the status of women in Kashmiri society. Salim is found to be a promiscuous person but then "Women were supposed to accept infidelity and other transgressions by their men and maintain a culture of silence" (258). Compare this to the nasty talk of her relationship with Aditya which is supposed to be the cause enough by the terrorists to coax Salim into murdering her in cold blood.

Slowly, Pakistan-sponsored militancy took hold of the liberal society of Kashmir. The militants banned cinema and girls going out without burqa. Zeba feels that burqa erased her identity. She would never like it for her daughters. The lumpen elements in society are hardly deterred by this cover. As she walks down in burqa, she hears a comment from two boys living in the neighbourhood that her buttocks were nice.

(258). Without burqa, when the same boys saw her, they would address her as 'chachi' (aunt), so burqa wearing, instead of providing safety, had further made her insecure.

The terrorists would even disfigure the face of the girl who flouted their orders, by throwing acid on her face. One such victim is given a bed in the hospital ward where Aditya is admitted in critical condition. The militants come searching for him but the girl outsmarts them by shifting him to the adjoining room and then when militants see her face, they choose to leave hospital. There is black humour in her comment that having seen her disfigured face, they won't return (292). This is really a pathetic situation created in the novel.

Historiography

Past can take different shapes for different reasons according to the needs and requirements of a novelist. But historian cannot mould the past according to his needs. "History can be romanticized, sensationalized, interrogated and problematized. The novelist may critique it satirize it, play with it, even trivialize it. All these different purposes cannot only have far-reaching implications for his fiction, but also determine his arrangement of events and characters, his choice of modes of presentation and narrative strategies" (Dhar, 27).

The novelist bases his novel on the history of Kashmir, rather he supplements it also. As to the relevance of a literary author in the field of history, Collingwood, a well-known scholar of history can be quoted here. While talking of the work of the historian and the litterateur, he notes:

Each of them makes it his business to construct a picture which is partly a narrative of events, partly a description of situations, exhibition of motives, and analysis of characters. Each aims at making his picture a coherent whole, where every character and every situation is bound up with the rest. The novel and the history must both of them make sense; nothing is admissible in either except what is necessary, and the judge of this necessity is in both cases the imagination. (2)

While dealing with history, a novelist is faced with several problems and in order to appreciate the novelist's work, we must understand what exactly is the art of fictionalizing history. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, fictionalizing history is "a work of fiction that attempts to convey the past age with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact" (64). But historical facts have been proved to be unworthy of the credit that we have given them all along, for the New Historicists tell us that history is handmaiden to authority. It is the king who gets written in history what he desires. Therefore, Aditya points out to the judge, "To write about Battmazar in olden times meant sure beheading. [...] My ancestor was beheaded for refusing to convert and none of my ancestors after him had the courage to return" (186). It is not the history that told the present generation of pandits about the genocide committed by the Pathan era rulers, rather it is the memory of the ghastly tragedy that percolated down the generations of Kashmiri pandits, and which demands to be given its due. J.P. Sartre, the well-known French philosopher rightly observes:

Since the past is no more, since it has melted away into nothingness, if the memory continues to exist, it must be by virtue of a present modification of our being everything in present: the body, the present perception, and the past as present impression in the body all is, actuality, for the impression does not have a virtual existence qua memory, it is altogether an actual impression. (Sartre, 160)

This novel, therefore, rightly raises the question of history and the way to learn it, which, as Prof. Baig, the Vice Chancellor of Jammu University states, "Through stories. Kashmiris preserved the stories of atrocities on them by word of mouth" (80). Baig insists on re-building the temple, which, coming from a historian, means memory is being recognized as a reliable history.

Undoubtedly, the memory continues to haunt people. When Aditya asks Prof. Baig if the history of a people is different from the memory they carry of past, he replies, "History, Aditya, dies a thousand deaths, but no memory. Memory holds us together and gives us hope when wars, massacres tear our continuity apart. [...] It is our memory that heals us, not history, from

injustices of the past. History puts a blind on us, making us believe that we are prisoners. History is like an empress, angry with a whip in hand, who demands obedience to the written word. Memory is the mother who holds us in embrace, protecting us when our soul needs answers" (87). So, unless the memory dissolves with the passage of time or through mollification in right manner, the bitterness remains.

It is also true that memory can be a double-edged sword. It can be understood with reference to the monument raised to India's Partition at Amritsar. One view is that it will bring back memories of mayhem and probably re-ignite the spark of revenge. On the other hand, it is believed that the present generation, which is uninvolved and is gifted with present-day intellectual capital, will take it in the right spirit and vow to eliminate hatred for future.

But Prof. infuses hope in Aditya when he says, "They [Kashmiri Pandits] carry their homeland in their hearts this time. Whenever societies have done that even if it takes twenty, fifty, hundred, even a thousand years, they have returned to their land. It will happen to your people too one day" (251). In a hard-hitting article, Prof. Baig asks the Kashmiri Muslims that if they perpetrate collective violence upon pandits, what right do they have to claim victimhood? (253). Prof. Baig, it must be said, is endowed with what is called 'historical consciousness', i.e., the faculty to take a broad view of history and its place in moulding people's lives. Historical consciousness, states Rao, "may be described as one's awareness of not the confluence of the moment, the milieu and the individual but also the sensibility that enable one to abstract meaning out of the Maya of human existence" (Rao, 118).

Solutions

The author presents psychological solution to the problem of terrorism in Kashmir, when the army officer orders release of Salim, a confirmed terrorist so that people "talk of him as a traitor who betrayed his comrades in exchange for freedom" (344). Kashmir, he says, "is full of criminals with halos of martyrs and creating martyrs will help terrorists' cause only. It is the creating of martyrs that keeps the movement in Kashmir

alive" (344). The writer has done well to append a glossary of meanings of Hindi and Urdu words besides explaining such terms in footnotes too.

The other solution that the novel suggests is the Gandhian one because "unarmed courage in the face of certain death leads us to a feeling of connection to life and brings a change in our heart" (311). Mitra has crafted the character of Aditya Narayan, who, through his peaceful satyagraha—the insistence on carrying on his mission—is also able to influence Muslims like Zeba, Anwar and Javed. Javed loses his life as a result of highhandedness of security men.

Anwar's courage is appreciated even by the army men, but more than that he is a conscientious young man, who is keen to know answer to three questions, viz., (i) Can a call for violence toward infidels and their women from mosques be justified? (ii) If I wanted to kill an infidel first and then end up saving his life, do I veer away from the path of being a Muslim? and (iii) While Haji chacha wants him to act according to the verses on infidels in the holy book, his father says he should be compassionate towards everyone as Islam is a religion of compassion (273). Clearly, he is a true humanist rather than a narrow-minded Muslim.

Non-violent approach, in our times, is under cloud just as Mahatma Gandhi's status as the person responsible for India's freedom is being questioned with the argument that the British had no capacity left after the end of the Second World War to hold on to the India. In addition, the radical opposition coming from Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army, the Naval Revolt, the several tribal revolts, etc. had further incapacitated the British. Non-violent opposition, as Anwar's example shows, works with conscientious adversaries, and to think the British had that mindset would be a misnomer.

Style

The 366-page novel is divided into 100 short chapters, but it goes to the credit of the author—he should know it being an experienced psychologist—that he keeps the interest of the reader alive creating suspense wherever the story seems to sag,

like on page 56, the narrative ends with "What do they mean by my background? And what do they mean by seeds that give birth?" muses the young girl Zeba. Thus, the fact that Zeba is an orphan is leaked at the right moment through a letter written by her mother 13 years ago. The writer has done well to append a glossary of meanings of Hindi and Urdu words besides explaining them in footnotes too.

Any novel endears itself to the readers and leaves a lasting impression when it is able to arouse, through effective narration, the emotion of pathos. There are several instances in the novel where the reader feels moved. One such is when Zeba talks on phone from a store to a doctor of the mental asylum where her mother was kept. The revelation about her mother's death is too much to bear for Zeba and when she tries paying for the phone bill, the shopkeeper does not accept it and having overheard the conversation, wishes her peace of mind. This is *kashmiriyat*, or rather *insaniyat* indeed (142).

Conclusion

The discourse in Kashmir is vitiated due to the machinations of a fanatic fringe among Muslim population egged on by Pakistan and further compounded by corruption. It's not that all Muslims think alike, there are people like the Imam who preach the essence of religion, and there are people like Krishan Narayan who are unable to free themselves from the conservative mindset with regard to untouchability. But Aditya Narayan, the protagonist, is a true Gandhian figure who, despite performing the daily rituals as a pujari of the Hindu temple, believes in the cardinal virtues of religion.

There is no denying the fact that the current intellectual discourse in India is pro-Left, and a skewed one with a distorted view of religion. For those who think nothing of conversion which lies at the root of the exodus of Kashmiri pandits, the novelist observes through a pandit character, "The conversion is the scar that doesn't let you heal. When after centuries of following a faith, you give it up on being forced, your soul never accepts it. It remains a trauma and lies embedded deep inside. It is passed on to the future generations making them violent" (267).

The present-day intellectual discourse identifies secularism with looking askance at anything related to Hinduism, so much so that admitting that one is Hindu by religion seems like one is admitting backwardness. On the other hand, talking of the interests of the minority community is the only thing legitimized by this discourse. It is, therefore, admirable on the part of Rajat Mitra to put things in proper perspective by putting the Hindu and the Muslim points of view side by side in a judicious manner.

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