

Journal of Management & Public Policy

Vol. 15, No. 3, March 2024 Pp. 84-87

ISSN 0976-0148 (Online) 0976-013X (Print)

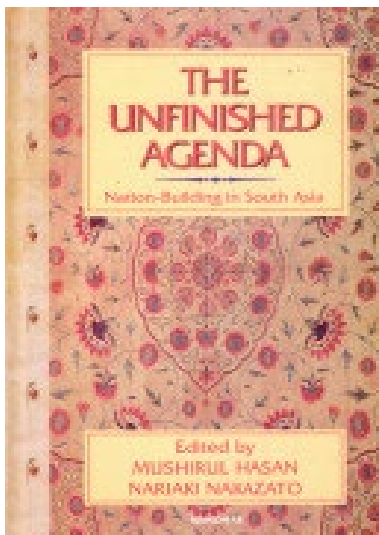
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47914/jmpp.2024.v15i3.006>

**Book Review: South Asian Perspectives: The Unfinished Agenda edited
by Mushirul Hasan & Nariaki Nakazato**

Radha Menon*

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews an interesting book titled South Asian Perspectives: The Unfinished



Agenda edited by Mushirul Hasan & Nariaki Nakazato. The book provides multidisciplinary perspectives on the emergence of the nations in South Asia. It has developed as a result of an interface between Indian and Japanese scholars at the University of Tokyo. Altogether fifteen academicians and social activists have contributed essays in the book. The articles are closely interlinked thematically and yet each is self-contained. All the essays encourage discussion on wide-ranging themes and their ramifications within the framework

of colonial society and the post- independent India. Partition of India and its impact on the sub-continent appears to be a major concern of the volume as six out of fifteen essays in the book are devoted to this theme alone.

Keywords: South Asia, Colonial Society, Emergence of Nations, Hindu-Muslim Relations, India

*Assistant Editor (Book Review), Journal of Management & Public Policy/Liberal Press
Email: radha.menon@jmpp.in

South Asian Perspectives: The Unfinished Agenda

Editors: Mushirul Hasan & Nariaki Nakazato

Published by Manohar (New Delhi) (2001) Pages 536

South Asian Perspectives: The Unfinished Agenda edited by Mushirul Hasan & Nariaki Nakazato provides multidisciplinary perspectives on the emergence of the nations in South Asia. It has developed as a result of an interface between Indian and Japanese scholars at the Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo. Altogether fifteen academicians and social activists have contributed essays to the book. The articles are closely interlinked thematically and yet each is self-contained. All the essays encourage discussion on wide-ranging themes and their ramifications within the framework of colonial society and the post-independent India. Partition of India and its impact on the sub-continent appears to be a major concern of the volume as six out of fifteen essays in the book are devoted to this theme alone. The book evokes scholarly discourse on 'the roots of Partition, riots, refugees, women, memory, literature, the shaping of national economic policies and, more recently, the Dalits' (Roy, 2003). However, a substantial focus of the edited volume is the Hindu-Muslim relations in India.

Noncia Datta, in her essay "Partition Memories: A Daughter's Testimony", has presented an in-depth interview with Subhasini who has herself experienced the scourge of partition-induced violence in south-west Punjab. The interview unravels the most candid story of partition violence and reflects on how gender, martyrdom and community identity were intertwined to become a guiding force in the wake of the formation of Pakistan. The interview has been supplemented by an enlightening discourse on the evolution of Arya Samaj which not only shaped Punjabi Hindu (read *Jats*) mindset but also spearheaded a vindictive campaign against their Muslim brethren out of 'representational fear' and as 'survival strategy' during partition mayhem.

Max Jean Zins in his essay on "The 1947 Vivisection of India" underlines the importance of studying the forms of violence affecting the human beings in their own right as these forms are a witness to duly constructed social realities. He opines that partition violence, far from being a 'medieval barbarism' is indeed a symbol of 'modernity of a new era for the

inhabitants of the subcontinent'. Certainly, this appears to be a new way of treating the subject of partition carnage. Gyanendra Pandey in his essay on "Citizenship and Difference: The Muslim Question in India" discusses how the logic of separation worked against the minorities and other marginal groups after independence.

Mushirul Hasan in his essay "India and Pakistan: Why the Difference?" maintains that 'out of various contradictory tendencies, the Pakistan must find the capacity to create a secularized state and confront the powerful trends towards authoritarianism. If the past is any indication, they have an uphill struggle ahead of them. Yet their case, with all its specifications, will be relevant to other countries trying to cope with daunting external circumstances and beset with internal problems. Takeshi Fuji in his essay on "Mirrors of the Colonial State" provides yet another dimension to the problem of boundaries. Fuji argues that the Assam-Myanmar- Yunnan area is closely related to one-another so much so that it does not fit in well with the framework of the nation-state and suggests that the history of this area should be studied from an angle relatively free from that of nation-state history. Achin Vanaik provides an overview of Indian foreign policy from independence to present day in his essay on "Indian Foreign Policy and Secular Perspectives". He explains both the strengths and weaknesses of non- alignment as the guiding framework of Indian foreign policy from early 1950s till 1980s.

Sekhar Bandopadhyay discusses the question of self-inflicted 'otherness' of dalit identity in his essay on "Mobilising for a Hindu Homeland: Dalits, Hindu Nationalism and Partition in Bengal (1947)". M S S Pandiyan analyses the colonial and post-colonial mode of resisting modernity. Kohei Wakimure and M M Islam in their essays discuss problems of healthcare and agriculture production during the colonial period. The economic aspect of the transfer of power, hitherto a neglected field of study, has been dealt with in an essay on "The Transfer of Economic Power in India" by Nariaki Nakazato.

However, the book is neither a millennium volume nor an exhaustive account of Indian past and present. At best, the concerned scholars have attempted to explore from their very different perspectives, some of the challenges before Indian Republic in its quest for a democratic, secular and egalitarian society. Even the editors of the volume have admitted

that many critical themes remain unexplored in the book, which they hope will be taken up in future.

REFERENCES

Kudaisya, G. (2005). Book review: Mushirul Hasan and Nariaki Nakazato (eds), *The unfinished agenda: Nation-building in south Asia*. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 28(1), 180–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856400500056350>

Hasan, M. and Nakazato, N. (Eds) (2001). *The unfinished agenda: Nation-building in south Asia*. New Delhi: Manohar.

Roy, T. (2003). Book review: Mushirul Hasan and Nariaki Nakazato, eds, *the unfinished agenda: Nation building in south Asia*. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 40 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464603040002>