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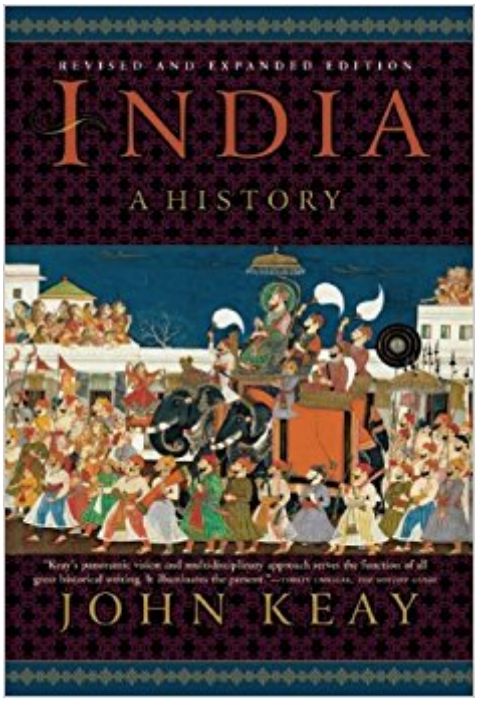
India: A History. Revised And Updated



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Synopsis

Fully revised with forty thousand new words that take the reader up to present-day India, John Keayâ ™s India: A History spans five millennia in a sweeping narrative that tells the story of the peoples of the subcontinent, from their ancient beginnings in the valley of the Indus to the events in the region today. In charting the evolution of the rich tapestry of cultures, religions, and peoples that comprise the modern nations of Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, Keay weaves together insights from a variety of scholarly fields to create a rich historical narrative. Wide-ranging and authoritative, India: A History is a compelling epic portrait of one of the worldâ ™s oldest and most richly diverse civilizations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is by far the best general history of India which I have found(I can only speak of English texts). Keay covers the full sweep of Indian history without spending two thirds of the book on the last two hundred years. Most other Indian historis focus too much on the colonial era. Moreover, when they describe pre-colonial times they mainly talk about the great "highpoints" such as the the Mauryan empire, the Gupta empire and the Great Moguls. Yet these highpoints only lasted for a small portion of the timeline of Indian history and usually left large portions of the subcontinent outside their way. The book has a superb graph which illustrates this point.Keay explicits states that he wants to avoid the common practice of treating Indian history as different. Most other histories deemphasize chronology and emphasize religion and society (especially the caste system). They almost treat India as timeless. While religion and society are very important topics, I found it very

refreshing to read Keay’s book with its greater emphasis on chronology. I strongly feel that he found a much better balance than I read in other popular histories of India.Keay expertly strings together the various threads of India’s history. This is no easy task given what at times is a plethora of dynasties and rulers. He was able to strike a good balance in giving a lot of information, without making the text tedious. "India: A History" is a book of which I have already reread portions, and I am sure I will consult it many times in the future.

India has five thousand years of history that we have enough evidence to write about. Any book that can simply be coherent and readable while covering so much ground is an achievement. John Keay’s "India: A History" is more than that, though; it is superbly-written and powerfully narrated.Keay notes in the introduction that he has deliberately avoided focusing more on recent history than on ancient: "a history which reserves half its narrative for the 19th and 20th centuries may seem more relevant, but it can scarcely do justice to India’s extraordinary antiquity." Naturally the availability of more historical sources does increase the attention paid to recent events, but still the Raj does not appear till nearly three quarters of the way through, and the 20th century and the real start of the struggle for independence is close to the end of the book. The result is a long, thoughtful and detailed telling of many of the dynasties and civilization that flourished in India -- though, as Keay also says in the introduction, only the highlights are mentioned, since "with perhaps 20 to 40 dynasties co-existing within the subcontinent at any one time, it would be [. . .] sado-masochism [to include them all]". So even at this extra level of detail there has been substantial editing. And there could have been more; the book’s only fault is that Keay mentions just too many of the endless dynastic dramas. The essence of a one-volume history is selective editing, and the book could have been shorter and a little less dry in places.However, the picture of India that emerges is deep, complex and fascinating, from the earliest Harappan archaeological relics through to the Gandhis. The Raj is of course particularly interesting: although technologically and industrially the British clearly surpassed them greatly at the time of the Raj, some of the diplomatic exchanges that Keay retails show the Indians as being more sophisticated, more civilized, and in many ways just smarter than the British. It was inevitable that the yoke would be thrown off; the only question was what India would be able to do with its independence.Keay’s prose is also a great pleasure; he has a wonderfully dry sense of humour, and he conveys exciting events with panache but also with precision and clarity.Recommended.

India is one of the world’s oldest civilizations. John Keay focuses on the centuries after the arrival of

the Europeans and British and the social effects of foreign influence.He begins the book in 3000 B.C., then parallels the Aryan invasion and moves through Indian history and sweeps through British rule with critical accounts of British government that are deeply moving and revealing. This book is definitely no apology for British rule. He demonstrates industrial deforestation of India by the British and the social consequences of this and other enviromental and economic actions.He continues on through Ghandi into the modern period and the difficulties of government and leadership in the post-Ghandi period.The books is written with great scholarship, although Mr. Keay's opinions dominate throughout. This books is definitely seen through the author's eyes and is perhaps, less objective than this reader desires, yet the thrilling perspective and colorful sequence of Indian history race through the reader's mind, with clear and beautifully written prose.Highly recommended for general reading. If someone desires greater scholarship, one must go to more specific references, however this is the finest general history of India that I have yet read. In fact, I cannot put the book down.

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