

**A BRIEF HISTORY
OF
THE INDIAN PEOPLE**

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A Brief History of the Indian People by W. W. Hunter

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W. W. HUNTER

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*A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INDIAN
PEOPLE.*

By W. W. HUNTER, C.I.E., LL.D.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IN this book I try to exhibit the growth of the Indian people, to show what part they have played in the world's progress, and what sufferings they have endured from other nations. Short Indian histories, as written by Englishmen, usually dismiss the first two thousand years of their narrative in a few pages, and start by disclosing India as a conquered country. This plan is not good, either for Europeans in India or for the Natives; nor does it accord with the facts. So long as Indian history is presented to the Indian youth as nothing but a dreary record of disunion and subjection, our Anglo-Indian Schools will never become the nurseries of a self-respecting nation. I have therefore tried to put together, from original sources, a brief narrative of what I believe to be the true history of the Indian people. These sources have been carefully examined in my larger works. This little book merely states, without discussing, the results arrived at by the labour of twenty years.

I have tried to show how an early gifted race, akin to our own, welded the primitive forest tribes into settled communities. How the nobler stock, set free from the

struggle for life by the bounty of the Indian soil, created a language, a literature and a religion, of rare stateliness and beauty. How the very absence of that struggle against nature, which is so necessary a discipline for nations, unfitted them for the great conflicts which await all races. How the domestic and contemplative aspects of life overpowered the practical and the political. How Hinduism, while sufficing to organize the Indian communities into a social and religious confederacy, failed to knit them together into a coherent nation.

Bengal was destined, by her position, to receive the human overflow from the ancient breeding-grounds of Central Asia. Waves of conquest from the north were as inevitable in early times as are the tidal waves from the ocean at the present day. But such conquests, although rapid, were never enduring; and although widespread, were never complete. The religious and social organization of Hinduism never succumbed. The greatest of India's conquerors, the Mughals, were being hemmed in by Hindu confederacies before their supremacy had lasted 150 years. So far as can now be estimated, the advance of the British alone saved the Delhi Empire from dismemberment by three Hindu military powers, the Marhattás, Rájputs, and Sikhs. The British Rule has endured, because it is wielded in the joint interest of the Indian races.

But while these thoughts have long been present in my mind, I have tried not to obtrude them on my pages. For I hope that this little book will reach the hands of

many young people who look on history merely as a record of events, and not as a compendium of philosophy. The greatest service which an Indian historian can at present render to India, is to state the facts in such a way that they will be read. If my story is found to combine truth with simplicity, it will have attained all that I aimed at. If it teaches young Englishmen and young Natives of India to think more kindly of each other, I shall esteem myself richly rewarded.

W. W. HUNTER.

STIRLING CASTLE, SIMLA,
15th July 1882.

THE Fourth Edition has been revised to this date.

CALCUTTA, January 1884.

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