



Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India

By Lawrence James

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In less than one hundred years, the British made themselves the masters of India. They ruled for another hundred, leaving behind the independent nations of India and Pakistan when they finally withdrew in 1947. Both nations would owe much to the British Raj: under its rule, Indians learned to see themselves as Indians; its benefits included railways, roads, canals, schools, universities, hospitals, universal language and common law.

None of this, however, was planned. After a series of emergencies in the eighteenth century transformed a business partnership-the East India Company-into the most formidable war machine in Asia, conquest gathered its own momentum. Fortunes grew, but, alongside them, Britons grew troubled by the despotism that had been created in their name. The result was the formation of a government that balanced firmness with benevolence, and had as its goal the advancement of India.

But the Raj, outwardly so monolithic and magnificent, always rested precariously on the goodwill of Indians. In this remarkable exploration of British rule in India, Lawrence James chronicles the astonishing heroism that created it, the mixture of compromise and firmness that characterized it, and the twists and turns of the independence struggle that ended it.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

When Robert Clive, a "harum-scarum schoolboy" not yet out of his teens, arrived in India in 1744, he found himself in the middle of chaos: English merchants fought against French traders, Indian princes warred among themselves, Portuguese and Dutch privateers plied the coasts, and throughout the country, anarchy reigned. Clive flourished amid the confusion. He quickly distinguished himself both in battle, showing bravery and unusual presence of mind, and in trade. The combination was profitable for his employer, the East India Company, and although Clive committed suicide in the wake of political scandal in 1774, he set in motion what would become the British conquest of India and the establishment of the Raj, a mixed form of government in which the English ruled through a network of Indian politicians and civil servants. Outwardly stable, the Raj was constantly under threat both by Indian aspirations to self-rule and by other imperialists' intrigues, notably on the part of Russia, Britain's chief competitor in what would come to be called "the great game." Lawrence James, a longtime student of British military history, offers a sweeping, and wholly absorbing, narrative account of the Raj, taking it from Clive's time to the era of Mahatma Gandhi and the flamboyant Viscount Mountbatten, the last British viceroy of India. --*Gregory McNamee*

From Publishers Weekly

Even though James gives relatively short shrift to the period between the battle of Plassey (1757) and the second Maratha war (1817-1818), when the East India Company used arms and bribery to take over the Indian subcontinent, this is still a big book. But for what the British historian and author of *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* wanted to do, it had to be big. James is a very lucid writer on a variety of topics, whether military, economic, social or political. His primary interest has been military history and it shows here. While not every reader will be fascinated by detailed descriptions of, say, military maneuvers of Sikh wars, these same details add intensity to the narrative of the Indian Mutiny (1857-59); the Great Game, that tortuous Anglo-Russian squabble over Afghanistan; or the doings of Subhas Chandra Bose during WWII. Opting against a simple chronology, James works in chapters on the position of Indian princes in the Raj, the differences between British and Indian sexuality and the romanticized, Kipling-esque vision of India that pervaded Britain in the early 20th century. There is a great deal about Britain here: the reception back home of newly rich Nabobs (a corruption of nawab); the British reaction to reports of the Indian Mutiny and the 1919 Amritsar massacre; the irreconcilable friction between Britain's devotion to economic expediency and liberal paternalism. In fact, some may find that the emphasis is a little too much on the "British" of the subtitle and not enough on the "India," but James presents a consistently intriguing take on a deeply complicated history.

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From Library Journal

After writing several acclaimed histories primarily focused on British imperial military history, James (*The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, St. Martin's, 1996) now concentrates on India, the old Empire's cornerstone. With an orientation to historical narrative instead of analysis, the work often raises questions it does not answer. Military perspectives dominate, but James fails to show the relationship between government and the military. Hardly anyone receives favorable discussion in this "revisionist" recounting of the Raj's rise and fall, while crucial figures (Clive, Hastings, Gandhi, Mountbatten) are treated shabbily. Nehru, strangely, is hardly mentioned. Military buffs might like this rather long history, but those interested in an impartial treatment will be better served by other recent titles, e.g., Shashi Tharoor's *From Midnight to the Millennium* (LJ 6/1/97).?Donald Johnson, Univ. of Minnesota Lib., Minneapolis

Users Review

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Jane Kim:

Exactly why? Because this Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will shock you with the secret this inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who write the book in such incredible way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book have such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I were you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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