

## India before Europe

Second Edition

India is a land of enormous diversity. Cross-cultural influences are everywhere in evidence, in the food people eat, the clothes they wear, and in the places they worship. This was ever the case, and at no time more so than in the India that existed from c. 1200 to 1750, before European intervention. In this thoughtfully revised and updated second edition, readers are taken on a richly illustrated journey across the political, economic, religious, and cultural landscapes of India – from the Ghurid conquest and the Delhi Sultanate, through the rise and fall of the southern kingdom of Vijayanagara and their successors, to the peripheries of empire, and the great court of the Mughals. This was a time of conquest and consolidation, when Muslims and Hindus came together to create a literary, material, and visual culture which was uniquely their own and which still resonates today.

CATHERINE B. ASHER is an art historian, focusing on the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. She has served as President of the Historians of Islamic Art, Vice President of the College Art Association and Chair of the CAA International Committee as well as Chair of the CAA Publications Committee. She has been Treasurer of the American Council for Southern Asian Art and Chair of the American Institute of Indian Studies Center for Art and Archaeology. Her publications include *Delhi's Qutb Complex: The Minar, Mosque and Mehrauli* (Marg Foundation), *The Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge University Press), and *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past* (American Institute of Indian Studies).

CYNTHIA TALBOT is a social and cultural historian whose research has focused on both south and north India. After studying temples and brahmins for years, in recent decades her interests have shifted to heroic histories and warrior culture. Her publications include *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (Oxford University Press), *Knowing India: Colonial and Modern Constructions of the Past* (Yoda Press), and *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200–2000* (Cambridge University Press), which received the Association for Asian Studies A. K. Coomaraswamy Book Award in 2018.

# India before Europe

---

Second Edition

Catherine B. Asher

*University of Minnesota*

Cynthia Talbot

*University of Texas at Austin*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-108-42816-3 — India before Europe  
Catherine B. Asher, Cynthia Talbot  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/highereducation/isbn/9781108428163](http://www.cambridge.org/highereducation/isbn/9781108428163)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108591904

First edition © Cambridge University Press 2006

Second edition © Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot 2023

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2006

10th printing 2017

Second edition published 2023

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Asher, Catherine B. (Catherine Blanshard), 1946– author. | Talbot, Cynthia, author.

Title: India before Europe / Catherine B. Asher, University of Minnesota, Cynthia Talbot, University of Texas, Austin.

Description: Second edition. | Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2023. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022024935 | ISBN 9781108428163 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781108591904 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: India – History – 1000–1765. | South Asia – History. |

India – Civilization – 1200–1765. | South Asia – Civilization. |

BISAC: HISTORY / Asia / South / General

Classification: LCC DS452 .A84 2023 | DDC 954.02–dc23/eng/20220610

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022024935>

ISBN 978-1-108-42816-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-44890-1 Paperback

Additional resources for this publication at [www.cambridge.org/india-before-europe](http://www.cambridge.org/india-before-europe)

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Contents

---

<i>List of Figures</i>	page vi
<i>List of Maps</i>	xii
<i>Preface to First Edition</i>	xiii
<i>Preface to Second Edition</i>	xvii
<i>Glossary</i>	xx
<i>Place Names: Alternative Spellings</i>	xxvii
1 Introduction: Situating India	1
2 The Expansion of Turkic Power, 1180–1350	28
3 Southern India in the Age of Vijayanagara, 1350–1550	62
4 North India between Empires: History, Society, and Culture, 1350–1550	98
5 Sixteenth-Century North India: Empire Reformulated	136
6 Expanding Political and Economic Spheres, 1550–1650	187
7 Elite Cultures in Seventeenth-Century South Asia	231
8 Challenging Central Authority, 1650–1750	288
9 Changing Socio-Economic Formations, 1650–1750	330
Epilogue	366
<i>Biographical Notes</i>	373
<i>Additional Bibliography</i>	378
<i>Index</i>	388

## Figures

---

Unless otherwise acknowledged all photographs are by  
 Frederick M. Asher and Catherine B. Asher

1.1	Rajarajeshvara temple, Thanjavur	<i>page</i> 17
1.2	Kandariya Mahadeva temple, Khajuraho	18
1.3	Great Mosque of Isfahan, Iran	25
2.1	Delhi's original Jami mosque, entrance to the prayer chamber dated 1198	33
2.2	Qutb Minar commenced 1199, Delhi's original Jami mosque	35
2.3	Iltutmish's Tomb, c. 1235, Delhi's original Jami mosque	38
2.4	Alai Darwaza, dated 1311, Delhi's original Jami mosque	44
2.5	Stone monolith dating to third century BCE, Firuzabad (Kotla Firuz Shah), Delhi	51
3.1	Plan of Vijayanagara. Courtesy of the Vijayanagara Research Project	71
3.2	Mahanavami Dibba, Vijayanagara	72
3.3	Gopura, sixteenth century and later. Virupaksha temple, Vijayanagara. Courtesy of John Gollings	76
3.4	Detail of carvings on the exterior enclosure wall, Ramachandra temple, Vijayanagara	78
3.5	Krishnadeva Raya and queens, Shri Venkateshvara temple, Tirupati. Courtesy Archaeological Survey of India	79
3.6	Chalukyan stepped reservoir reinstalled at Vijayanagara. Courtesy of Phillip Wagoner	80
3.7	Royal building known as the Elephant Stables, Vijayanagara	82
3.8	Mosque/ <i>dharmasala</i> , 1439, Vijayanagara	83
3.9	Painting showing court dress of Vijayanagara period, Virabhadra temple, Lepakshi	84
3.10	Mahmud Gawan's madrasa, fifteenth century, Bidar	88
4.1	Relief carving of hanging lamps in the mihrab (prayer niche), Adina mosque, Pandua	102

List of Figures	vii
4.2 Tomb of Shaikh Ahmad Khattu, at the dargah of Shaikh Ahmad Khattu, Sarkhej, Ahmadabad	108
4.3 Kalaka and the Shahi King in Conversation, <i>Kalpa Sutra</i> (Book of Sacred Precepts) and <i>Kalakacharya Katha</i> (Story of the Teacher Kalaka). Manuscript (99v), 1442, Satyapur, Gujarat, India. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase, M.72.53.18. Photograph © 2005 Museum Associates/LACMA	111
4.4 The Sultan Enjoying Pan, <i>Nimatnama</i> . By permission of the British Library, Ms Pers 149 f. 100v.	114
4.5 Tower of Victory, Chittor	117
4.6 Adinatha Jain Temple, Ranakpur	121
4.7 Krishna and the Gopis, leaf from a <i>Bhagavata Purana</i> series c. 1525–1540. Opaque watercolor on paper sheet: 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ in (17.5 × 23.2 cm). image: 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ in (13.7 × 22.5 cm). Brooklyn Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. H. Peter Findlay, 80.41	132
4.8 The Princess Seduced by her Tutor, <i>Chaurapanchashika</i> . Courtesy Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi	133
5.1 Kabuli Bagh mosque, Panipat	142
5.2 Qila-i Kuhna mosque, Purana Qila (Din Panah), Delhi	144
5.3 Tomb of Sher Shah, Sasaram	145
5.4 Tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti, Fatehpur Sikri	161
5.5 Interior pillar, Diwan-i Khass, Fatehpur Sikri	163
5.6 Krishna Holding Up Mount Govardhan, <i>Hari Vamsha</i> . Mughal period (1526–1858), date c. 1590–1595, ink, colors, and gold on paper 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ in (28.9 × 20 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Edward C. Moore Jr., Gift, 1928 (28.63.1). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image Source: Art Resource, NY	166
5.7 Tale XLIV; Kojasta, the Wife, Tries to Convince the Parrot to Give Her Permission to Meet Her Lover, <i>Tutinama</i> (Tales of a Parrot). India, Mughal school, reign of Akbar, Color and gold on paper, 20.3 × 14 cm. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1997, gift of Mrs. A. Dean Perry, 1962.279.282.b	169
5.8 Alamshah cleaving asunder the chain of the wheel, from volume 11 of a <i>Hamza-nama</i> (Adventures of Hamza) c. 1560s–1570s. Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of George P. Bickford, 1976.74	171
5.9 Virgin Mary. Courtesy Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi	172

## viii List of Figures

- 5.10 Akbar Riding a Mad Elephant, *Akbarnama*. V&A Picture Library, IS. 2:21–1896 174
- 5.11 Akbar Walking to Ajmer, *Akbarnama*. V&A Picture Library, IS.2:77–1896 175
- 5.12 *Khamsa* (Quintet) of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi: A Muslim Pilgrim Learns a Lesson in Piety from a Brahmin, 1597–1598. Mughal period. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. H. 9 $\frac{7}{8}$  in (25.1 cm) W: 6 $\frac{1}{4}$  in (15.9 cm). Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran. 1913, (13.228.29). Image Copyright @ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Image source, Art Resource, NY 177
- 5.13 Rama Stalks a Demon Who Has Assumed the Form of a Golden Deer, *Ramayana*. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1907.271.128b 180
- 5.14 Interior, Govinda Deva temple. Vrindavan 182
- 6.1 Allegorical Representation of Emperor Jahangir and Shah Abbas of Persia, *The St. Petersburg Album*. Artist, Abu'l Hasan. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Purchase – Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1945.9a 194
- 6.2 Gujarati cotton resist dyed cloth for the Southeast Asian market, fourteenth-century detail showing hand painted floral forms. Courtesy Tapi Collection 196
- 6.3 Ludolf Bakhuizen, *View of Surat from Sea*, seventeenth century. © National Maritime Museum, London 199
- 6.4 Char Minar, Hyderabad 208
- 6.5 Sufi Receiving a Visitor, Bijapur. Ms. Douce Or b.2 folio 1 recto. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford 209
- 6.6 Portrait of Ibrahim Adil Shah II, Bijapur. © The Trustees of The British Museum 213
- 6.7 Procession of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and Bhagmati, Golkonda. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Oxford 214
- 6.8 Tent cloth, seventeenth century, Golkonda. V&A Picture Library, IS. 19–1989 217
- 6.9 The King Adorns his Beloved. c. 1725, Ramalingavilasam, the Audience Hall of the Cetupati (Setupati) Kings, in Ramanathapuram (Ramnad), Tamil Nadu. Courtesy Anna Seastrand 222
- 6.10 Two box panels with loving couples. Late seventeenth century: ivory backed and gilded paper. 5 $\frac{1}{16}$  × 8 in (14.4 × 20.3 cm). Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gift,

List of Figures	ix
2013 (2013.981a, b). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, U.S.A. Image copyright @ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Image Source, Art Resource	223
6.11 South Indian textile showing Vijayanagara influence, cloth, 1 of 7 pieces, c. 1610–1640. India. Cotton, drawn and painted resist and mordants, dyed 109¼ × 38¼ in (277.5 × 97.2 cm). Brooklyn Museum. 14.719.7. Museum Expedition 1913–1914, Museum Collection Fund 14.719.7	227
7.1 Allegorical portrait of Jahangir and Muin al-Din Chishti. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, 07A.5,07A.14	234
7.2 Darbar of Jahangir, <i>Jahangirnama</i> , attributed to Manohar. Indian, Mughal period, about 1620. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper 35 × 20 cm (13¾ × 7⅞ in). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Francis Bartlett Donation of 1912 and Picture Fund, 14.654. Photograph © 2006 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	235
7.3 Shah Jahan Standing on a Globe. Inscribed (later) to Hashim, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Purchase – Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1939.49a	236
7.4 Jahangir Receives Prince Khurram on His Return from the Deccan, <i>Padshahnama</i> . The Royal Collection. © HM Queen Elizabeth II, MS 1367, folios 48B, 49A	238
7.5 Khanjar dagger. India, 1660s. Overall 34.4 cm (13⅝ in). Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of S. D. Wright 1930.708	240
7.6 The Illumined Tomb (Taj Mahal), Agra. Courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies, Center for Art and Archaeology	242
7.7 Jami mosque, Shahjahanabad, Delhi	245
7.8 Shah Jahan's Jharoka, Public Audience Hall, Shahjahanabad Palace, Delhi	247
7.9 Nur Jahan Holding a Portrait of Emperor Jahangir, c. 1627. Artist, Bishandas, Gum tempera and gold on paper, Painting only: 13.6 × 6.4 cm (5⅜ × 2½ in); Page: 30 × 22.1 cm (11⅜ × 8⅜ in). Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift in honor of Madeline Neves Clapp; Gift of Mrs. Henry White Cannon by exchange; Bequest of Louise T. Cooper; Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund; From the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection 2013.325	251
7.10 Tomb of Nur Jahan's parents known as the tomb of Itimad al-Daula, Agra	253



x	List of Figures	
7.11	Jagdish temple, Udaipur	259
7.12	Ravana Prepares for Battle, <i>Ramayana</i> of Jagat Singh Sisodiya. By permission of the British Library, add. 15297 (1) f. 138r	260
7.13	Map of Amber, 1711, detail showing the palace and the temple built by Raja Man Singh for his heir. Courtesy National Museum, New Delhi	262
7.14	Malasri Ragini from the Chunar <i>Ragamala</i> Series (or Gaund Ragini), 1592. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper. Dimensions: actual: 22.5 × 14.8 cm (8 <sup>7</sup> / <sub>8</sub> × 5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>6</sub> in). Credit Line: Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift in gratitude to John Coolidge, Gift of Leslie Cheek, Jr., Anonymous Fund in memory of Henry Berg, Louise Haskell Daly, Alpheus Hyatt, Richard Norton Memorial Funds and through the generosity of Albert H. Gordon and Emily Rauh Pulitzer; formerly in the collection of Stuart Cary Welch, Jr. Copyright: Photo: ©President and Fellows of Harvard College	264
7.15	Chaturbhuj temple, Orchha	266
7.16	The Betel Seller, <i>Rasikpriya</i> , early seventeenth century, possibly Orchha. Courtesy of an Anonymous American Collector	267
7.17	Amar Singh Sisodiya sati memorial, Ahar, Udaipur. Courtesy Jennifer Joffe	270
7.18	Mangammal and her grandson, Vijayaranga Chokkanatha, c. 1700 Mangammal Mandapa, Minakshi-Sundareshvara temple complex, Madurai. Courtesy Crispin Branfoot	272
7.19	Bidri Pandan with Chevrons. c. 1700, Bidar, Zinc alloy with silver overlay, Diameter: 15 cm (5 <sup>7</sup> / <sub>8</sub> in); height: 10.5 cm (4 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub> in). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Severance and Greta Millikin Purchase Fund, 2020.206	273
7.20	Yogini in a Landscape, seventeenth century, Bijapur. @ The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, 11A.31	275
7.21	Shyam Ray temple, 1643, Vishnupur, West Bengal. Courtesy Pika Ghosh	279
7.22	Tomb of Muin al-Din Chishti, Ajmer	281
7.23	Minakshi temple, Madurai. Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections	283

List of Figures	xi
8.1 Aurangzeb, early eighteenth century, Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, $6\frac{1}{16} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ in (16.98 × 11.43 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by Dorothy and Richard Sherwood, M.72.88.1	294
8.2 Jahanara's tomb, Nizam al-Din Auliya dargah, Delhi	295
8.3 Posthumous portrait of Shivaji Bhonsle. Late seventeenth century, with inscription in Dutch on the frame. Photo: Thierry Ollivier. Musee des Arts Asiatiques, Guimet Paris @ RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY	307
8.4 Fortification wall, Pratapgad	311
8.5 Shiva temple, 1674, Raigad. Courtesy George Michell	312
8.6 Vishnupad temple, Gaya	313
8.7 Fakhr al-Masajid, 1728–1729, Shahjahanabad, Delhi	316
8.8 Jami mosque known as the Katra mosque, Murshidabad	322
8.9 Street showing the Natani family mansion, Jaipur	324
8.10 Rana Amar Singh II in Udaipur during a monsoon downpour, c. 1700, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Purchase and partial gift made in 2012 from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection – Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F2012.4.2	326
9.1 Chintz palampore, Coromandel Coast. Courtesy Tapi Collection	333
9.2 Hendrik van Schuylenberg, <i>Headquarters of the Dutch Trading Company at Hugli</i> . Courtesy Rijksmuseum Foundation, Amsterdam	338
9.3 Half rupee issued with names of King William and Queen Mary, 1692, Silver. © The Trustees of The British Museum	339
9.4 Palace, Dig, Badan Singh (1722–1756) and enlarged 1756–1763 under Suraj Mal	342
9.5 Imaginary Meeting Between Guru Nanak, Mardana Sahib, and Other Sikh Gurus, c. 1780. India, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Purchased with funds provided by Dorothy and Richard Sherwood, M.74.88.3. Photography © 2005 Museum Associates/LACMA	344
9.6 Daud Khan serai, Daudnagar, Bihar c. 1659–1664	352
9.7 Portrait of an Officer of the East India Company, probably William Fullerton of Rosemount, Murshidabad. V&A Picture Library, IM.33–1912	363

## Maps

---

1.1 South Asia today	<i>page</i> 9
1.2 Physical geography of South Asia	13
2.1 South Asia and Afghanistan, c. 1200	30
2.2 Ala al-Din Khalji's campaigns	42
3.1 South India in the fifteenth century	65
4.1 North India in the fifteenth century	100
5.1 Mughal empire under Babur, Akbar, and Aurangzeb	139
6.1 South India, c. 1550	205
7.1 Seven cities of Delhi	244
8.1 Maratha expansion through the eighteenth century	301
9.1 South Asia, c. 1750	337

## Preface to First Edition

---

*India before Europe* is the product of collaboration between two scholars from different disciplines, who have joined together to write a volume on Indian history and culture from 1200 to 1750. Catherine Asher is an art historian who has worked on north India's Indic, Islamic, and Islami-cate cultural traditions. Cynthia Talbot is a historian who has worked largely on the social history of pre-Mughal south India and also is aware of larger trends in world history. When first approached by Marigold Acland of Cambridge University Press to write a history of the 500 plus years immediately prior to the rise of British colonial power in India, neither of us felt competent to tackle this challenging task alone. Only by pooling our quite distinct spheres of training and knowledge, we thought, could we possibly do justice to the complexity and richness of this very important era. Little did we realize then how much more we had to learn, not only from each other but also from a wide range of individuals upon whose scholarship we relied. The end result is one that neither of us could have achieved on our own.

The book was written jointly in Austin and Minneapolis when the two authors could meet, but more often it evolved in cyberspace, where attachments were constantly zinging across the country or, at times, even across countries, for the other person's perusal. Although first drafts of specific sections or chapters were composed individually, in the end every word was evaluated and edited by both of us. We hope the outcome is a text that reads as if it were authored by a single writer, not two.

An important motivation for both of us was the desire to provide a text that would be useful to specialists and non-specialists alike, something that would bridge the vast gap in the secondary literature between the introductory work on South Asia, on the one hand, and the many scholarly monographs and articles, on the other. The need for an up-to-date survey is particularly acute for the period with which we are concerned here, the years from 1200 to 1750, since the roots of many controversial issues that divide the peoples of South Asia along national, regional, religious, and ethnic lines today are thought to lie in that era.

We have attempted to offer a balanced, interdisciplinary perspective, one that encompasses artistic culture as well as political achievement, and also recognizes the role played by different communities from a variety of regions. By this means, we hope to express our appreciation of the diverse cultures and societies of South Asia that we have had the privilege to study for many years.

A small note on the text is in order. We have italicized foreign words and terms only the first time they are introduced. If a word is used more than once with a gloss, then it is included in the glossary. There is an appendix with short biographies of the most important personalities discussed in the work. We have used many of the older terms for Indian cities, since these are often closer to the names that were used during the period under consideration than are today's more modern ones. While we have made an attempt to use a consistent transliteration system, in a number of cases we have used commonly accepted spellings, especially for temple names.

Since we are not able to mention, in the body of the text, all the scholars whose works we consulted in the writing of this book, we present an extensive bibliography instead. The help and cooperation of many other individuals and institutions were needed to complete this project, however. To provide a complete list would not be possible, but some indeed must be acknowledged. Three institutions should be thanked for their generous financial assistance: the American Institute of Indian Studies, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Texas at Austin.

Others we must thank include current and former students whose work has benefited ours in so many ways, especially Deborah Hutton, Jennifer Joffe, and Riyaz Latif, upon whose expertise we frequently relied. Colleagues at institutions here and abroad to whom we are indebted include Steven Cohen, Rosemary Crill, Carl Ernst, John Fritz, Henry Ginsberg, Pika Ghosh, Catherine Glynn, Donald Clay Johnson, Janice Leoshko, Stephen Markel, George Michell, Carla Petievich, Dede Ruggles and Susan Stronge. We are grateful to Susan Deans-Smith, Julie Hardwick, and Martha Newman for their thoughtful comments on the introductory chapter, and also to Phillip Wagoner for carefully reading the entire text during a very busy time and providing useful suggestions. Barbara Metcalf, Thomas Metcalf, Sandria Freitag, and David Gilmartin have provided much-needed support throughout the project. In India, Dr. Pradeep Mehendiratta and Purnima Mehta have opened doors when we thought nothing could be done. M. A. Dhaky, U. S. Moorti, and Jagdish Yadav have also provided tremendous assistance over the years. Alisa Eimen worked tirelessly on procuring plates from museums and

institutions. Virginia Larson and Rebecca Moss spent hours scanning the illustrations. Julianna Budding deserves our deep appreciation for the speed with which she produced the elegant maps included here, with the exception of Map 1.2 which Maria Lane provided. We thank our families – Eric Schenk, Rick Asher, Alice Asher, Tom Asher, and Dana Bilsky – for the help and support they have given throughout this project. We are especially grateful to Eric Schenk for his meticulous reading of our final draft. To all of you, including those who helped but go unmentioned, many thanks.

## Preface to Second Edition

---

Over fifteen years have passed since the first edition of *India before Europe* was published and, in that time span, the world has become even more interconnected. The rapid acceleration of globalization has led to increased migration from South Asia to other regions, as well as easier access to South Asia for people from abroad. Although the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down the movement of people from one place to another, the trend is inexorable for the foreseeable future as families, friends, businesses, institutions, and other socio-economic networks continue to spread out over larger expanses of space. Just as striking as the increase in the migration and mobility of people in recent years is the speed with which electronic technology and social media has hastened the transmission of ideas and information around the globe, making it possible for almost instantaneous conversation on a mass scale. This trend too is likely to grow in the coming years, despite efforts by many states to control the content of discourse for both negative and positive reasons. While we had not imagined, when we wrote the first edition of this book, that the physical and intellectual distances between places would shrink so swiftly, we are heartened by these developments in the recent past and gratified, in retrospect, that the issue of cultural exchange was so central to our book about the more distant past. We continue with that emphasis in the second edition.

We are also pleased that scholarship on the period from 1200 to 1750 has burgeoned since *India before Europe* first appeared. Much new work has been done on topics covered in that edition as well as on other aspects of premodern India. Current work on the Mughals especially has been both exciting and inspirational as we prepared this second edition. Among these riches are new interpretations of the Mughal state policy of *sulh-i kull*, thoughtful reevaluations of the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, probing studies of nobles and their administrators, and stimulating reassessments of the imperial princes. Insightful work on Aurangzeb and the later Mughals has offered fresh approaches. Impressive new scholarship on the Deccani sultanates and south Indian polities has also

xviii Preface to Second Edition

guided us in formulating this second edition. Studies on Mughal, Deccani, and southern Indian art, architecture, and material remains have made us think more carefully about the role visual culture played in state formation and consolidation as well as providing personal pleasure. Thanks to this latest scholarship we were inspired to enhance this second edition with more on topics such as merchants, Indian Ocean trade, elite women, food and plant history, textiles, painting from Rajput, Mughal, Deccani and south Indian courts, patronage of Indic languages in Persianate courts, poetry in regional languages and more.

The growing interest in the era from 1200 to 1750 is reflected not only in the increase in specialized research but also the composition of surveys of the period. In addition to *India before Europe*, works such as Richard Eaton's *India in the Persianate Age* (2019) and André Wink's *The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (2020) provide nuanced understandings of historical developments, especially in regards to the interactions of the subcontinent's multiple communities and India's place within world history. Our text considers these topics as well but one notable distinction, in comparison to other surveys, is its substantial, detailed focus on cultural developments, both Indic and Islamicate. This includes visual and material culture and the many literatures produced in South Asia during this period.

Readers of the first edition have asked how to find color illustrations of the material included. Most monuments covered are relatively well known and web searches will usually yield images suitable for presentations. For objects and paintings again general web searches are useful, but we suggest consulting the List of Figures at the front of this book in order to identify the museum or library that holds the particular object or painting. Many of these institutions have excellent websites with accessible high-quality images along with detailed information. To further assist the reader we have provided a list of Further Reading at the end of each chapter. There is also a lengthy Additional Bibliography at the back of the book.

Since the authors were geographically distant, almost all of the second edition of *India before Europe* was written in cyberspace due to the difficulties of travel during the pandemic that commenced in 2019. Thanks to the internet and email we were able to again gain the assistance of many of those we acknowledged in the first edition. For this edition we would like to thank others for their invaluable expertise and suggestions for improvement including Molly Aitken, Eric Beverley, Crispin Branfoot, Allison Busch, John Cort, Debra Diamond, Daniel Ehnbohm, Mary Beth Heston, Dipti Khera, Karen Leonard, Leslie Orr, Vijay Pinch, Sheldon Pollock, Yael Rice, Nicholas Roth, Katherine Schofield, Anna



Seastrand, Tony Stewart, and the anonymous reviewers of both the prospectus and final draft. Eric Schenk is to be thanked for his patience while revisions to the text were slowly completed in a world ravaged by the pandemic. Most of all, however, we would like to honor the memory of Rick Asher, who sadly died before this book went to press. Even while suffering from a terminal illness, Rick took on the responsibility of obtaining permissions to publish all the images used here, a difficult and time-consuming task for which we are extremely grateful. We cannot list all the innumerable ways in which he helped us move this project forward, not to mention his constant support and good cheer which buoyed our spirits – we dedicate this book to him.

## Glossary

---

*Adi Granth* the most sacred scripture in the Sikh religion

*amir* a noble in a Muslim court

*Avadhi* an important literary language of early modern north India; a vernacular form of Hindi from the Lucknow region

*bangla* a roof with a curved cornice

*Baniya* refers to various Hindu and Jain merchant-banker communities of northern and western India

*baraka* a Sufi saint's spiritual power, thought to emanate from the tomb even after death

*Bengali* a regional language of eastern India, spoken today in India's West Bengal state and in Bangladesh

*bhakti* a type of Hindu religious worship characterized by an intense personal devotion to a deity often expressed in poem-songs

*Brahmi* a writing system dating back to at least the third century BCE, from which all subsequent Indian scripts were derived except the few based on Perso-Arabic

*Brahmin* the highest category in the Hindu *varna* or class system whose traditional occupation was that of priest or religious teacher, but who often served as poets, ministers, or accountants to kings and lords because of their literacy and education

*Brajhasha* a north Indian vernacular language that was a precursor of Hindi. Early compositions in Brajhasha consisted mainly of religious poems with heavy bhakti overtones but over time it became a literary language of north Indian elite courts.

*char bagh* a four-part garden generally believed to have been introduced into India by the Mughals; the Mughal version has its origins in the traditions of the Timurids

*chintz* a printed and/or hand painted cotton fabric

*Chishti* the most popular Sufi order in India; the major Chishti saints included here are Muin al-Din Chishti, Nizam al-Din Auliya, and Shaikh Salim Chishti; the Mughals were especially devoted to the Chishti order

*Dakani* a form of Hindavi developed in the Deccan between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries as a literary language; also referred to as Old Urdu

*dargah* the tomb of a Sufi saint that becomes a shrine

*darshan(a)* seeing or beholding a Hindu or Jain deity or a king

*Deccani* local nobility in the Deccan Sultanates as opposed to the foreign-born Westerners

*deshmukh* headman of 20–100 villages in the Maratha country; a type of rural gentry

*dharma* broadly connotes righteousness, religious truth, or moral duty in Indic thought, but also often refers to one's social obligations to family or community

*dhoti* an unsewn garment for a male that is wrapped around the waist

*Din-i Ilahi* a discipleship relation between Akbar and his closest nobles

*Diwan-i Amm* Public Audience Hall in the Mughal and related courts

*Diwan-i Khass* Private Audience Hall in the Mughal and related courts

*doab* literally, two rivers; the alluvial land lying between two rivers that eventually merge into each other

*gopura* a gateway into the compound of a south Indian temple; tall, elaborate *gopuras* are common from the fourteenth century onward

*Habshi* Abyssinians brought from Africa to the Deccan as military slaves and converted to Sunni Islam. They served in the regular army, as the sultan's bodyguards, and some rose to high positions as ministers and generals.

*haram* literally, forbidden; the female quarters of a household or court; the female members of the court

*Hindavi* an Indo-Islamic term for the indigenous languages of India that were the predecessors of modern Hindi and Urdu, sometimes referred to simply as "Hindi"

xxii Glossary

*hookah* a water pipe used for smoking tobacco

*iqta* in Muslim states of the pre-Mughal era, a territory assigned to a political subordinate who had administrative authority over it and used some its revenue to maintain troops

*jagir* lands whose revenues were assigned to a Mughal *mansabdar* in lieu of salary

*jagirdar* the holder of a *jagir*

*Jain* a follower of the enlightened beings known as Jinas and the religion today called Jainism; Jains strive to lead an ascetic lifestyle and are often bankers and merchants

*Jat* a martial peasant community predominantly found in western north India

*jharoka* the term for a throne used by the Mughal rulers

*jharoka-i darshan* the Mughal emperor's public viewing window where he appeared each morning so the public could behold his image

*jizya* a tax on non-Muslims that in turn gave them protection under Islamic law

*Kannada* a regional language of southern India, spoken today in Karnataka state

*khanazad* literally, son; a noble who served the Mughal emperor loyally as if he was a family member

*khanjar* a curved sword often with a handle made of expensive materials such as jade; it was usually worn in a noble's waistband

*khanqah* residential compound of a Sufi teacher

*Krishna* an incarnation of the god Vishnu whose exploits as a child and a young man are particularly popular among worshippers

*kshatriya* the second highest category in the Hindu *varna* or class system whose traditional occupation was that of king or warrior

*madrassa* school for Islamic religious instruction

*Mahabharata* one of India's two great epics transmitted both in Sanskrit and in regional languages, focusing on a struggle for succession between cousins and featuring the god Krishna

*mandapa* a porch or porches that are before the inner sanctum of a Hindu or Jain temple

*mansabdar* a noble who held a mansab rank in the Mughal administrative system, which entitled him to either a salary or lands (*jagir*) whose yields would equal a salary, in return for supplying a specified number of troops and horses

*Marathi* a regional language of the Deccan, spoken today in Maharashtra state

*mihrab* niche in the *qibla* wall of a mosque

*Natha* a Hindu ascetic order that sought immortality through the practice of yoga

*naubat* official orchestra that would play when the emperor was in court; sometimes called a *naqqar*

*nayaka* a warrior lord of south India; later the name of several dynasties who succeeded the Vijayanagara state

*nayamkara* a territory assigned to a political subordinate of the Vijayanagara empire who used some of its revenue to maintain troops

*pan* a digestive consisting of areca nut among other ingredients wrapped in a betel leaf; offering pan was a perquisite of hospitality

*patola* a luxury fabric where the threads of both the warp and woof are tie-dyed prior to weaving, creating a reversible design

*Persian* the court language of Muslims in Iran, Central Asia, and India, especially under the Mughals

*Peshwa* title of the Brahmin prime minister of the Maratha court who became the de facto ruler

*prasad(a)* food offered to Hindu deities and thus sanctified; often distributed or sold later to devotees for their consumption

*pardah* seclusion of women

*qawwali* ecstatic songs in honor of Sufis by *qawwal* singer-musicians

*qazi* a judge in the classical Islamic tradition; in Mughal India and the various sultanates they settled disputes, issued legal deeds, judged people charged with crime, officiated at marriages and dealt with other civil matters

xxiv Glossary

*qibla* direction of Mecca toward which all Muslims pray

*Ragamala* literally, a garland of musical modes; it often refers to a set of paintings loosely based on these modes

*raja* a non-Muslim king or lord; the Sisodiyas of Mewar used the title *rana* instead

*Ram(a)* an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu who was an exemplary king

*Ramayana* one of India's two great epics transmitted both in Sanskrit and in regional languages, focusing on the life of the god-king Rama

*rasa* a term used in Indian aesthetics to denote specific moods or emotions; also connoisseurship, flavor

*rupee* the monetary unit used in north India since the sixteenth century; a silver coin

*sama* listening to music, often with an ecstatic character, at Chishti *dargahs*, with the goal of finding union with god

*Sanskrit* classical language of India that continued to be used for literary production at many non-Muslim courts and religious centers

*Sant* a saint-poet of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century north India who sought direct experience of god; often they were of low caste and envisioned god or the divine as lacking form and attributes

*serai* an inn for a traveler

*sharia* laws concerning all aspects of a Muslim's life

*Shia* the smaller of the two main groups of Muslims, who reject the authority of the caliphs, and instead believe that members of the Prophet Muhammad's family were his rightful successors

*shikhara* a superstructure, often of considerable height, on Hindu and Jain temples, erected over the central sanctuary

*Shiva* a major Hindu god, celebrated for his ascetic ways and his dance of destruction that brings about the end of time; he is the husband of Parvati and father of Ganesha and Skanda

*shudra* the lowest category in the Hindu *varna* or class system whose traditional occupation was service, but who engaged in many activities including agriculture

*Sikh* member of a religious faith first established by Guru Nanak c. 1500 that developed largely in the Punjab

*Sufi* Muslim mystics, often organized in various orders, whose spiritual leaders guide novices through meditation, prayer, and at times specific practices, in order to find oneness with god

*sulh-i kull* peace to all; universal toleration promoted by the Mughal state under Akbar and Abu al-Fazl

*sultan* title initially used by Muslim rulers of Turkic extraction to indicate their possession of political power, but later employed by many Muslim kings; a state ruled by a sultan is known as a sultanate

*Sunni* the majority of Muslims who accept the historical development of Islam after the Prophet Muhammad's death

*Tamil* a regional language of southern India with a long literary history, spoken today in Tamil Nadu state

*Telugu* a regional language of southern India, spoken today in Andhra Pradesh state

*ulama* Muslim scholars versed in religious and legal texts

*ummah* the community of people espousing Islam

*Urdu* identified with north Indian Muslim culture since the eighteenth century, this language blends vernacular Hindi grammar with Perso-Arabic vocabulary

*urs* literally, marriage; the date a Muslim saint or a member of royalty died; anniversary commemoration at the tomb of a deceased saint, ruler, or member of a royal family

*Vaishnava* individuals or groups devoted to the worship of Vishnu in his various forms; their beliefs and practices are collectively designated as Vaishnavism in English

*varna* one of the four classes in the classical Indian conception of society; sometimes used in reference to the entire system of four classes

*Vishnu* a major Hindu god whose ten incarnations include Rama and Krishna; he is the husband of Lakshmi and often regarded as the preserver of the universe

*watan jagir* ancestral lands of Mughal nobles who were princes in their own right

xxvi Glossary

*Yogini* female ascetics devoted to the Hindu god Shiva

*zamindar* a person who had the hereditary right to collect revenues from a village or group of villages, often designated as a tax-collector by the Mughal state

*zikr* recollection of god's ninety-nine names, in Islam

*zimmi* a Muslim term for people of the Book, Jews and Christians, whose histories are included in the Quran as having a shared religious tradition with Islam



## Place Names: Alternative Spellings

---

Older spellings	Contemporary spellings
Allahabad	Prayagraj
Bangalore	Bengaluru
Benares/Banaras	Varanasi
Bijapur	Vijayapura
Bombay	Mumbai
Calcutta	Kolkata
Calicut	Kozhikode
Cochin	Kochi
Dacca	Dhaka
Gulbarga	Kalaburagi
Madras	Chennai
Orissa	Odisha
Pondicherry	Puducherry
Tanjore	Thanjavur
Trivandrum	Thiruvananthapuram