

Whistling In The Dark: Some Play About The Mughal Empire At The National Theatre

[The praise lavished on these papier-mache characters](#) by Peter Tatchell, a homosexual-rights campaigner who has felt aggrieved in the past by the Muslim hostility to homosexuality (in other words, he has very specific objection and not, apparently, a general one) is misplaced. Holding out false hopes is dangerous. The play pits the True Believers against the Less True Believers, Aurangzeb against Akbar (more or less). But Akbar, revered by non-Muslims because he lifted – it only lasted as long as he did – the Jizyah that had been imposed on them as “honorary” People of the Book (there were just too many Hindus to kill them all, and had they all been converted or killed, who would have paid for the Islamic states and statelets?), is despised by Muslims. Perhaps the playwright was unaware of this, Perhaps the praising critic did not know. Just as no fiction, however well-intentioned, can do justice to the German murders of Jews – only documentaries can begin to do that – no fiction, however well-etc., can help to make clear to non-Muslims, and it is they whose understanding of Islam needs constant improving, what Islam is all about. And if those who think the way to calm things down is to persuade Muslims that what is in the Qur’an, Hadith, and Sira don’t count, or count as much, and that Akbar, or for that matter Ataturk, in some sense “represent an alternative Islam,” the short answer – which happens to be the same as the long one – is No.