

Beyond Belief makes for a riveting read, and it is to Roy's credit that she is able to weave a consuming narrative out of source materials that must have often been rather dreary and bureaucratic. In the view of this reviewer, the book could have benefitted from an even organization of period and themes within chapters. Perhaps this aspect was predetermined by the author's decision to focus on institutions rather than eras. The book will be useful to a wide audience, including political scientists, historians, anthropologists of the state, and scholars of modern South Asia. While individual chapters address South Asian scholarly concerns more directly, the introduction and the conclusion serve as theoretical framing devices that make the monograph an essential read for anyone who is interested in theories of nationalism. Overall, it is a timely intervention both in the thematic of the formation of nationalist ideologies as well as the problematic of a specific articulation of postcolonial nationalism in India.

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Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition. By BHASKAR SARKAR. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009. xi, 384 pp. \$94.95 (cloth); \$25.95 (paper).
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This is one of the most provocative books that has been published in recent years on Indian films. Although I had already seen most of the films that Sarkar chose to write about, his sophisticated insights revealed a lot about their themes pertaining to the partition of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. In many ways, the book is an eye-opener, even though I have my own disagreements and quibbles.

Sarkar divides his pathbreaking study into two major parts, bracketing them with his detailed introduction and a final brief "coda." In part I, he devotes two chapters to analyzing the Hindi films of the 1950s and 1960s and the third chapter to an overview of popular Bengali films. In part II, in the first chapter, he returns to some key partition films such as *Nastik*, *Chhalia*, and *Dharmaputra* and then moves on to present Ritwik Ghatak films (the best part of the book), and then some recent films of last two decades, such as *Tamas*, *Gadar*, *Pinjar*, *Naseem*, and *Way Back Home*.

In his introduction, he lays out his theoretical framework and his overall plan for the book by describing his personal experiences dealing with the partition of Bengal. My minor quibbles are with some of his points in this part of the book. Sarkar treats South Asia as a monolithic entity, as if India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh were proverbially "separated at birth"—a topic of several Hindi films—only waiting to be united in the happy ending. Much has changed since 1947 in all of these countries. While India continues to become a stronger nation

(democratically, economically, technologically, and even cinematically with global spread of “Bollywood”), Pakistan and Bangladesh seem to be following an opposite path of downfall on all accounts. Such differences in these South Asian countries cannot be ignored in a project such as Sarkar’s. For instance, on page 17, he notices “effective demotion of minorities to second-class citizenship.” The fact that the religious nationalism project failed in India, whereas it gained strength in Pakistan and Bangladesh, once again highlights the differences in South Asia more than the uniformities. Elsewhere, on page 26, he blames the Indian film industry for being a puppet in “the manipulation by the ruling bloc against minority interest,” but then goes on to note in other places quite the opposite—that most films of the 1950s and 1960s in fact celebrated the Nehruvian secularism, especially as progressive writers and filmmakers led the film industry when they all migrated in the aftermath of the partition. Surprisingly, Sarkar cites Faiz (p. 42), but there is not even a single mention of writers such as Sahir, Mazrooh, and Kaifi, who celebrated secularism in several of their songs. It is the latter group of writers whom Indians have enjoyed in films, not Faiz, who never wrote for Indian films and whose influence is limited to the Urdu literary circles. Far from being a puppet of the government, Indian films criticized the ruling bloc even in the 1950s and 1960s, as Sarkar acknowledges on page 74 with his examples of films such as *Amar* (1954) and *Naya Daur* (1957).

I would argue that the Indian nation-state rarely, if ever, “mourned” itself, as the title of Sarkar’s book suggests. The immediate mourning after 1947 was largely limited to the families directly affected—that is, Hindus and Muslims in Bengal; Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in Punjab; and Muslims in other northern provinces of India. The trauma or mourning that Sarkar has chosen to focus in his project seems a bit far-fetched when imagined as a “national” experience. In several places, Sarkar connects all of the religious violence in India to the single event of partition, which is again problematic (pp. 15, 29). Similarly, linking the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai and other Indian cities to the partition is problematic. The rise of global terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda has a much bigger role to play in global terrorist attacks than a singular event of partition, as I would argue.

My disagreements aside, this book will be a great asset in all undergraduate and graduate courses on South Asian films or South Asian history. A great strength of the book is Sarkar’s taking into account the debates about the “religion” (p. 25) and “secularism” (p. 14 and p. 75) in India. He also notes the distinctive elements of Indian cinematic portrayal and experience, which is different from the Western style of filmmaking and film watching (p. 26). Other highlights of the book are excellent summaries and allegorical readings of lesser known films such as *Shabnam* (1948), some of which are still not available in DVD format.

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