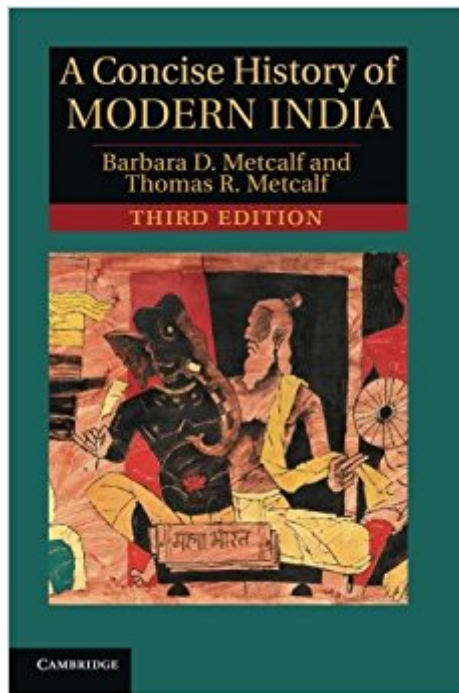


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A Concise History Of Modern India, 3rd Edition



Synopsis

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 the third edition of the book, a final chapter charts the dramatic developments of the last twenty years, from 1990 through the Congress electoral victory of 2009, to 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'.

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Customer Reviews

'This is a beautifully written book, intended for the smart and engaged general reader of history, as well as students of South Asia. A classic in the field!' Durba Ghosh, Cornell University'A Concise History of Modern India is an indispensable guide to Indian history, culture, religion, and politics from the fourteenth century to India's emergence as a major player in information technology and the global economy in the new millennium. Beautifully crafted, lucidly written, and analytically uncompromising this book is invaluable to scholars interested in the rich and contradictory history of

the world's largest democracy.' Rochona Majumdar, University of Chicago

The Metcalfs' classic history of India has informed students across the world since publication in 2001. This third edition charts the developments of the last twenty years, from 1990 through the Congress electoral victory of 2009, to the rise of the Indian high-tech industry in a country still troubled by poverty and political unrest.

Could be better. A lot of emphasis on Mughals and not much about the rebellions that took place towards the end. Not enough justice done to the Maratha and Sikh history. Also has opinionated facts. Some topics are incorrect from other history books. Overall, find another book for Indian history if you can.

A good and possibly impartial account of Indian affairs. A connection with global affairs and how that influenced the country is impressive. Does not lecture as "I know best" how to improve or tackle the problems that the Indian nation faces is actually welcome. Most Western authors just cannot hold their emotions and end up suggesting solutions which possibly is more than what actually they set down to achieve. A good read.

If you want a short history of India, like a video viewed in fast-forward, this is the one.

I love it. Just what I wanted at a great price.

There's a lot of "fluff" in the text and does not break down material nicely.

In this review, I must stress that I read this book while in attendance at my local university in Florida for a class on the international relations of Southeast Asia. I'm going to keep this very brief in that this book is brilliantly well-written, and very -- very, accessible in its approach that one would get the impression that it is creative non-fiction. It is that accessible, and well-written in telling a story about an intensely diverse people divided mostly by religion with their society, its culture, and its history -- all the way up to its architectural designs; with it being influenced by none other than Islam for most of the recent millennium while also being influenced by Hinduism in its ancient past. A story that reveals something about its future that would ultimately shape its destiny. I'm being intentionally vague with this, because it captured my imagination while I was reading it; especially learning about

the Mughal ruler, Akbar, who is weirdly socially progressive, and ahead of his time in some respects. Anyway, I'm beginning to babble and this review is getting too long to fathom. The weaknesses in this book would be, and I'm being sincere; its weaknesses would be it can be a bit dense in spots where it may be a bit of a grind. This being the period after the British reforms (read racist) during the mid-19th Century, but before the rise of Ghandi and Jinnah!~ Joshua, Debut Author of PARADISE: A Comedy-Drama

Read it on a recent trip to India, it's extremely well-written and surprisingly engaging. The authors depict India's history from an academic perspective and put events in a global context, enabling the reader to understand the nation and its current sociopolitical environment. There are some biases that I assume arise from the the authors being Western academics, but I can't say I disagreed too often. Overall, it gave me a different perspective from what I am used to hearing from my family and Indian peers. As an Indian raised partly in India and then mostly around Indians in the US, I always wondered, "If our nation is so great, why are we one of the worst off third world countries out there? Why are there such disparities? Why is there so much corruption?" Was it entirely because of British rule and Imperialism? Or was it due to the nepotism and corruption of leaders who have taken advantage of the populace over the past half century? Or, worst of all, was it merely the bickering among a people who might have otherwise united to overcome their struggles, both within their country and against imperialism? Ultimately, I came out with new ideas - though not complete theories - on how each of those is true to an extent and why. However, this book is far from comprehensive and I only took it as an addendum to what I had already learned and what I will eventually learn and observe on my own. I am very glad I read it, and I will probably re-read it when the next edition comes out.

As a relative newcomer to the history of India, I found this a decent introduction to the issues and approaches to them that have shaped modern Indian political life. The two central themes that emerge are first, the nature of colonial rule (under Britain, of course--the term is never used of Muslim masters, nor is "imperialism") and the process of separation from it, and second, the problems involved in intercommunal and inter-caste relationships in the context of subsequent Indian democracy. I had been looking in particular for a sense of how the conversation between Muslims and Hindus about India's past goes, if a "conversation" can be said to exist on the subject: how do Muslims justify their period(s) of rule to their former subjects? How do Hindus as Hindus make sense of their past as subjects of Muslim rule? The extreme positions on both sides are easily

discovered, but these extremes don't really meet in conversation. I was disappointed, though, in this respect: the Metcalfs do not so much convey a sense of the course of this conversation as take one side of it. It is as though they conceive of their history as a kind of therapy against Hindu distrust of Islam: in this treatment, Islam changed nothing, was never involved as an actor, was never alien to India, an influence from "outside." The problems begin only when the Brits and later, Hindus, attempt to conceptualize the communal structure of the subcontinent in too-rigid terms. Mughals and other Muslim dynasties never, apparently, tried to conceptualize anything (let alone by means of Islamic categories!), or if they did, kept their categories loose and supple (well-known characteristics of Islamic thought, of course), for no ill effects are shown to follow, for anybody except, perhaps, for a few rival Hindu dynasties, from centuries of Muslim rule. But those hapless Brits! The book contains page after page of English terms hugged by ironic scare quotes--sad results of pathetic colonial attempts to make sense of religious and political characteristics of India. Again, the authors' ironic knowingness is directed only at British and Hindu efforts to comprehend and manipulate, never at Muslim ones. In the end, one feels rather manipulated oneself.

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