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978-1-107-02649-0 - A Concise History of Modern India: Third Edition

Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf

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## A Concise History of Modern India

*Third Edition*

*A Concise History of Modern India*, by Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, has become a classic in the field since it was first published in 2001. As a fresh interpretation of Indian history from the Mughals to the present, it has informed students across the world. In this third edition of the book, a final chapter charts the dramatic developments of the last twenty years, from the rise of the Indian high-tech industry in a country still troubled by poverty and political unrest. The narrative focuses on the fundamentally political theme of the imaginative and institutional structures that have successively sustained and transformed India, first under British colonial rule and then, after 1947, as an independent country. Woven into the larger political narrative is an account of India's social and economic development and its rich cultural life. Throughout, the authors argue that despite a powerful historiographical tradition to the contrary, no enduring meaning can be given to categories such as 'caste', 'Hindu', 'Muslim', or even 'India'.

BARBARA D. METCALF is Professor of History Emerita at the University of California, Davis. Her publications include *Islamic Revival in British India* (1982) and *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan* (2004).

THOMAS R. METCALF is Professor of History Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. His publications include *Ideologies of the Raj* (1995); *Forging the Raj: Essays on British India in the Heyday of Empire* (2005); and *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1870–1920* (2007).

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# *A Concise History of Modern India*

THIRD EDITION

BARBARA D. METCALF

*Professor Emerita, University of California, Davis*

and

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*Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley*



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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The first edition of *A Concise History of India* appeared in 2001, and covered events up to the end of the twentieth century in 2000. A second edition, titled *A Concise History of Modern India*, to more accurately reflect its coverage, appeared in 2006. That edition took the story of India up to 2005 and included the displacement of the BJP government by the Congress under Manmohan Singh the previous year. We are immensely grateful for the enthusiastic response this book has received over the last ten years from teachers, colleagues, and students. Although not meant as a textbook, to our pleasant surprise, *A Concise History of Modern India* has been widely adopted in college and university courses on South Asia.

The current third edition has left intact the material in Chapters 1 through 8, up to 1989. We revised these chapters extensively for the second edition, incorporating new perspectives and new research into our narrative. Even though a number of important studies have appeared over the last several years covering the colonial and early national periods, not to mention the eighteenth century, we did not consider revision necessary at this point. Chapter 9, however, and the Epilogue, had become seriously outdated and, to be useful, required a comprehensive revision amounting to a complete reorganization. The current Chapter 9 covers the twenty-year period from 1990 to 2010 as one continuous narrative. An attempt has been made, furthermore, to reorganize the chapter in a thematic rather than wholly chronological fashion. Its two major sections assess successively the changing nature of India's politics, with

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special attention given to the rise of Hindu nationalism, and the growth and consequences of economic liberalization over the twenty years since the coming into office in 1991 of the Narasimha Rao government. We reflect in particular on a troubling economic polarization, with growing affluence in the cities but profound disadvantage for others. Among the most depressed are the largely tribal populations of interior central and eastern India, where there has been endemic violence in recent years. The chapter concludes with a look at the fascinating question of the rivalry between India and China, the two Asian 'giants', as the locus of global economic power shifts eastward. In this section we have relied substantially on the writing of such experts as the distinguished economist Amartya Sen.

We have again retained the preface to the first edition because it contains information about India's historiography and geography that may be helpful to readers.

We want again to thank several colleagues who brought errors to our attention, or suggested topics that required further consideration, on the occasion of the preparation of the second edition. Among them are Sumit Guha, Ralph Nicholas, and Leonard Gordon. Taymiya Zaman, now at the University of San Francisco, worked with us in Ann Arbor to secure permissions for the illustrations and to create a new electronic text for the Press. In the preparation of this edition we are grateful for the assistance of Hannah Archambault and Emma Kalb, and for discussions at Berkeley and Stanford with Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Rudolph, Anupamo Rao, and other colleagues. We are grateful also to Susan Bean who helped us secure permission to use the M. F. Husain painting on the front cover. As always we are indebted to our enterprising and enthusiastic editor, Marigold Acland of Cambridge University Press, who has worked with us since this project first took shape some fifteen years ago.

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## 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, 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 handmaiden 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

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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



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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', whereas 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 mapmakers, 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.

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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, known as the Harappan or Indus (at its height between 2000 and 1500 B.C.), possessed close trading ties with Mesopotamia. Central Asian peoples reached the subcontinent in the centuries around 1000 B.C., bringing with them a language, the Indo-European, that also spread westwards into much of Europe. As a result, the languages that developed 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 to 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 learned early 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

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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, more than 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, the central Indian hills nevertheless 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 the centuries immediately preceding the colonial presence.

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 in New Delhi. Several friends and colleagues, most notably Catherine Asher, Frederick Asher, Rebecca Brown, and

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*Preface to the first edition*

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.

Berkeley, California, 2001

## 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 B.C.). 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 B.C.), 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

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*Glossary*

*bartal* 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 B.C.) 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, and the like

*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, and the like

*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 horsemen 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

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*nawab* Mughal governor; conventionally used in British India as a title for Muslim princes, chiefs, and the like. 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 between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries by Osmanli Turks, who ruled until the empire's dissolution in 1918 following World War I

*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

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

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

*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 C.E.)

*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 Sanskritic traditions, articulated above all in 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 B.C.), 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')



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## 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

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## CHRONOLOGY

### EARLY INDIA

c. 2600–1700 B.C. 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 the subcontinent thinly populated by hunters, gatherers, and herders.

c. 1500–1200 B.C. 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 south. Texts describe bronze tools, horses, complex cosmology.

c. 900–800 B.C. 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 Lakshman 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 B.C. ‘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 philosophies pursue concepts of reincarnation, karma, and complex cosmologies.

327–325 B.C. Invasion by Alexander the Great.

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

c. 200 B.C.–200 C.E. 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 the north-west and establish dynasties. According to legend, St Thomas begins preaching Christianity in India by 52 C.E.

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 an Arab dynasty in Sind.

985–1120 Establishment of Chola Empire in south India, conquests of Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Malaya; raids into the 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.

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

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

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

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 the Maratha stronghold to challenge Mughals.

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 the battle of Panipat; Haider Ali founds state of Mysore in the south.

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

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

1772 Warren Hastings appointed first governor-general.

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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 the Marathas; British control the entire subcontinent outside the north-west.

1819 Founding 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.

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.