



## About the Book

Smouldering Fire is historical fiction that revolves around an uprising in India in 1857, referred to by the British as the ‘Indian mutiny’ and by Indians as the beginning of the struggle for liberation. The narrative is woven around Rudradutt, a wise guru, who teaches Sanskrit to young men, while also inculcating spiritual tenets that can be incorporated into their daily lives. First among these tenets are non-violence, love for humankind, and a life of service. But to Rudradutt’s young acolytes, his principles are beginning to seem increasingly incompatible with their desire for freedom from British rule.

The book is based on a historical event in which Indian soldiers were commanded by British officers to bite off bullet cartridges rumoured to have been lubricated in pig and cow fat, an insult to both Muslims and Hindus. It incorporates historical characters including Mangal Pandey, who was executed by the British for his role in the rebellion that ensued.

Set in a time when anti-white sentiment in India was rising along with a yearning for freedom from colonialism, Smouldering Fire raises eternal questions about the violence within our hearts. Written in beautiful, lyrical prose, its central themes are non-violence, peace, love, inclusivity, and justice, especially in the face of adversity—all still relevant to us, living in the midst of increasing strife, marginalization, violence, and competing claims to ‘truth’.

Published in 1935 as Bhārelo Agni, the book was originally written in Gujarati, an Indo-Aryan language spoken in the Indian state of Gujarat and spoken by Gujarati people worldwide.

## About the Author

**Nurdin M. Kassam** (1934–) was born and raised as part of the Indian diaspora in colonial East Africa where he experienced institutionalized racism first-hand and witnessed the marginalization of colonized peoples. These experiences deeply disturbed him, and inspired him to challenge the status quo, which he felt he could best do by becoming a lawyer. Against all odds, he qualified as a lawyer, earning a Bar-at-Law from Lincoln’s Inn and a Master of Law from Yale University. He taught at the University of Papua New Guinea and, in Canada, taught and practised law, specializing in mediation. He has designed and facilitated seminars on mediation internationally. He first read *Bhārelo Agni* at the age of seventeen and felt that its powerful message of non-violence and one humanity should be translated into English for a wider audience. He has now fulfilled his decades-long commitment to translate the book.

## Original Publication

**Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai** (1892–1954), considered a prominent figure in Gujarati literature, wrote sixty-eight books, including twenty-seven novels, hundreds of short stories, plays, poems, literary criticisms, historical essays, and biographies. Initially working as a teacher, he switched to the civil service in the former princely state of Baroda, while continuing to write and publish. In 1932, Desai received the Ranjitram Suvarma Chandrak Award for his contribution to Gujarati literature. His novels often included historical events and covered a range of social and political issues. *Bhārelo Agni* is considered Desai’s magnum opus and is an example of his skills in masterfully articulating the ideals of non-violence which Indian independence movements led by Gandhi incorporated into their struggle.

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