

# A Concise History of MODERN INDIA

Barbara D. Metcalf and  
Thomas R. Metcalf

SECOND EDITION



CAMBRIDGE

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# A Concise History of Modern India

In this second edition of their successful *A Concise History of India*, Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf explore India's modern history afresh and update the events of the last decade. These include the takeover by Congress from the seemingly entrenched Hindu nationalist party in 2004, India's huge advances in technology, and the country's new role as a major player in world affairs. From the days of the Mughals, through the British Empire, and into independence, the country has been sustained and transformed by its institutional structures. As the authors argue, it is these institutions which have helped bring about the social, cultural, and economic changes that have taken place over the last half-century and paved the way for the modern success story. Despite these advances, poverty, social inequality, and religious division still fester. In response to these dilemmas, the book grapples with questions of caste and religious identity, and the very nature of the Indian nation.

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# *A Concise History of Modern India*

SECOND EDITION

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and

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of *A Concise History of India* appeared in 2002, and covered events up to the end of the twentieth century in 2000. We are immensely grateful for the enthusiastic response this book has received from teachers, colleagues, and students. Though not meant as a textbook, to our pleasant surprise the *Concise History* has been widely adopted in university and college courses. It is our hope that this new edition will be equally well received.

One might ask why a second, revised edition is needed so soon after the first. The answer lies, in large part, in the increased pace of historical change in India, together with the rapid growth of historical scholarship on India. We endeavour in this edition to do two things: to take the story of India through the first five years of the twenty-first century, up to 2005; and, where necessary, to incorporate new perspectives, and new research into our larger narrative. We have also taken this opportunity to correct a number of factual errors and stylistic infelicities that have come to our attention.

As the wholly new 'epilogue' makes clear, much has happened in India since 2000. A BJP government, seemingly firmly entrenched in power when we wrote, has been displaced by a Congress-led government under Man Mohan Singh; economic growth propelled by high-technology services has propelled India to a new level of prosperity, yet one still undercut by pervasive poverty; and the country has become, as never before, a major player on the world stage, courted for the first time in fifty years by the United States. To accommodate the epilogue, and to give the decade of the 1990s a

greater coherence as a distinct era in Indian history, chapter 9 has been reconsidered and substantially reordered. We have tried as well to complement more adequately our account of ‘official’ Gandhian nationalism with a greater attention to ‘populist’ nationalism, from Bhagat Singh to Subhas Chandra Bose; and we have looked afresh at contentious questions, such as the relations between Hindus and Muslims, with the aim of securing, not a spurious ‘balance’ between opposing views, but rather the greatest possible precision in our account of the events that matter in recent Indian history. We have also added a chronology of key events and figures. Those from the earlier periods of India’s history are intended as a reference for the role they frequently play in shaping modern memory and understandings of the past.

We want to thank several colleagues who have brought errors to our attention, or suggested topics that required further consideration. Among them are Sumit Guha, Ralph Nicholas, and Leonard Gordon. Taymiya Zaman at the University of Michigan has worked with us to secure fresh permissions for the illustrations, and to incorporate our revisions into the electronic text of the volume before submission to Cambridge University Press.



## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This is a concise history of India since the time of the Mughals. It comprises the history of what was known as British India from the late eighteenth century until 1947, when the subcontinent was split into the two independent countries of India and Pakistan, and of the Republic of India thereafter. (The history of Pakistan, and after 1971, of Bangladesh, is taken up in a separate volume in this series.)

In this work we hope to capture something of the excitement that has characterized the field of India studies in recent decades. Any history written today differs markedly from that of the late 1950s and early 1960s when we, as graduate students, first ‘discovered’ India. The history of India, like histories everywhere, is now at its best written as a more inclusive story, and one with fewer determining narratives. Not only do historians seek to include more of the population in their histories – women, minorities, the dispossessed – but they are also interested in alternative historical narratives, those shaped by distinctive cosmologies or by local experiences. Historians question, above all, the historical narratives that were forged – as they were everywhere in the modern world – by the compelling visions of nationalism. The first histories of India, written from the early decades of the nineteenth century, were the handmaid of British nationalism. They were subsequently challenged, and rewritten, by Indian nationalist historians. All of these histories, including those written from a Marxist perspective, were shaped by notions of ‘progress’ and what was seen as an inevitable progression toward presumably already known models of ‘modernity’ that included economic development

and democracy. In recent years, Indian historians have taken the lead in breaking apart the old narratives, at the cost, some would argue, of a cherished cultural continuity and the stirring stories of heroism that foster patriotism. What they have given us in its place is what the leading 'subalternist' Partha Chatterjee calls 'fragments' of history. But such a history is no less critical for the formation of an informed citizenry of an individual nation, or of the world.

We focus in this concise history on the fundamentally political theme of the 'imagining' of India, and on the institutional structures that changed and sustained that 'India'. In so doing, we endeavour to show as well the social changes and the cultural values that were constituted in interaction with that political structure and that vision. We have chosen to place political history, and the doings of the social elite, at the centre of our narrative because they have been the driving force for historical change. A 'subalternist' might appropriately insist that such an emphasis does not do justice to the multiple mentalities and diverse lived experience of the bulk of India's population. An intriguing example of the gap between political history and individual memory has recently been analyzed by the historian Paul Greenough. Colonial and later census enumerators, he notes, required the recording of birth dates from populations who, for the most part, did not commemorate this event. Hence census personnel supplied respondents with lists of 'historic' events to help anchor memories. These included national events, such as the coronation of George V or the proclamation of the Republic of India, as well as local events such as natural disasters or corrupt elections. These latter events, in Greenough's view, proved most evocative in stirring recollections of the past, and so reveal a more 'subaltern' history than the official or textbook version. Yet, we would argue, in multiple ways the lives of those interviewed for the census were inevitably shaped, from the foods they ate and the lands they ploughed to the prospects for their children, by their existence as subjects of the colonial Raj, and later as citizens of the independent Indian state.

Like others who have come to recognize the implicit teleologies of 'national' history, we acknowledge that history is always written, and of necessity rewritten, to serve the needs of the present. One of those needs, in our view, is to show that commonsense notions of continuity, fostered by nationalism, must be replaced by

an understanding of the newness of modern identities, and the new meanings infused into old terms ('caste', 'Hindu', 'Muslim', and even 'India' itself). This is what the political scientist Benedict Anderson has called the great paradox of nationalism: that nation-states, a product of recent centuries, must always claim to be very, very old. To show otherwise in the case of India is especially challenging; for the British colonialists had a powerful incentive to make of India a timeless and unchanging land in contrast to their own avowed 'progress', while Indian nationalists were driven by an equally insistent desire to claim the sanction of antiquity for their own cultural and political ideals. To understand how our cultures are constructed, however, is essential in giving us a critical distance on what otherwise seems part of nature. It is a distinctive contribution that history can make to civic life.

We call the reader's attention in particular to the extracted quotations and the illustrative figures threaded throughout the historical narrative. The extracts represent 'voices' of participants in the events being described. Where possible, we have chosen these extracts from works that are readily available to those who wish to explore these sources further. They exemplify the changing modalities of contemporaneous expression and behaviour. Similarly, the visual reproductions are not simple 'illustrations', but are intended to provide some sense of the visual world, including new media, of the times.

The maps provided in the volume are meant to help orient the reader to central elements of India's geography. The physical features of the Indian subcontinent have shaped its history in fundamental ways. Its size – some 2,000 miles from east to west, and another 2,000 miles from north to south – calls into question the label of 'subcontinent' given it by European map makers, whose own European 'continent' is hardly more extensive. The Indian subcontinent, like Europe itself, is a distinctive feature of the larger Eurasian land mass from which it projects. Unlike Europe, however, India was cut off by forbidding mountain ranges from Central Asia, so that it participated only marginally in the traffic in goods and people that over the centuries swept eastwards and westwards across the steppes.

Despite the persisting barrier to travel formed by the unbroken line of mountains reaching from the Pamirs and Karakoram in the

north-west, across the central Himalaya to the dense jungle-clad hills of the Burmese border, India continually interacted with its neighbours. Such interaction commonly took place to the westward, where the Khyber and Bolan Passes provided access to the Afghan plateau. The earliest Indian civilization, that known as the Harappan or Indus (at its height 2000–1500 BC) possessed close trading ties with Mesopotamia. Central Asian peoples reached the subcontinent in the centuries around 1000 BC, bringing with them a language, the Indo-European, that also spread westwards into much of Europe. As a result the languages that grew up in northern and central India share fundamental linguistic patterns with those of many European countries. Greeks under Alexander the Great, followed by Central Asian Sakas, Scythians, and Huns, and finally Turks, Mongols, and Afghans, conquered, and frequently settled, in the north-west. Movements of peoples outwards from India into Central Asia also took place, most notably those of Buddhist pilgrims and teachers to Tibet and China, as well as traders in luxury goods.

The two arms of the Indian Ocean – the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea – that define the remaining two sides of the Indian triangle mark out the region as a distinctive space and shape it as a distinctive climatic zone – that of the monsoon. Gathering force in the hot equatorial regions of the Indian Ocean, the monsoon rains sweep across India each summer. Indian agriculture is almost wholly dependent on these rains, which vary dramatically in their intensity, from 60 to 80 inches a year on the western and eastern coasts and the mountainous foothills, to a mere 15–20 inches in the Punjab. Sind and Rajasthan in the north-west lie outside the influence of the monsoon, and so are given over almost wholly to barren desert. The oceans also linked India to its neighbours. The seafaring Cholas of the far south were centrally important in the transmission of Buddhist and Brahmanic learning from India to South-East Asia. Indian merchants early learned to navigate with the monsoon winds as they sailed across the western Indian Ocean. From 1498, when Vasco da Gama, guided by a Gujarati pilot, brought his ship into an Indian port, India's European conquerors came from the west across the sea.

Its physical features, especially its mountains and rivers, divide India into regions no less distinctive than the various countries

of Europe. These regions are characterized by differing ecological patterns, languages, and cultures. Paralleling the Himalaya are the rivers of the Gangetic plain, which unite to form the sacred 'Ganga', flowing from the north-west to the south-east into the Bay of Bengal. A rich agricultural zone, this region, known as 'Hindustan', was the heartland of northern empires and the goal of those invaders who entered from the north-west. The Indo-Gangetic plain, over 1,000 miles in extent, comprises the Punjab, whose 'five rivers' flow south-west into the Indus; the rich 'doab' area between Ganges and Jamuna; and farthest to the east, where the Brahmaputra joins it from Tibet, the fertile, heavily watered region of rice agriculture in Bengal.

Northern India is marked off from peninsular India, known as the Deccan, by ranges of low hills, scrub jungle, and westward-flowing rivers. Although not as forbidding a barrier as the towering Himalaya, nevertheless the central Indian hills permitted the settled peoples of south India, speaking languages derived from what is called the Dravidian family, to develop distinct cultural characteristics. Further, unlike the sweeping plains of the Gangetic valley, the land itself in the south, containing river valleys cut off from each other by hills, together with the coastal ranges known as the 'ghats', encouraged peoples to develop separate states and even languages. Despite all this diversity, however, by the Middle Ages unifying elements of what can be called an Indic civilization reached most areas of the subcontinent. Our volume begins with an examination of this medieval Indian civilization.

We wish to express our appreciation to a number of institutions which have made their facilities available to us during the writing of this book. These include the libraries of the University of California at Berkeley and at Davis, the Ames Library of the University of Minnesota, the British Library, and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Several friends and colleagues, most notably Catherine Asher, Frederick Asher, Rebecca Brown, and Narayani Gupta have assisted us in procuring rare photographs used as illustrations. We are especially grateful to Rachel Sturman, who, in addition to giving the manuscript a careful reading, took upon herself the task of collecting illustrations and securing permissions for their use.

More generally, we wish to thank our students, who, over the several decades since we began our teaching careers, by their questions and their enthusiasms have encouraged us always to think afresh about the history of India. We would especially like to acknowledge those who have shared ideas with us from research projects not yet published. These include Lisa Trivedi, Durba Ghosh, and Rachel Sturman, among others. We owe much as well to Marigold Acland, of the Cambridge University Press, who first encouraged us to take on this task and then prodded us to complete it in good time. Finally, we want to thank Kavita Datla and Ariana deRocheft Reynolds for preparing the index under intense time pressure.

## GLOSSARY

*bhakti* An approach to worship and spiritual practice in the Hindu tradition characterized by personal devotion to a Divinity, often mediated by a holy person or teacher

*Brahman* The varna or status category identified in the classical Sanskrit tradition as most pure and entitled to perform priestly duties

*Buddhist* A follower of Gautama Buddha (b. 560 BC). Like Mahavira Jain, he rejected the authority of Brahmanic ritual; he taught that suffering is inseparable from existence, and that one should strive to extinguish the self and the senses in order to achieve a state of illumination called nirvana. Supported by the great emperor Asoka (c. 269–32 BC), Buddhism essentially disappeared in the Indian subcontinent by the tenth century. It was revived in the mid-twentieth century by the ‘untouchable’ leader Ambedkar.

*dalit* ‘Down-trodden’, term used by former untouchables to describe their community. Has replaced Gandhi’s term *harijan* ‘children of God’ in recent decades.

*darbar* Royal audience, hall of audience, court; executive government of a princely state. Also darbar.

*diwan* The chief civil administrator of an area under the Mughals; *diwani*, civil or revenue administration

*factor* A commercial agent, here of the East India Company, resident in India; the term factory denoted a warehouse for storing trade goods

- farmer* A revenue term used for a person who bids to secure the right to collect the taxes of a given area in return for payment to the government of a fixed sum
- hadith* Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and actions
- hartal* Closing of all shops in a market as a protest against oppression or ill-treatment
- imam* A prayer leader; among Shi'a, venerated male descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, whose succession terminated after twelve incumbents for the majority of Shi'a followers, after seven for several smaller sects
- jagir* The right to the assessed tax revenue of a piece of land, given for a limited term by the Mughals as a reward for service; the holder of a jagir is a *jagirdar*
- Jain* A follower of Mahavira (b. 599 BC) who, like the Buddha, rejected the authority of Brahmanic ritual, and taught an ascetic, world-denying philosophical and ethical system. Particularly successful in business, Jains are a small community resident mostly in Gujarat and Bombay
- Jat* A north Indian peasant and agriculturist community
- Jesuit* A member of the Society of Jesus of the Roman Catholic Church, founded by St Ignatius Loyola in 1534; present in India from its earliest years with the establishment of Portuguese trading enclaves
- jizya* A poll tax levied on non-Muslims that entitled them to protection and freed them from military service
- jotedar* A revenue collecting intermediary in Bengal, between the peasant cultivator and the zamindar
- Kayasth* North Indian caste group, many of whose members served from Mughal times in government bureaucracy and other institutions requiring literacy, accountancy, etc.
- Khalifa* (caliph) A successor, particularly used for successors of the Prophet Muhammad
- Khatri* North Indian caste group, many of whose members served from Mughal times in government bureaucracies and other institutions requiring literacy, accountancy, etc.
- Khilafat* (caliphate) The office or dignity of the caliph; as 'Khilafat Movement', an organization that sought to secure the position of the Ottoman sultan as spiritual leader of all Muslims



*Kshatriya* The varna or status category identified in the classical Sanskrit tradition as those entitled to exercise military power and perform sacrifices

*mansab* A rank within the Mughal state system, carrying with it the obligation to supply in a number commensurate with the rank; the holder of a mansab is a *mansabdar*

*nabob* see *nawab*

*naib* A deputy, as of a governor of a province under the Mughals; title of respect

*nawab* Mughal governor; conventionally used in British India as a title for Muslim princes, chiefs, etc. The term *nabob*, a corruption of *nawab*, was used for Englishmen who gained sudden riches in India

*Ottoman* A vast empire in Asia Minor and the Balkans conquered in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries by Osmanli Turks, who ruled until the empire's dissolution in 1918 following World War One

*Pandit* Title of respect for learned Brahman; passes into English as 'pundit', an expert or authority on some subject

*panchayat* Council, court for arbitration of disputes, for villages, castes or other groups; from traditional gathering of five (panch) elders

*Parsi* see *Zoroastrian*

*Persian* The literary and government language of the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughal Empire, and other pre-modern Indian states

*peshwa* Hereditary Maratha chief minister; from 1720 *de facto* ruler of the Maratha confederacy

*pir* 'elder', founder or head of a sufi order or shrine

*presidency* The residence of a 'president'; here used for the three East India Company centres of Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta established in the seventeenth century

*Rajput* A 'prince'. Rajput clans, based in northern and north-western India, emerged in the medieval and Mughal period as warrior princes and frequent allies of the Mughals

*raja* 'Ruler'. A title widely used in British India not only for princes but by chiefs, zamindars, etc.; customarily (but not always) confined to Hindus

- sabha* Association or society; assembly, council, court
- Sanskrit* An Indo-European language which emerged in ancient times as the sacred language of legal and ritual tradition cultivated by Brahmans
- satyagraha* ‘Truth force’, a Gandhian neologism to describe his method of dispute settlement based on a shared pursuit of ‘truth’ with an opponent, together with mutual respect
- Sayyid* Muslims who claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad
- settlement* In British India a revenue term used in the context of agricultural taxation to specify an agreement with an individual or group for the responsibility to pay a fixed amount of tax on a given tract of land; often carried with it effective ownership of the land
- Shaikh* (1) A title for a sufi (q.v.) master; (2) a Muslim claiming descent from the Companions of the Prophet
- shari‘at* The whole body of rules guiding the life of a Muslim in law, ethics, and etiquette
- Shi‘a* The minority of Muslims who reject the succession of the first four caliphs in favour of the rights of the Prophet Muhammad’s son-in-law ‘Ali and his descendants, the imams
- Shudra* The lowest varna or status category identified in the classical Sanskrit tradition; required to perform services for the three higher and pure varnas
- Sikh* A ‘Disciple’, used in this case for the followers of the path (*panth*) of the teacher Guru Nanak. Also *see bhakti*
- sufi* Those who cultivate the inner dimension of Islam through moral practices, disciplines, and association with sufi masters who act as guides, teachers, and mediators; a ‘mystic’
- Sunni* The majority of Muslims who accept the authority of the first four caliphs and the principle of consensus for choosing successors to the Prophet Muhammad (570–632 CE)
- swadeshi* Of ‘one’s own land’; used by nationalists to encourage the production and use of products made within India
- swaraj* Self-rule, self-government
- ‘ulama* (sg: ‘alim) Authorities learned in Islamic legal and religious studies

*Vaisya* The varna or status category identified in the classical Sanskrit tradition as businessmen and merchants and as men entitled to perform sacrifices

*varna* The four ideal hierarchic categories comprising human society (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Shudra, q.v.) in the Brahmanic Sanskrit traditions, articulated above all the dharmasastra texts of Manu at the turn of the first millennium

*yogi* A Hindu ascetic who practices disciplines intended to discipline the consciousness to achieve control and tranquility

*zamindar* A 'landholder', the person who collects and transmits the revenue or tax claim to the government

*zenana* The women's quarters of an Indian household

*Zoroastrian* A follower of the Iranian teacher Zoroaster (b. 660 BC), roughly contemporary with the Buddha, Mahavira Jain, and the authors of the Upanishads, whose ethical monotheism, focused on the deity Ormazd, is predicated on a universal struggle between light and dark. Only small communities of Zoroastrians continued after the advent of Islam, including groups on the western coast of India known as 'Parsis' ('Persians').

#### PLACE NAMES: ALTERNATE SPELLINGS

<i>British usage</i>	<i>Contemporary usage</i>
Banaras	Varanasi
Bombay	Mumbai
Calcutta	Kolkata
Cawnpore	Kanpur
Ceylon	Sri Lanka
Dacca	Dhaka
Ganges	Ganga
Jumna	Yamuna
Madras	Chennai
Oudh	Awadh
Poona	Pune
Simla	Shimla

# CHRONOLOGY

## EARLY INDIA

C. 2600–1700 BCE Harappan Civilization. Cities with advanced hydrology, architecture, skilled crafts, and trade to West and Central Asia. Located in the Indus Valley as well as adjacent Punjab and Gujarat. Most of subcontinent thinly populated by hunters, gatherers, and herders.

C. 1500–1200 BCE Aryan culture in Punjab and western Gangetic plain derived from contacts or population movements from Central Asia. Ritual texts, the Vedas, in the Sanskrit language (linguistically linked to Iranian and European languages), preserved by Brahman priests over centuries and gradually carried east and southward. Texts describe bronze tools, horses, complex cosmology.

C. 900–800 BCE The epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata recount tales of kingdoms and warfare; they have been revised over the centuries and are well known in many forms today. The Mahabharata ('The Great Story') tells of warfare between two branches of a royal family and includes the Bhagavad Gita ('Song of the Bountiful Lord') in which the god Krishna explains Duty and Reality to Arjuna, a warrior-hero. In the Ramayana ('Rama's Way'), Rama (later considered a reincarnation of Vishnu), his wife Sita, and his brother Lakshaman, choose forest exile when Rama loses his right to his throne in Ayodhya; they defeat enemies to return in triumph to foster justice and peace.

6th century BCE 'Axial Age' of philosophical efflorescence across the Old World: Mahavira Jain (599–527), whose followers are known as 'Jains', and Gautama Buddha (563–483), teacher of the 'Buddhists', challenge Brahmanic dominance. Brahman sages compose Upanishads. All three pursue concepts of reincarnation, karma, and complex cosmologies.

327–325 BCE Invasion by Alexander the Great

268–233 BCE Reign of Ashoka Maurya, peak of the Mauryan Empire, based in northeast but with influence throughout subcontinent. He converts to Buddhism after his conquest of Kalinga (261); Buddhist missions begin in South Asia, spread to East and Southeast Asia.

C. 200 BCE – 200 CE Sanskrit 'sastras' describe ideal society of four hierarchic classes: Brahmins ritually superior; above warriors, farmers and merchants, and workers and servants. Indo-Greeks, Shakas, Kushans enter through northwest and establish dynasties. According to legend, St Thomas begins preaching Christianity in India by 52 CE.

320–497 Gupta Empire based in north; 'Classical Age' of Brahmanic culture, Sanskrit literature, temple architecture and sculpture. Chinese pilgrims arrive to study Buddhism.

680–720 Pallava kingdom; shore temple at Mahabalipuram

711 Establishment of Arab dynasty in Sind

985–1120 Establishment of Chola Empire in south India, conquests of Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Malaya; raids into north, including conquests of Orissa and Bengal. Artistic efflorescence includes bronze sculpture.

1000–27 Raids of Mahmud of Ghazna into north India, including plunder of Mathura, Kanauj, and Somnath temples.

#### CHAPTER I SULTANS AND MUGHALS

1206–1398 Establishment of Turko-Afghan dynasties in Delhi, expanding into south in fourteenth century. Persian language and Islamic institutions patronized

1297–1306 Delhi sultans repulse Mongol attacks and welcome refugees from Mongol raids.

1346–1565 Empire of Vijayanagar, in south India; 1398 raid of Delhi by Timur. Regional kingdoms now separate from Delhi in north in Gujarat, Bengal, Jaunpur. 1510 Portuguese conquer Goa

1347–1481 Bahmani sultanate in Deccan succeeded by regional kingdoms.

1526–1858 Mughal Empire unifies north and parts of south India under its rule, creating prosperity, stability, and cultural efflorescence. Weakens after 1707

1600 Establishment of East India Company by English, followed by similar companies of Dutch (1602) and French (1664) merchants.

1646 Shivaji establishes Maratha stronghold to challenge Mughals.

## CHAPTER 2 MUGHAL TWILIGHT (1707–1772)

1707 Death of Aurangzeb

1708 Sikh revolt in Punjab under Banda (to 1715)

1713 Maratha confederacy established under Peshwas (to 1818)

1717 Emperor Farrukhsiyar awards British duty-free export privilege.

1724 Nizam-ul Mulk establishes rule in Hyderabad.

1727 Jai Singh founds city of Jaipur on grid plan.

1739 Persian invader Nadir Shah sacks Delhi.

1744 War of Austrian Succession in Europe (to 1748); Dupleix asserts French power in India

1756 Bengal Nawab Suraj-ud-daula conquers Calcutta.

1757 Battle of Plassey; British control of Bengal

1761 Afghans defeat Marathas at battle of Panipat; Haider Ali founds state of Mysore in south.

1764 British defeat combined forces of Bengal and Awadh *nawabs* and Mughal emperor, at Buxar (Baksar).

1765 Emperor awards British revenue-collecting rights (*diwani*) over Bengal.

#### CHAPTER 3 EAST INDIA COMPANY (1772–1850)

1772 Warren Hastings appointed first governor-general

1783 India Act establishes Board of Control.

1784 Asiatic Society of Bengal founded

1793 Cornwallis restricts Indian Civil Service positions to Europeans; Permanent Settlement of Bengal

1803 Conquest of Delhi; Mughal emperor confined to his palace as pensioner

1818 Defeat of Marathas; British control entire subcontinent outside northwest.

1819 Foundation of Hindu College, Calcutta

1828 Ram Mohan Roy founds Brahmo Samaj.

1829 Bentinck abolishes *sati*.

1835 Macaulay's Minute on Education

1849 Second Sikh War; conquest of Punjab; Dalhousie arrives as governor-general.

#### CHAPTER 4 REVOLT AND THE MODERN STATE (1848–1885)

1853 Railway construction begins, with guaranteed interest for investors.

1856 Annexation of Awadh (Oudh)

1857 Mutiny and revolt throughout northern India; first Indian universities established

1858 East India Company abolished; Mughal ruler exiled; Crown rule instituted

- 1868 Muslim academy established at Deoband
- 1872 First all-India census
- 1875 Sayyid Ahmad Khan founds MAO College, Aligarh; Dayanand Saraswati founds Arya Samaj.
- 1876 Empress of India Act
- 1877 Imperial Assemblage held by Lord Lytton
- 1878 Afghan War; Vernacular Press Act
- 1882 Liberal viceroy Ripon enacts local self-government for municipalities.
- 1884 Ilbert Bill guarantees Europeans trial by jury.
- 1885 Indian National Congress founded; final conquest of Burma

CHAPTER 5 CIVIL SOCIETY, COLONIAL CONSTRAINTS  
(1885–1919)

- 1891 Age of Consent Act
- 1893 Swami Vivekananda attends World Parliament of Religions; Tilak establishes Ganapati festival; rioting over cow protection
- 1896 Plague in Bombay
- 1899 Curzon arrives as viceroy (to 1905).
- 1901 Punjab Land Alienation Act prohibits transfer outside agricultural classes.
- 1905 Partition of Bengal; *swadeshi* movement begins; Gokhale founds Servants of India Society.
- 1906 Muslim League founded
- 1907 Tata Iron and Steel Company founded
- 1909 Indian Councils Act; Gandhi publishes ‘Hind Swaraj’.
- 1911 Partition of Bengal undone; Delhi made capital of India
- 1914 First World War begins; India participates on British side.



1916 Congress and League join in Lucknow Pact.

1917 Montagu Declaration, of eventual responsible government

CHAPTERS 6 AND 7 (1919–1950)

1919 Rowlatt Acts; Amritsar Massacre; Montagu-Chelmsford Report offers dyarchy

1920 Gandhi launches a non-violent campaign to secure Indian self-rule with the support of the Muslim Khilafat Movement and the Indian National Congress.

1922 Chauri Chaura killing; Gandhi calls off non-cooperation.

1925 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founded

1927 Simon Commission, of British MPs, appointed

1930 Gandhi inaugurates Civil Disobedience Movement with salt march to the sea to oppose British taxes; round table conferences held in London in effort to negotiate settlement

1932 Communal Award, and Poona Pact between Gandhi and Ambedkar

1935 Government of India Act

1937 Elections under 1935 Act give Congress control of seven provinces.

1939 Second World War; Congress ministries resign.

1940 Muslim League under M. A. Jinnah adopts Pakistan Resolution.

1942 Cripps Mission; 'Quit India' Movement

1943 Bengal Famine; Subhas Chandra Bose leader of INA in Singapore

1946 Elections give Congress and Muslim League overwhelming victories in Hindu and in Muslim majority areas; Cabinet Mission seeks compromise; Calcutta Killing initiates cycle of violence.

1947 India wins independence from Britain and is partitioned, creating a new India and the 'Muslim Homeland' of Pakistan. Up to a million people lose their lives during this transition.

1948 Gandhi assassinated by a Hindu Nationalist terrorist

#### CHAPTER 8 CONGRESS RAJ (1950–1989)

1950 Constitution of India adopted; India becomes a Republic.

1951-2 First general election; first Five Year Plan

1953 First linguistic state, Andhra Pradesh

1956 States Reorganization Commission

1962 India–China War over disputed boundary

1964 Death of Nehru; founding of Hindu VHP organization

1965 India–Pakistan War over Kashmir

1966 Indira Gandhi becomes prime minister (1966–77, 1980–4).

1967 Elections give victory to regional parties in east and south; start of Green Revolution

1971 East Pakistan demands autonomy from West Pakistan. Civil war leads to intervention by India and the birth of Bangladesh.

1974 India becomes the world's sixth nuclear power, detonating a nuclear device in Rajasthan.

1975 Emergency rule by Mrs Gandhi (to 1977)

1977 Coalition government under Janata Party (to 1979)

1980 Growing movement for independent Khalistan in Punjab

1984 Indira Gandhi killed by her guards after attack on Amritsar temple; Rajiv Gandhi takes office.

1985 Shah Bano decision on status of women under Muslim personal law

## CHAPTER 9 AND EPILOGUE (1989–2005)

1989 V. P. Singh takes office with Janata Dal party; Mandal Commission report; Kashmir insurgency begins.

1991 Congress government under P. V. Narasimha Rao (to 1996); acceleration of economic liberalization; Rajiv Gandhi assassinated

1992 Destruction of Babri mosque, Ayodhya, followed by anti-Muslim riots

1998 India and Pakistan detonate nuclear weapons and declare themselves nuclear states; BJP takes office under A. B. Vajpayee (to 2004).

1999 Kargil intrusion leads to brief war with Pakistan over Kashmir.

2002 Railway fire precipitates violence against Muslims throughout Gujarat.

2004 Congress returns to office under Manmohan Singh.

2005 India and United States sign agreement for the sharing of civil nuclear technology.



# 1

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## Sultans, Mughals, and pre-colonial Indian society

Imagine a time traveller standing in Mughal Delhi, amidst the splendor of the emperor Shah Jahan's (r. 1627–58) elegant, riverside city, in the year 1707 (plate 1.1). News had come of the death of Shah Jahan's long-ruling son, Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707) in the distant Deccan, where he had been engaged in arduously extending his vast empire. The traveller, understandably wondering what the death of a mighty monarch would mean, might first have looked back in time a century, say to the death of Shah, Jahan's grandfather, Akbar (r. 1556–1605). Had he done so, he would have seen the key institutions in place that had made the Mughals, in the intervening century, the most powerful empire the subcontinent had ever known. It was far greater in population, wealth, and power than the contemporaneous Turko-Mongol empires with which the Mughals shared so much: the Persian Safavids and the Ottoman Turks. The Mughal population in 1700 may have been 100 million, five times that of the Ottomans, almost twenty that of the Safavids. Given the trajectory of continuity and growth that had taken place in the seventeenth century, our time traveller at the turn of the eighteenth century might legitimately have imagined a Mughal future to match the glorious past.

But if, Janus-faced, the traveller then looked ahead a century, say to 1803, he would have found not continuity but extraordinary change. He would have seen an empire existing only in name amidst a landscape of competing regional powers. Among these regional states was one which, in 1707 only a minor European trading

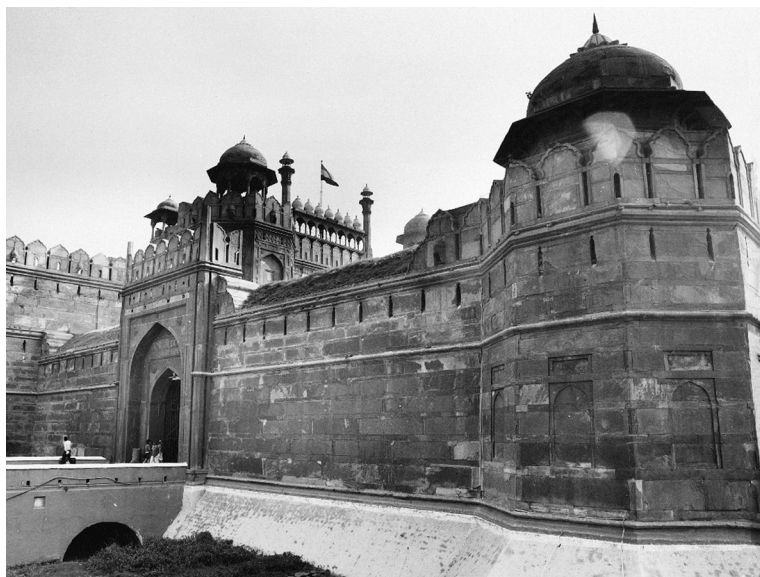


Plate 1.1 Shah Jahan's Red Fort, Delhi, now flying the flag of the republic of India.

body operating from coastal enclaves, was now transformed into a governing body based in the rich, eastern province of Bengal. The Mughal emperor, though still a symbolic overlord, was now confined to the area around Delhi, himself prey to Afghans, the western Deccan-based Marathas, and, in 1803, placed under the control of that very English Company which, as this new century turned, had lately come to a vision of creating an empire itself.

The most familiar ways of understanding the Mughal era in Indian history were forged in a framework created by the British as they themselves devised a national history for their own emerging nation. Central to their image of themselves, as well as to their image of what they came to see as a backward but incipient nation, was what the historian David Arnold has called the Orientalist 'triptych' of Indian history. In this vision, ancient 'Hindus' had once created a great civilization. With the advent of Islamic rulers in the early thirteenth century, Indian culture rigidified, political life gave way to despotism, and the gap between foreign 'Muslim' rulers and a native 'Hindu' populace of necessity made for a fragile