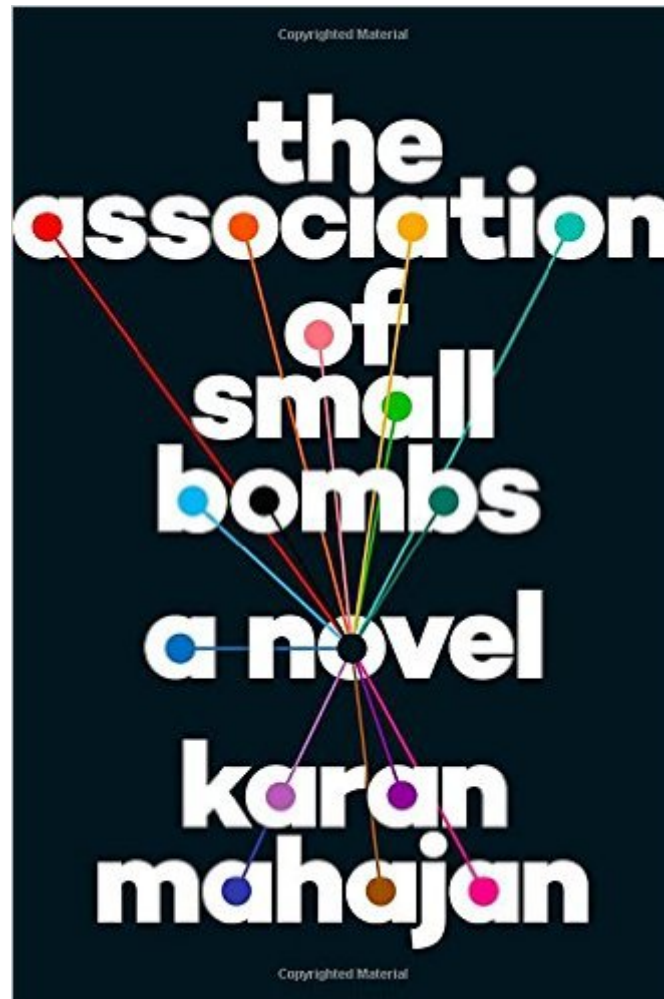


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The Association Of Small Bombs: A Novel



Synopsis

Longlisted for the National Book Award & the FT/Oppenhimer Emerging Voices Award
New York Times Editors' Choice
Named a Best Book of 2016 by: Esquire, Time magazine, Vulture.com
"Wonderful. . . . Smart, devastating, unpredictable, and enviably adept in its handling of tragedy and its fallout. If you enjoy novels that happily disrupt traditional narratives about grief, death, violence, politics I suggest you go out and buy this one. Post haste."
Fiona Maazel, The New York Times Book Review
"Brilliant. . . . Mr. Mahajan's writing is acrid and bracing, tightly packed with dissonant imagery. . . . The Association of Small Bombs is not the first novel about the aftermath of a terrorist attack, but it is the finest I've read at capturing the seduction and force of the murderous, annihilating illogic that increasingly consumes the globe."
Sam Sacks, The Wall Street Journal
"[Mahajan's] eagerness to go at the bomb from every angle suggests a voracious approach to fiction-making, a daring imaginative promiscuity that moves beyond the scope of his first, very good novel, Family Planning."
The New Yorker
"[A] beautifully written novel. . . . Ambitious. . . . Carries us deep into the human side of a tragedy."
The Washington Post
For readers of Mohsin Hamid, Dave Eggers, Arundhati Roy, and Teju Cole, The Association of Small Bombs is an expansive and deeply humane novel that is at once groundbreaking in its empathy, dazzling in its acuity, and ambitious in scope
When brothers Tushar and Nakul Khurana, two Delhi schoolboys, pick up their family's television set at a repair shop with their friend Mansoor Ahmed one day in 1996, disaster strikes without warning. A bomb "one of the many small bombs that go off seemingly unheralded across the world" detonates in the Delhi marketplace, instantly claiming the lives of the Khurana boys, to the devastation of their parents. Mansoor survives, bearing the physical and psychological effects of the bomb. After a brief stint at university in America, Mansoor returns to Delhi, where his life becomes entangled with the mysterious and charismatic Ayub, a fearless young activist whose own allegiances and beliefs are more malleable than Mansoor could imagine. Woven among the story of the Khuranas and the Ahmeds is the gripping tale of Shockie, a Kashmiri bomb maker who has forsaken his own life for the independence of his homeland. Karan Mahajan writes brilliantly about the effects of terrorism on victims and perpetrators, proving himself to be one of the most provocative and dynamic novelists of his generation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Association of Small Bombs tells the varied stories of people impacted by a small bombing in Delhi, India in 1996. The perspective shifts from the Kuhrana's, whose two sons were killed in the bombing; Mansoor, who was with the boys but survived the bomb; Shockie, who made and planted the bomb; and Ayub, who succumbs to violence in multiple ways. This novel began stunningly with excellent imagery and writing. I was instantly drawn in to the complicated web Mahajan was weaving and easily covered half the book (almost) in about a day. As the novel progressed I was made to consider perspectives I'd never have thought of and stumbled across a myriad of individual sentences that were profound in their simplicity. To approach a bombing from so many perspectives, including from the point of view of the bomb itself at times, is an incredibly complex thing, and Mahajan does it well. I gave the novel three stars out of five because there were some things that troubled me. Mahajan's occasional use of character's thoughts of rape or struggles with sexual obsession felt unnecessary and diminishing to the plot of the novel itself and were therefore off-putting. I was also worried at times that Mahajan started off with innocent and sympathetic Muslim characters and later turned them into exactly what they were fighting against: the stereotype that Muslims are inherently violent, fanatical, and responsible for the majority of bombings throughout the world. HOWEVER, if one reads closely and carefully, it can be seen that Mahajan argues against this and tries to demonstrate the falsities of this stereotype, but ultimately I felt he was only mildly successful as each Muslim character in his novel became a bomb, in his own way. It felt a bit contradictory.

The Association of Small Bombs™ By Karan Mahajan', author, Neil Shah, narrator
In 1996, two brothers were killed when a bomb exploded in an open air market in Delhi, India. So began a book

that explores terrorism and the making of a terrorist, exposing the type of person that joins the cause and the reactions of the victims to the havoc they wreak. In the early days of terrorism, using small bombs, disorganized splinter groups accomplished one important goal. They created fear and confusion even though only minor death and destruction occurred. This fear and confusion gave rise to the need for vengeance and retribution on the part of the victims and their families. They had to come to terms with the experience in a way that allowed them to go forward with their lives. Often these methods had disastrous consequences, at other times they succeed in gaining some closure for the victim's families. Unfortunately, these little groups of radical Muslims, or Islamists, that were largely ignored in foreign lands, were able to spawn more plentiful militant groups, eventually giving birth to 9/11. Tushar and Nakul Khurana, were young boys, not yet teenagers, on what their father would later think of as a fool's errand. They had gone to the market in Lajpat Nagar to pick up a television that had been repaired. Because they were poor, they could not purchase a new one. Vikas Khurana was ashamed that he had sent his boys to retrieve the TV, and instead, he pretended it was to retrieve a watch. Either way, the boys died. They had taken a friend, Mansour Ahmed, with them. Mansour was a Muslim. When the bomb exploded, Mansour ran away. He lived with the guilt of his escape for the rest of his life.

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