

**Yasmin Khan (2007) *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*. London: Yale University Press. 251pp, £19.99, 978 0 300 12078 3**

In *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* Yasmin Khan recalls the partition of the Indian subcontinent into two nation states in 1947. She narrates the story of partition from the painful experiences of traumatised common people during the migration either to Pakistan or India, and argues that both these countries are built on 'messy and turbulent foundations' (p.10).

Khan recounts how more than a million people were killed, women were raped, people killed their own relatives to save them from others, and how nascent governments dealt with these problems during the partition. She describes Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in great trauma and also blames them equally for the entire trauma during the partition. She is of the opinion that as Congress did not expect partition until 1947, the Muslim League was not prepared for partition, which it had also been demanding. She criticises the politics of Congress and the Muslim League as a struggle for power, and the British government as being in a hurry to divide the land and resources between these new countries without serious management. She justifies the creation of Pakistan but argues that the way the subcontinent was partitioned gave birth to a lot of problems and pain, some of which continue to this day. Khan also analyses the present situation of both these countries with respect to the promises made by the political leadership of the time.

The title of the book will be a surprise for many, though equally justified by others, since it removes the misunderstanding with the name India. Viewed historically, post-partition India is not the only continuation of what had previously been called the Indian subcontinent, and Pakistan shares the history and pre-history of the subcontinent all the way. Much work has been done, but still there are many issues to be resolved in the discourse of the partition. This book will be a valuable addition to the debate that still prevails among academics and the general public of the subcontinent over the partition - its reasons, circumstances and aftermath. Khan has thoroughly researched and presented the events of the partition with the help of maps and illustrations in chronological order to support her arguments, and this book will therefore prove to be a useful resource for all researchers of the history of the subcontinent. Those who are less interested in political affairs or history will nonetheless find this book a novel full of human tragedy.

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