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The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict

Sudhir Kakar

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For decades India has been intermittently tormented by brutal outbursts of religious violence, thrusting thousands of ordinary Hindus and Muslims into bloody conflict. In this provocative work, psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar exposes the psychological roots of Hindu-Muslim violence and examines with grace and intensity the subjective experience of religious hatred in his native land.

With honesty, insight, and unsparing self-reflection, Kakar confronts the profoundly enigmatic relations that link individual egos to cultural moralities and religious violence. His innovative psychological approach offers a framework for understanding the kind of ethnic-religious conflict that has so vexed social scientists in India and throughout the world.

Through riveting case studies, Kakar explores cultural stereotypes, religious antagonisms, ethnocentric histories, and episodic violence to trace the development of both Hindu and Muslim psyches. He argues that in early childhood the social identity of every Indian is grounded in traditional religious identifications and communalism. Together these bring about deep-set psychological anxieties and animosities toward the other. For Hindus and Muslims alike, violence becomes morally acceptable when communally and religiously sanctioned. As the changing pressures of modernization and secularism in a multicultural society grate at this entrenched communalism, and as each group vies for power, ethnic-religious conflicts ignite. *The Colors of Violence* speaks with eloquence and urgency to anyone concerned with the postmodern clash of religious and cultural identities.

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