



The Way Things Were: A Novel

Aatish Taseer

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The Way Things Were opens with the death of Toby, the Maharaja of Kalasuryaketu, a Sanskritist who has not set foot in India for two decades. It falls to his son, Skanda, to return Toby's body to his birthplace, "a tin-pot kingdom" not worth "one air-gun salute." This journey takes him halfway around the world and returns him to his family, the drawing-room elite of Delhi, whose narcissism and infighting he has worked hard to escape. It also forces him to reckon with his parents' marriage, a turbulent love affair that began in passion but ended in pain and futility.

Aatish Taseer's *The Way Things Were* takes its title from the Sanskrit word for history, *itihasa*, whose literal translation is "the way things indeed were." It is both an intimate portrait of a family and a panoramic vision of the last half century of life in Delhi, with Sanskrit woven in as central metaphor and chorus. Through one man's struggle with his inheritance, it explores the cultural schizophrenia of modern India and the difficulty of building honestly on the past.

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