Decoding Intolerance: Riots and the Emergence of Terrorism in India

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The rioting in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, in 1961 was a watershed event for India. After the Partition, it was the first time such large-scale communal violence had taken place. The author, Prateep K. Lahiri, on his first posting, was involved in bringing the situation under control. Some time later in 1969, as district magistrate of Indore, Lahiri played a key role in dealing with the outbreak of communal violence in that city. While the violence in both instances appeared to have been spontaneously provoked by an incident - just like in Gujarat in 2002 - the reasons that later emerged for the rioting revealed the deeper malaise that continues to affect our social system. Decoding Intolerance: Riots and the Emergence of Terrorism in India is a significant book by an administrator, who has observed the minutiae of the crisis from close quarters and scrutinized the role of the police and the state administration. The author synthesizes various dimensions of the issue, including the changing perceptions of Indian Muslims in the recent past, the history of religious fundamentalism and how it manifests as communal unrest, both in India and elsewhere. The phenomenon of terrorism, which has reared its ugly head over India and the world, is also touched upon to understand the implications it has had on the shifting political scenario. Decoding Intolerance critically analyzes the recurrence of communal violence and offers a persuasive argument about the problem, with a focus on its prevention in the future.

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