

***Revisiting India's Partition: New Essays on Memory, Culture, and Politics* edited by Amritjit Singh, Nalini Iyer, and Rahul K. Gairola (Lexington Books, 2016)**

Sixty-nine years after partition, this book studies the subject that has haunted the subcontinent ever since. The world knows of the importance of the events of 1947 and 1973 that have shaped the present relations of the three countries that were once India. This subject is still studied by international scholars and this book takes the study further by moving away from the political narratives of partition and viewing the subject from different perspectives. The editors have divided their book into five sections according to the authors' different approaches to the subject. These perspectives are so diverse that to give a collective summary of them would not do justice to them all.

The first section deals with the different approaches to the partition. For example, Rahul K. Gairola discusses the misuse of the sentiments of people of the sub-continent by the international advertising market. He studies the Google and Coca Cola advertisements that play on these emotions and present feeble attempts at overcoming differences. He also studies the tendency in the audience to mimic the US, which plays an important role in the success of the advertisements. He uncovers the false idealism of these approaches and the picture of bridging of the gap between these nations that is based on ideas that go against the different cultural and religious ideologies of the nations concerned. He unveils the superficial basis of the wish to eliminate differences: he says that paradoxically it is because we know that we are different that we talk about the inhumanity of differentiating between peoples. If we really believed that we were the same then there would not be any need to talk about a unified whole.

The second section takes up works of fiction and memoirs as a source of mini narratives that were ignored in meta narratives about the partition. These essays discuss the everyday choices that came to determine lives of people of the sub-continent and the incidents that they encountered due to the partition. Debali Mookerjee-Leonard discusses a short story 'Maachh' (or 'Fish') by Dibyendu Palit, Shaktipada Rajguru's novel *Meghe Dhaka Tara (The Cloud-Capped Star)* and Jyotirmoyee Devi's *Epar Ganga Oper Ganga (The River Churning)* with reference to the effect of partition on Hindu Bengali women. She shows how women have to assume responsibilities of their families and sacrifice their dreams for them. They become the 'shock-absorbers' and have to re-live the loss of families due to conditions created by the partition. This essay draws not only from literature, but also from analytic articles and books on partition, as well as on feminism.

In 'Borders and Borderlands', the essays deal with the disputes arisen due to the new formed ideology of borders. This section is also based on diverse sources. 'Property, Violence, and Displacement: Partition in Sindh' by Nandita Bhavnani analyses the condition of Sindh during the partition and the reasons for the eruption of violence in the province, despite being the most peaceful province. She has studied the religious conditions of the area and the minimal effect of national politics on its people. Bhavnani analysis the material reasons for the rise of animosity between the Hindus and the Muslims. She gives a chronological analysis of the Sindhi history with respect to culture, economic conditions, religion, and politics. She shows how these factors

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determined the behaviour of the general public, and the changes that they faced in 1947 and in the subsequent years. The analysis contributes towards an understanding of the condition of the province during the partition.

Unlike Mokherjia-Leonard, who discusses literature as a medium to channel personal and communal suffering caused by partition and to present a realistic picture of the common condition of people in the sub-continent, Nazia Akhtar discusses the use of fiction to promote a narrative of hatred between communities of a nation. Her essay 'Hyderabad, Partition, and Hindutva: Strategic Revisitings in Neelkanth's "Durga"' discusses the narrative of an episode in Kishorilal Vyas Neelkanth's novel *Razakar* and studies the portrayal of Sikhs and Muslims in Hyderabad. She studies the bias against Muslims and the problematic linking of the present Muslim community in the region to the political group of Razaraks in the early 1940s. She further shows the use of Sikh mythology to inculcate a feeling of brotherhood among Sikhs for the Hindus. This would unite them in the spirit of nationality and self-respect against the Muslims, who are believed to seize any opportunity to rape, murder, and torture Hindus and Sikhs. Akhtar has not made it clear whether she means the Indian Hyderabad or the Pakistani city. Nevertheless, the essay is an engaging discussion on the image of Muslims, and Sikhs, and the politics of Hyderabad in the near past, the use of mythology to create nationalist sentiments and to arouse certain political views in the masses.

Although this book deals with a very sensitive issue for the people of these areas, all but a couple of the essayists exhibit complete emotional detachment from their subject. On the whole, the strength of the book lies in the engaging contributions by scholars who take different and innovative sources as their bases for studies. The few essays briefly mentioned above are only examples of the many perspectives discussed in *Revisiting India's Partition*. The collection analyses the short-term and continued impact of the partition on the three countries, and presents narratives that have been ignored by political historians.

Saba Idris