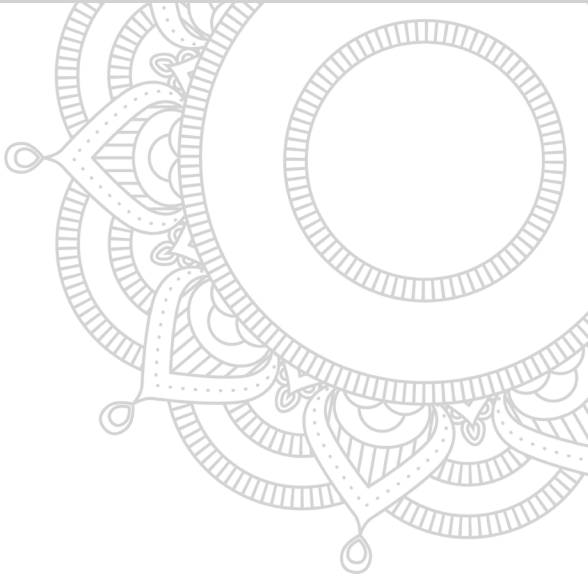


Scholarly Conventions



I aim for accuracy and legibility throughout this book, and those twin goals have guided my choices of scholarly conventions.

Specialist Terms. I shy away from specialist terminology when I can, eschewing terms beloved by experts but unintelligible to others (e.g., “Persianate” and “Islamicate”). I also decline to use acronyms, which are somewhere between off-putting and maddening to nonspecialists. And so, I spell out the Indus Valley Civilization (rather than resorting to IVC) and use the titles of Sanskrit texts such as the Mahabharata (not MBh); I make small exceptions when the acronym is more common than the full name (e.g., RSS). Readers who want a more in-depth take on my vocabulary choices should see the Historiography essay.

Diacritics. Many words in this book are transliterated from a rich plethora of South Asian languages, including Sanskrit, Tamil, Pali, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Telugu, and Bengali. To be easy on the eyes, I forgo diacritics (including for European languages). For earlier periods, I follow standard transliteration schemes, although with some variations to use familiar English spellings (e.g., Ashoka, not Asoka, and Mahmud Gawan, not Gavan) or for clarity (e.g., Brahmin for the social class, not Brahman).

Names and Spellings. For proper names of people in the colonial period and later, I tend to employ the transliteration adopted by the person in question. Accordingly, I write about Duleep Singh (not Dalip Singh), Sikhddhar (not Sikdar), and Anandibai Joshee (not Joshi).

For places, I use names and spellings in vogue at the time, and so I recount events in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras in British India (in the twenty-first century, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai, respectively); similarly, I detail how Malik Ambar built up the central Indian city of Khirki (i.e., Aurangabad, after the Mughal renaming). This practice results in multiple spellings of some places depending on the timeframe in question (e.g., Sind in premodernity and Sindh today). In some cases, spellings were not standardized, and I let small variations stand (e.g., I use Baluchistan and Balochistan, Kandahar and Qandahar). I make an exception to the practice of adopting time-appropriate names for the Indus (Valley) Civilization, since we do not know what they called their cities or themselves and so must resort to modern terms. For English words, I generally follow American spelling conventions.

Honorifics. I avoid honorifics for historical figures, writing of Alexander of Macedon rather than Alexander the Great, William Jones sans his knighted title of Sir, Jinnah rather than Quaid-i-Azam (Great Leader), Ambedkar rather than Baba Saheb (Respected Father), and Jyotirao Phule and Mohandas Gandhi by their respective given names rather than their shared appellation of Mahatma (Great Souled). Some may find this practice jarring or even disrespectful, although it is meant only to signal an appropriate critical distance. My goal is to understand the historical roles of flawed women and men in their times and places, and I find positioning those people on pedestals ill-suited for such an endeavor. My non-honorific preference also applies to religious figures, such that I tend to write of Nanak and Jesus (rather than Guru Nanak and Jesus Christ, respectively). Notably, when I write about such figures here, I do so pursuant to excavating the histories of specific religions in South Asia, especially through the ideas and actions of practitioners. As a historian, I do not and cannot give credence to theological claims. Accordingly, I speak of deities as part of Indian intellectual history and without veneration, writing of Ram, Allah, and Krishna sans further qualification. I make small exceptions to these guidelines and include honorifics when not doing so would likely cause confusion. For instance, I refer to the Maratha warrior-king Shivaji (rather than Shiva, which is more commonly the name of a Hindu god) and the Prophet Muhammad (since there are many Muhammads in Indian history).

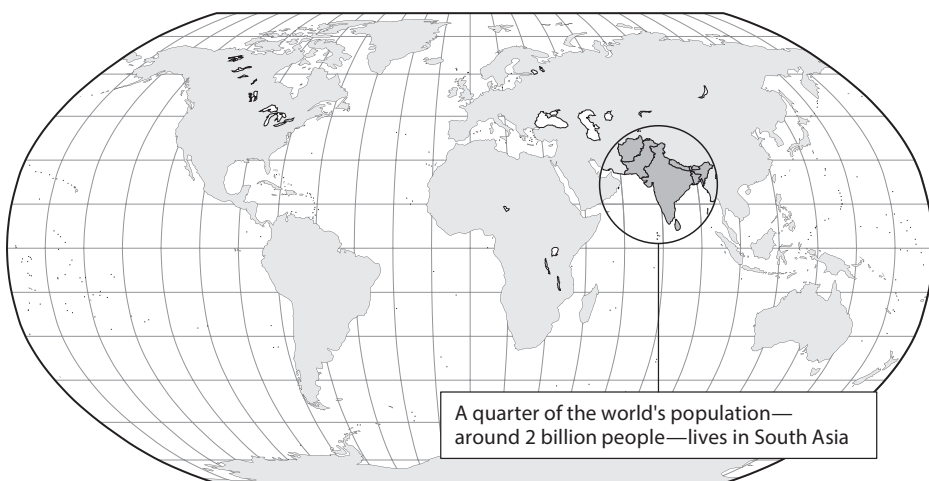
Dates. I give all dates in the Gregorian calendar since it is, by far, the most common calendar used worldwide today. I always use the acronym BCE (Before Common Era). I only include CE (Common Era) upon first

usage or where there is a likelihood of confusion. I strive to give dates, instead of or alongside referents meaningfully only to certain groups of scholars. For instance, South Asia–focused archaeologists may all know when the Neolithic period began on the subcontinent, but most scholars who work on later periods do not. Likewise, I can recite Mughal regnal dates in my sleep, but I would not expect “Akbar’s rule” to immediately anchor a Vedic specialist much less a more casual reader of South Asian history.

Quotes. In quotes from primary and secondary sources, I often adjust spellings, grammar, and italics and omit diacritics for the sake of consistency and readability. I also sometimes introduce parenthetical glosses for clarity. For English-medium primary sources, I retain older spellings when doing so does not compromise intelligibility. I often cite to translations of primary sources for wider accessibility.

Citations. Some premodern Indian names lend themselves to the modern Western convention of citation by surname, and others do not. I use and alphabetize as appropriate to the specific name and do not awkwardly force South Asian names into Western conventions (e.g., I cite Abul Fazl and not Fazl, Abul, but I cite Vivekananda, Swami). Most sources are listed in the bibliography, with one big exception and one small exception. In the last few chapters, I cite to many contemporary news sources and often include full citations in the notes. This avoids the awkward question of whether such sources are best categorized as primary or secondary. It also signals my more limited use of contemporary news sources, which I do not endorse as equivalent with scholarship. On a smaller scale, I cite some modern poetry and novels in the introduction and elsewhere, including full citations in the notes.

Translations. Unless noted, all translations are my own. Readers should know that I agree with many scholars of South Asia—both historians and literary scholars—that a little flexibility produces more accurate translations than rigid adherence to the original text, especially regarding grammar. As the historian A. L. Basham—one of my predecessors in writing an overarching history of South Asia—put it, “I have, however, allowed myself in places great liberties with the original, mainly in order to make the point of the verse more clear to English listeners” (India Office Records manuscript Eur f147/94, British Library, p. 11). Indeed, I translate as I judge can best communicate a primary source’s original sense and thereby, hopefully, allow Indians from the past to speak to readers in the twenty-first century.



Modern South Asia's population density.