BOOK REVIEW
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Ghosh, A. Eight Lives: A Study of the Hindu-Muslim Encounter, by Rajmohan Gandhi, Publisher: Suny Press, New York.

Within this book's 320 pages Mohandas K. Gandhi, grandson of Mohandas K. Gandhi, focuses on the lives of eight Muslims and their influence on India in the 20th century. His aim is clearly to reduce the gulf between Hindus and Muslims. He shows that these figures, viewed as heroes by subcontinent Muslims, can be admired by Hindus as well-that they need not be frozen in Hindu minds as foes. A fascinating account of 20th-century India. Pakistan, and Bangladesh; $12.95 paperback, $39.50 hardcover.

Reviewer: A. Ghosh

Author Rajmohan deals with the lives of eight Moslems which include, among others, Muhammed Ali Jinnah and Fazlul Huq. These men played an important role leading to the division of India: Pakistan for the Moslems and India for the rest. However, most of India's Moslems, prime movers of Pakistan, were permitted to stay behind, thanks to secure Nehru's "no" to exchange of population. Inclusion of Sheikh Abdullah would have more aptly made it "Nine Lives," for clearly Kashmir has not yet played its role.

To prove Islam's tolerance, the author quotes from an unrepresentative verse of the Koran, Islam's holy book. He missed the main thrust of the prophet's words: "(IX/5)...Slay the idolaters wherever you find them and take them captive and besiege them and prepare for them ambush..." Eagerly the author cites the common ancestry of Hindus and Moslems and insults Moslem pride, since for a Moslem, the period prior to the acceptance of the kalima is a period of darkness or jahiliya. To remind him of his pre-Islamic existence and relationship with kafirs, is

revolting to him. So is the printing on the front page of the word Allah in Arabic (in green, the holy color) by the side of and below the kafirs' Awn in ochre.

The author's analysis of Jinnah's importance is not correct. The astute Jinnah only accelerated the creation of Pakistan. The urge came from Islam. Jinnah used to say: "I will have my Pakistan or Insha Allah (by God) I will destroy India." In the absence of one Jinnah, the qaum would have created another. It was Moslem separatism coupled with Islamic intolerance that was bent upon seizing power by any means in order to have Pakistan, wherein the followers of Allah would rule and the kafirs serve. The result was the theocratic state of Pakistan (and now Bangladesh as well). The author mentions jizia tax en passant, without giving the full implications of the other 19 disabilities imposed upon the Hindus during Moslem rule, under jizia. He blames the Hindu for lack of generosity but does not notice that the game was being played by a breed known today as 'secularists' and not 'Hindus.' The author is grossly erroneous when he calls India "world's second largest Muslim country." The author's inclination to present only the pleasant side of the Moslems perhaps stems from the Mahatma, his grandfather. The Mahatma used to preach to the Hindus not to strike in self-defense nor to take revenge but let themselves be put to the sword of the Mussalman and die with a smile on the lips. This sounds incredible, but so said the Mahatma on April 6, 1947.

The book deals with the past but does not draw any conclusions; neither does it focus on the future. Will the Moslems of India destroy the country as was threatened by Jinnah? The author is silent on the subject. The drama that is unfolding today on the subcontinent with unmistakable signs of unrest cannot be explained from the author's comments. The book is likely to generate a false sense of reassurance in the undiscriminating reader. This is unfortunate, for the Hindu mind does not seem to have learnt anything of the Moslem psyche in these long four decades.

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