



The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization

Achin Vanaik

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Furies of Indian Communalism is a powerful and rigorous analysis of the growing phenomenon of Hindu communalism, which currently threatens to tear India apart. Placing the politics of Hindu nationalism and anti-Muslim hatred in a global context, Vanaik explains the specific nature and modernity of communalism, distinguishing it both from fascism and from merely religious extremism. In defending both the reality and the desirability of the secularization of Indian state and society, Vanaik engages in a rich and subtle examination of the relationship between religion and culture, critically appraising the contributions of Emile Durkheim, Charles Taylor and Anthony Giddens to questions of identity and modernity. Whilst rejecting simplistic readings of religion as nothing but ideology, Vanaik is scathing about the postmodernists and cultural essentialists who assert the inescapable centrality of religion to Indian culture and society. Moving beyond purely theoretical considerations, he assesses India's political future, the possible obstacles to the development of communalism, and the forces that exist on the Left that might be brought into alliance to halt the march of chauvinism.

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