



Center for Global Islamic Studies

Contagious Peace: Friendship, Hospitality, and Humanity in Muslim South Asia

Yasmin Saikia

Hardt-Nickachos Chair in Peace Studies

Professor of History

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Drawing upon personal and research experiences in Aligarh (India) and Punjab (Pakistan) over a period of three decades (1980-2010), in this presentation Saikia probes the intimate and private spaces of human interactions within a variety of Muslim communities. Her personal experiences as a student at Aligarh Muslim University, field work in a remote village in Punjab, and oral history with perpetrators of the 1971 war in Pakistan enable reflection on the ever present power of human connections. The infectious contagion of human understanding opens up and creates new possibilities for building relationship between self and other. Living in relationship is as much a way of being as well as a desire for creating spaces for peace that is unique and preponderant in Muslim South Asia. Her story highlights the everyday human encounters that spread the contagion of peace for rethinking the capacity of people's peace in the subcontinent.

Photo: Women's College, AMU



Yasmin Saikia is Professor of History and the first holder of the Hardt-Nickachos Chair in Peace Studies at Arizona State University. Originally from India, Yasmin had her early education at Aligarh Muslim University (India) and completed her graduate and doctoral work at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

She is the author of three books and numerous articles and book chapters. Her recently published book, *Women, War, and the Making of Bangladesh: Remembering 1971* (Duke University Press, 2011) explores the story of the war of 1971 highlighting the memories of victims and perpetrators of violence spread across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In the book, she shows how individual acts and memories are woven into a collective narrative telling the story of survivors reclaiming *insāniyat*, humanity, which was a crucial lesson of the war. *Insāniyat* is at the heart of survivors' message offering a possibility to rethink a new relationship between Pakistan, Bangladesh and India.

Yasmin is writing her fourth book tentatively titled *Freedom Imaginings: The search for autonomy in British India (1920-1940)*. Additionally, she is undertaking a ten-year longitudinal research *Learning Peace and Violence: A children's history of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*.

Her work on peace studies focusing on women and children's experiences considers the layered intersections among religion, culture, and history alongside the project of memory building and Muslim identity politics in South Asia. Focusing particularly on Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, her research examines the language of non-violence that is often used in tandem with the practice of violence against women and vulnerable groups.

Tuesday, November 4 • 4:15 PM • Linderman 200

For more information contact Office of Interdisciplinary Programs
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