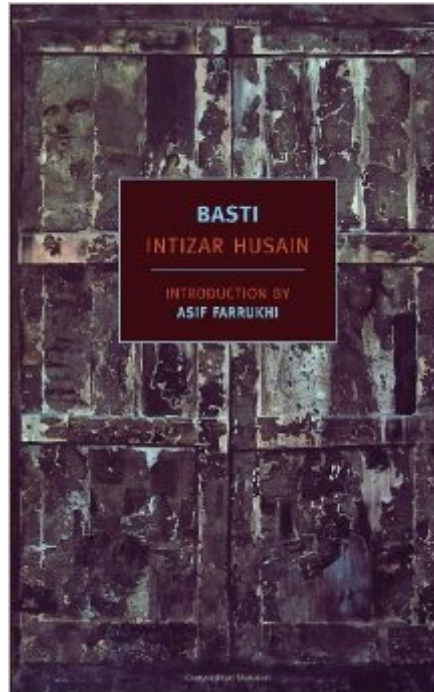


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Basti (New York Review Books Classics)



Synopsis

An NYRB Classics Original *Basti* is a beautifully written reckoning with the tragic history of Pakistan. *Basti* means settlement, a common place, and Intizar Husain's extraordinary novel begins with a mythic, even mystic, vision of harmony between old and young, man and woman, Muslim and Hindu. Then Zakir, the hero, wakes to the modern world. Crowds gather. Slogans echo. Cities burn. Whether hunkered down with family or furtively meeting to exchange news with friends in caf  s, Zakir is alone in a country lost to the politics of loneliness.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (4 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Zakir grows up in Rupnagar at the fall of the British Raj, He delights in his world, mixed with the tales and legends of all India-Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist Sanskrit -and events like the coming of electricity, Then comes independence, the partition and the emigrations. On arrival in Pakistan his love and hopes of the new land are quickly unravelled by corruption, politics and the humiliating defeat in 1971 to India and the new Bangladesh, the new diaspora and scattered families and friends... A fascinating insight into the history of this region, but this is in no way a political novel; more a threading together of events-including a doomed love-that disillusion young hopes (A universal theme) Husain incorporates many Indian literary and religious adages that have grown from the melting pot of Indian history; these roots being lost in a new portioned Pakistan. Ghandi had it absolutely right that a modern India would be best served by a secular society that held all its

diverse religions and sects. The mistake was Iqbals and Jinnahs in wanting a separate Islamic state. Pakistan had to find itself-politically and culturally-away from a sub continent that had grown over hundreds of years. It still struggles to this day, with the added ignomy of India now being a power house in the world whilst Pakistan remains firmly rooted in the third world. Zakir's happiest times are in the India pre partition with all its cultures to wonder at. Lost in translation ? The novel does switch from first person to third and from past to present without much notice (together with all the names and titles of people !) but the thread of the story is strong and interesting that it keeps you on board and there is a superlative glossary that teaches you of a culture; its history and religions, which is one of the great gifts of literature. It tells you of a people and place as well as being a good story.

Intizar Hussain was a prominent Urdu writer, this book is an English translation of his much acclaimed book Basti. The story starts in pre-partitioned India and migrates with the characters to Pakistan. It is a story of migrants, and every kind of migrant will be able to relate to it. Zakir and his family move to Pakistan from India but a part of them is left in India and will stay there forever. Their life, actions, thought revolve around that town where they were originally from and they can't escape that.

Great stories by a powerful writer

Although written by a Pakistani author during and after the independence, the writing is very secular and sympathetic to the characters. The easiness in the flow of narration could be improved..

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