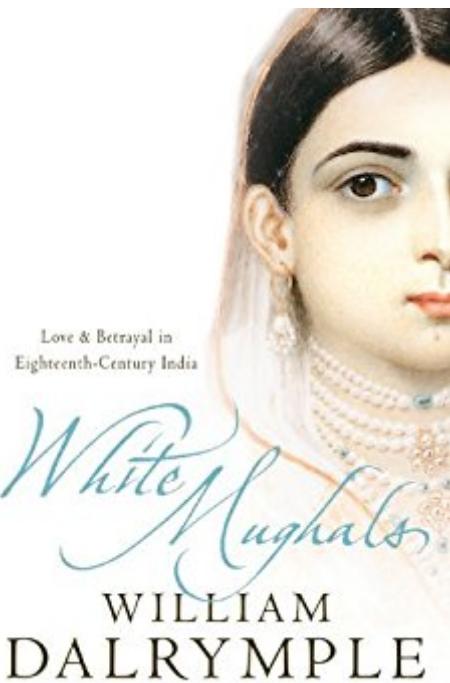


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White Mughals: Love And Betrayal In Eighteenth-Century India



Synopsis

From the author of the Samuel Johnson prize-shortlisted “Return of a King”, the romantic and ultimately tragic tale of a passionate love affair that transcended all the cultural, religious and political boundaries of its time. James Achilles Kirkpatrick was the British Resident at the court of Hyderabad when he met Khair un-Nissa, the great-niece of the Prime Minister of Hyderabad. He fell in love with her and overcame many obstacles to marry her, converting to Islam and, according to Indian sources, becoming a double-agent working against the East India Company. It is a remarkable story, but such things were not unknown: from the early sixteenth century to the eve of the Indian Mutiny, the “white Mughals” who wore local dress and adopted Indian ways were a source of embarrassment to successive colonial administrations. Dalrymple unearths such colourful figures as “Hindoo Stuart”, who travelled with his own team of Brahmins to maintain his temple of idols, and Sir David Auchterlony, who took all 13 of his Indian wives out for evening promenades, each on the back of her own elephant. In “White Mughals”, William Dalrymple discovers a world almost entirely unexplored by history, and places at its centre a compelling tale of seduction and betrayal.

Book Information

File Size: 2455 KB

Print Length: 640 pages

Publisher: HarperPress; UK ed. edition (May 31, 2012)

Publication Date: May 31, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0084WT1SI

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #41,189 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #5

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Asia > India #23 in Books > History > Asia >

Customer Reviews

Fascinating account of early 18th Century when British Colonial Officers managed to thrive in that wonderful crossroad where Europe and India met as equals. Superbly crafted like Persian calligraphy, the story takes us through the love story between James A. Kirkpatrick, the British Resident stationed in the Hyderabad Court, and Khair un-Nissa, the uniquely beautiful daughter of a noble Persian-Indian family. Dalrymple leads us in a magical tour of Mughal Hyderabad, in the center of India and in a sense in the center of that brief hybrid world of British Indian relations of mutual understanding and respect. The love story is tenderly narrated and we follow it along as it survives court intrigues, diplomatic incidents and power struggles. The outcome of the story is tragic, but tempered with the fact that there are still symbolic remains of their love standing like the Doll House James built for Khair in the Residency Gardens.. In essence, one of those books you just don't want to be made into film, but want to be made into film so the magic never goes.

This is the first book I have read by Mr. Dalrymple. I knew very little about the British exploits in India, and even less about the cross-cultural exchange that is detailed in the pages of this book. This book is a mixture of history, anthropology, theology intertwined with a tragic love story that kept me enthralled from page one. Not only did I fall in love with the characters, but feel almost compelled to visit the land where these events occurred! My thanks to the author for this work. I thoroughly enjoyed every page. I look forward to reading more of his books.

I only recently came across this book but recommend it as a most compelling and readable work of history. The combination of romance, wealth and power, the fatal flaws of British and Indian rulers and princes, and two lost children, is just amazing. Dalrymple builds the story on a foundation of wonderfully detailed and erudite research, so that you trust his characterizations and conclusions. The hero of the book, James Achilles Kirkpatrick, was a noble man in all senses of the word, and by becoming one of the mughals transcended the divisions of skin color and culture. As a resident of the British East India Company, he spoke out against the arrogant racism of Governor General Wellesley in the early years of the 19th century that would destroy everything the English needed for their own sakes to keep alive in India. Kirkpatrick's tragedy was dying young on the brink of being able to make a difference in British policy. The tragedy of his young wife continued to her ill-usage at the hands of another Englishman, Resident Henry Russell. The fate of the two Kirkpatrick

children is revealed at the end of the book, and the hopefulness of the connection between a granddaughter and far-away grandmother is a lovely ending to the tale. I am going on to read more Dalrymple.

The tale of the star-crossed lovers Col. James Achilles Kirkpatrick and the Hyderabadi Begum Khairunissa unwinds like a Greek tragedy. The story of Khairunissa, widowed at 19, her children at the ages of 5 and 3 snatched away from her, never to see them again and betrayed by the next man she learnt to love is played out in the background of more tolerant Englishmen who understood and assimilated the habits, culture and religions of India. The next generation of English conquered India, but did not win its heart. A page turner of a book impossible to put down.

I won't bother going into how fascinating this book is, suffice to say that if it isn't turned into a movie, or at least a cable series at some point, I will be shocked. You would think this to be a work of fiction. I think this is one of those books that if everyone of Indian, Persian, European and Arab ancestry were forced to read, there would a lot less misery and war in the world, because strangely enough, at one time, all these different races coexisted peacefully for quite some time.

In this book Dalrymple not only provides a fascinating look at the private lives and liaisons of the British in India, but also a comprehensive view of Anglo-Indian relations from the first arrival of English tradesmen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the Sepoy Mutiny and the beginning of the Raj period. A gripping read which also discusses Mughal court life in South India, which is not usually covered as widely as in the North. Definitely worth every minute!

I am totally fascinated by William Dalrymple's books about the history of the Indian sub-continent during the era of the British Raj. To me he writes history in an exciting manner that reads like a novel and in many ways the history as described by him has relevant lessons for today's world and the interaction of the Muslim culture. Be warned, if you read one of his books you will be hooked and have to read all of them. Roger Grace

This is a fascinating and sad history and love story. A revealing view of British Indian relations before Colonial arrogance and Evangelical stupidity ruined the possibilities.

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