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## **Calcutta in the Age of Viral Outrage: Social Media, False Narratives, and Justice in Megha Majumdar's *A Burning***

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### **Abstract**

Megha Majumdar's debut novel, *A Burning* (2020) is a riveting and politically urgent exploration of how social media, mob mentality, and institutional failure converge to destroy an innocent life in contemporary Calcutta. Set against the turbulent backdrop of religious nationalism, class inequality, and digital vigilantism, the novel charts the tragic fate of Jivan, a young Muslim woman from the city's slums who is falsely accused of complicity in a terrorist attack on the basis of a single Facebook comment. This paper examines the novel's treatment of social media as a double-edged instrument that simultaneously empowers and destroys, constructing false narratives that become indistinguishable from truth in the public imagination. Drawing on theories of media ecology, postcolonial critique, and discourse analysis, the paper argues that Majumdar presents Calcutta not merely as a geographical backdrop but as a semiotic space - a city whose layered histories of communal tension, political opportunism, and economic disparity make it uniquely susceptible to the distortions of viral outrage. Through the three interlocking narratives of Jivan, PT Sir, and Lovely, the novel interrogates who gets to speak, who is heard, and who bears the ultimate cost when truth is sacrificed on the altar of political convenience and digital spectacle. The paper further explores how the novel critiques the complicity of media, the judiciary, and ordinary citizens in manufacturing and sustaining injustice.

**Keywords:** Social Media, False Narratives, Justice, Islamophobia, Viral Outrage, Political Fiction.