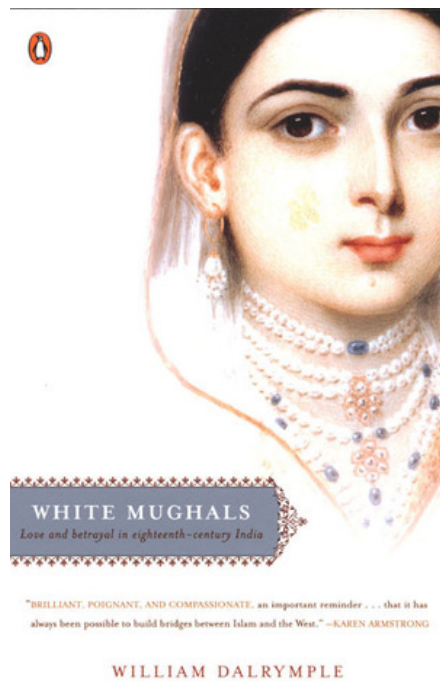




White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India

William Dalrymple

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White Mughals is the romantic and ultimately tragic tale of a passionate love affair that crossed and transcended all the cultural, religious and political boundaries of its time. James Achilles Kirkpatrick was the British Resident at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad when in 1798 he glimpsed Kahir un-Nissa—'Most excellent among Women'—the great-niece of the Nizam's Prime Minister and a descendant of the Prophet. Kirkpatrick had gone out to India as an ambitious soldier in the army of the East India Company, eager to make his name in the conquest and subjection of the subcontinent. Instead, he fell in love with Khair and overcame many obstacles to marry her—not least of which was the fact that she was locked away in purdah and engaged to a local nobleman. Eventually, while remaining Resident, Kirkpatrick converted to Islam, and according to Indian sources even became a double-agent working for the Hyderabadis against the East India Company.

It is a remarkable story, involving secret assignations, court intrigue, harem politics, religious and family disputes. But such things were not unknown; from the early sixteenth century, when the Inquisition banned the Portuguese in Goa from wearing the dhoti, to the eve of the Indian mutiny, the 'white Mughals' who wore local dress and adopted Indian ways were a source of embarrassments to successive colonial administrations. William Dalrymple unearths such colourful figures as 'Hindoo Stuart', who travelled with his own team of Brahmins to maintain his temple of idols, and who spent many years trying to persuade the memsahibs of Calcutta to adopt the sari; and Sir David Ochterlony, Kirkpatrick's counterpart in Delhi, who took all thirteen of his wives out for evening promenades, each on the back of their own elephant.

In **White Mughals**, William Dalrymple discovers a world almost entirely unexplored by history, and places at its centre a compelling tale of love, seduction and betrayal. It possesses all the sweep and resonance of a great nineteenth-century novel, set against a background of shifting alliances and the manoeuvring of the great powers, the mercantile ambitions of the British and the imperial dreams of Napoleon. **White Mughals**, the product of five years' writing and research, triumphantly confirms Dalrymple's reputation as one of the finest writers at work today.

White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India Details

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William Dalrymple**

From Reader Review White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India for online ebook

Jenny Brown says

This is one of those books that makes you realize just how little you know about historical periods you thought you knew a lot about.

The depth of scholarship is mind-boggling. I read every footnote and learned something from each one, but as I'd read it I'd think, How did Dalrymple learn so much about all these obscure people? So many of the sources are in Persian, too.

I came away with so much more understanding of the Mughal culture and how Islam expressed so differently in India during the Mughal period. I also came away with an appreciation of the Englishmen who opened themselves up to the Mughal culture and treated it with respect rather than the later, Victorian contempt.

As a female, however, I was a bit uneasy with the way that the author gives the Mughal culture and the westerners who were attracted to it a pass on their oppressive treatment of women. Whatever "power" women wielded from the zenana, it was the power of wiley slaves manipulating their masters.

It is telling that the only characters who emerge as fully formed people in this story are the males. Khair un-Nissa never comes to life as anything but a pawn in both the lives of the men around her and in the book. In truth, this is a book about English-Mughal male political and cultural relationships, not the "romance" that is touted on the cover, which seems to be emphasized there mostly to make the book more marketable.

Highly recommended.

Kishore says

This is a story of the quintessential Indophile – a young British Company officer who falls in love at first sight and is slowly but steadily drawn into the warm tresses of the (later ravaged) lady that was India. Of an Englishman who came to speak fluent Hindustani long before it was fashionable for Indians to learn English. It is the story of an Indian beauty who, standing at the crossroads of culture and history, chose to tread a path that soon became scorned upon for being too bold. It is the story of a short but colourful train of men and women, the white Mughals, who brought forth a hybrid healthier than both parent cultures – but was unfortunately nipped in the bud by the ensuing 'arrogance of empire.'

One cannot help but wonder what course history would have taken if the mixing continued that way without the conceited, separatist plunder that marks all later Indo-British relationships. Perhaps India would have kept her honour and self-esteem and continued to be the melting pot of world cultures without falling prey to petty religious-nationalist divides. Perhaps the British Empire's implosion would have been prevented by its non-existence, and the flourishing in its place, of a cultural-economic continuum. Perhaps.

From the measly, moth-eaten fragments left behind by history, William Dalrymple has created a romance more moving than fiction, while embellishing it with just the right amounts of light, colour and poetry. WD has now joined the elite list of my favourite living authors in any genre.

Kay says

A grand, slow-moving procession through 18th-century India

Stately processions are a leit motif in William Dalrymple's epic account of a doomed love affair between James Kirkpatrick, a British East India Company resident, and Khair un-Nissa, great-niece of Hyderabad's chief minister. Midway through the book, for example, he quotes a source describing the massive pilgrimage for the annual festival of Mawlah Ali:

"Some 3,000 elephants, as well as some 50,000 horses and load-bearing camels, with stalls selling fresh and dried fruit, clothes and fine woolen pashmina shawls: as far as the eye can see, immense crowds appear, of buyers and sellers, riders and dancers, glorious tents and mountainous elephants, and with tall buildings erected continuously on either side from the Musi River to the foot of Koh-e Sharif..."

Elsewhere he describes the departure of William and Fyze Palmer, an East India Company official and his Muslim wife:

"Their convoy moved slowly down through the then thickly wooded foothills of the Western Ghats... even by the standards of the time the Palmers traveled heavily, and James was astonished by the sheer number of bullock carts, transport cattle, elephants, baggage camels, syces, sepoy, bearers and Fyze's 'dozen females' (presumably her attendants)..."

In many ways, this book is just such an unwieldy procession. Encompassing a vast sweep of cultures and events, the book plods forward at an even, unhurried pace. This allows the reader to take in all the sights en route, but at times, I confess, I hankered for a swifter means of transportation through a terrain that became almost monotonous in its splendor.

Dalrymple's account is ostensibly a story of the love affair between James and Khair, but their relationship unfolds before the great tapestry of politics and intrigue that was late 18th-century India. As such, there are dozens of major and minor personages to keep track of. Even with the help of an introductory eleven-page list of dramatis personae and two complete family trees, one for the Kirkpatrick's and the other for Khair's Shustari family, the reader may find keeping all the names and alliances straight to be a daunting task.

My chief complaint, however, is that Dalrymple seems to have been unable or unwilling to sufficiently distill four years of research to make his book more accessible. Almost every page is festooned with references (nearly a thousand all told) and copious footnotes. He introduces a subject, any subject, regardless of how trifling, and then rather than concisely summing up what the reader needs to know or skipping it altogether if it has no direct bearing on the tale, he hares off whatever line he was originally taking and expounds at length upon a new topic. Pages later, he returns to his original theme, but by that time the reader has forgotten what it was.

Thus the reader is treated to sometimes fascinating but often tedious treatises on the major Mughal festivals, methods of abortion in 18th-century India, Mughal gardening methods, rites of passage for Mughal children, pigeon-keeping, British colonial architecture, Islamic astronomy, and dozens of other topics of peripheral importance to the tale. Likewise, with the introduction of each new East India Company or Mughal court official, the author digresses to give a full account of that person's life and character up to that point.

Dalrymple obviously loved researching the book, and as he makes it clear in his introduction, he was most fortunate to unearth previously unknown sources and in particular to find the key to deciphering encoded letters between James Kirkpatrick and his brother William. However, in his zeal for the chase, he too often makes his quest for the story part of the central narrative. It's intrusive. He's also much given to quoting at great length from his sources. Almost every other page seems to have a great chunk of correspondence inserted into it. I couldn't help but wish a firmer editorial hand had been applied.

With all its faults, however, this is a beguiling book in many ways. Dalrymple's central thesis is that before the 19th century, British and Indian cultures were more closely interwoven and more hybridized than previously thought. James Kirkpatrick was one of a number of notable "White Mughals," British East India officials so sympathetic to local customs and Indian cultures that often they converted to Islam or Hinduism, usually before wedding Indian women. However, James and Khair were ultimately victims of a growing hardening stance of the British, who came to look upon India less in terms of a rich culture met on equal footing and more from the vantage point of an imperial power greedily exploiting a resource. As Dalrymple makes abundantly clear, the personalities and failings of certain East India Company officials, most notably Lord Wellesley, the Governor General from 1798-1803, were responsible for this hardening stance. In many ways the exploration of the complex workings of the British East India Company's policies, military campaigns, and economics is just as central to the book as the similarly complex fate of James and Khair, the star-crossed lovers.

John says

At first glance one might dismiss this book as a pulp-fiction "bodice-ripper" EXCEPT that it is a) beautifully written & b) a true story. This book really hit home as aspects of it are echoed in my family history. A major misconception held by many post-modern americans is that the Anglo-Indian relationship can be summarized (and ignored) as Ben Kingsley in "Ghandi". Dalrymple gives a much more nuanced and complex view of the early days of "The Company" and the final years of the Mughal Empire.

Raghu says

This is a scholarly work of Indian history, extensively researched and written with a passion and a nostalgia for a not so distant past when there was wholesale interracial sexual exploration and substantial cultural assimilation between Indians and the British in India. Author Dalrymple says that till the early years of the 19th century, there was an Indian conquest of the European imagination when one in three British residents in India acquired Indian women as wives or mistresses and maintained substantial harems. They adopted Indian dresses as conventional wear, smoked the hookah and children born to them often spoke Hindustani or Persian or even Tamil as their first language. Even though some British Generals did the puja and participated in the Kumbh Mela, it was essentially a fusion of Britain and Indian Islamic culture. So, how did we get from the days of these 'White Mughals' to the violent Mutiny in 1857 and the bitter struggle for Independence over the next 100 years? This book provides the historical background for the final days of this cultural mix through the love story of General James Kirkpatrick, a British Resident in Hyderabad, and Khair-un-Nissa, a Sayyid Shia of Indo-Persian aristocratic upbringing and said to be a descendant of the Holy Prophet himself.

Towards the end of the 18th century, the Mughal empire in India was plagued by endless skirmishes, wars and invasions and gradually broke up into smaller kingdoms ruled by regional leaders. As the diminished

Mughal emperors in Delhi became just figureheads, there arose three indigenous power centers in India, namely the Maratha confederate of the Peshwas in Western India piloted by the brilliant minister Nana Fadnavis, Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad in the south. At this juncture, the East India Company sent Richard Wellesley as Governor-General to Calcutta even as the French were also casting their eye on the 'jewel of India'. Lord Wellesley, while not an Indophile like Warren Hastings who preceded him as the first G-G of India, believed that India was no longer a place to embrace and be transformed by; instead it was a place to conquer and transform. He embraced the European view at the end of the 18th century that the 'undaunted spirit and irresistible ardour' of the West will bring blessings to India, which was sapped of its strength by its 'effeminate rulers and luxurious tyrants'.

In such a volatile context, we come across the love story that is set in the state of Hyderabad. James Kirkpatrick, a 'White Mughal' and the British Resident of Hyderabad, falls in love with Khair-un-Nissa, who at age 14, was engaged to be married to a Hyderabad Muslim. Khair also was quite smitten by James and with the help of her mother and grandmother, they get married against all odds in a society where it was unthinkable for such a cross cultural marriage among the high society. They have two children over the next few years but the tumultuous situation in India at that time is not conducive to an Indophile like James. He manages to get into the good books of the imperial Wellesley by helping in the defeat of Tipu Sultan of Mysore but eventually comes under great pressure to abandon Khair, which he steadfastly refuses to do. Sadly, not only does James send both his Anglo-Indian children away to England but dies soon after at age 41, when Khair was still only 19. In widowhood, as if the tragedy of her children and husband being snatched away from her is not enough, Khair is further disgraced, then banished and finally rejected. When she dies at age 27, this fiery, passionate, beautiful woman dies as much from a broken heart, from neglect and sorrow as from any apparent physical cause.

Apart from the love story, there are other interesting details in the book about life in India those days. Apparently, young British women used to sail to India on the look-out for an eligible husband among the British officers living there. Unfortunately for them, most Englishmen in India preferred Indian women to Europeans. Part of the problem was said to be the 'unattractive' busks and corsets worn by English women which failed in competing with the Indian bibis wearing the sari, which was described by General 'Hindoo' Stuart as the sexiest garb imaginable. It is also equally likely that the Englishmen preferred Indians for the opportunity of having multiple women as companions instead of being married to one Englishwoman. This resulted in many women returning to England without a husband and were cruelly termed 'returned empties'. The book also chronicles the sad situation of Anglo-Indian children born out of this union. They suffered racism both in India and England - oddly more from the British in India. The White Mughal parents generally sent these children away - from their moorings in India and from their own parents - to England to be educated, often to be converted from Islam to Christianity and renamed with Christian names. The other surprising detail in the book is about how Britons died in droves in India while still rather young, possibly due to ill health, disease etc brought on partially by not adapting to the necessary changes required to live in a tropical country.

This is a poignant and compassionate book about life in India when it was at a crossroads where the British decided to transform themselves from traders to imperial rulers. It is an authoritative and seminal contribution to Indian history. School Text books in India simply repeat the colonial view of 'the Twain shall never meet' when it comes to the Indo-British colonial engagement. It is time to rewrite our textbooks and say that it wasn't necessarily always so. The author ends the book by denouncing the post 9/11 penchant for the 'clash of civilizations' with the following words: "As the story of James Achilles Kirkpatrick and Khair un-Nissa shows, East and West are not irreconcilable, and never have been. Only bigotry, prejudice, racism and fear drive them apart. But they have met and mingled in the past and they will do so again."

Adam says

The White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India by William Dalrymple is a tour-de-force of historical writing. Packed with the results of an unbelievably enormous amount of research and detective work, it is highly detailed, yet it flows like a good novel.

It gave me great pleasure reading it.

Until the first decade of the 19th century, Europeans living in India had no difficulties with cohabiting and having sexual relations with the local Indians, whom they encountered. Many of them often abandoned their European habits and adopted the oriental lifestyle of the people with whom they were living. This interracial mixing and cultural interchange is the subject of Dalrymple's masterpiece.

The author centres his study on the life and loves of James Kirkpatrick (1764-1805), who became the British Resident at the Nizam's court in Hyderabad. Having already had one child by the mysterious 'Dark Girl', Kirkpatrick was clearly attracted to the Indian female. One of these females of aristocratic descent became attracted to the young Resident. Kirkpatrick reciprocated Khair un Nissa's amorous interest in him, and by 1801 not only had they married, but also he had become a Muslim. They had a son and a daughter.

Kirkpatrick's marriage to an Indian and his 'going native' was not an isolated incident. Many of his peers in the East India Company started multi-racial families, as well as adopting wholly or partially the Indian ways of life. At first, this was not much frowned upon by the Company officials in their headquarters in Calcutta, but with the arrival of Richard Wellesley in Calcutta as Governor General at the very end of the 18th century things began to change. He was concerned that Kirkpatrick's amorous liaison with someone so closely connected to the Nizam's court in Hyderabad might damage the Resident's loyalty to the Company, especially at a time when the Company was struggling to gain control of the Deccan, the part of southern India in which Hyderabad is located.

James Kirkpatrick's life ended soon after his happy marriage to Khair un Nissa began. He lived long enough to oversee the construction of his magnificent Palladian Residency* in Hyderabad and its *zenana* in which his Moslem wife could live separated from men as her religion dictated.

Dalrymple traces the tragic life of Kirkpatrick's widow, who lived in exile in a coastal port on the east coast of India with her mother but bereft of her two children. They had been sent to England to live with Kirkpatrick's father, and later his brother. Their fate during a period when the British began to develop their prejudice against their Indian subjects is also described in the book.

This review only touches a tiny part of the tip of the iceberg. There is so much more to this encyclopaedic book that only by reading it can one truly appreciate its greatness. Some have criticised the excessive use of footnotes, claiming that they distract the reader from the flow of the book. Far from it: not only is each and every footnote fascinating on its own, but also they enhance what is already an excellent account of the history of the relationships between two dramatically contrasting cultures.

* See <http://yameyamey.blogspot.co.uk/2012/...> for pictures of this wonderful building.

PS: I can fully understand Kirkpatrick's attraction to Indian women, having married one myself!

Hana says

White Mughals is the story of a romance but really it is the story of a moment in time when England and India explored each others' worlds and cultures with great delight and mutual admiration. And sadly, it is also the story of how everything changed in less than a generation.

This is the sort of book that demolishes all of your old notions of 'how it happened'. I read into the wee hours of the night and as I finished the book this morning I instantly went back to the beginning to work my way through the copious (and fascinating) footnotes.

Anyone with a serious interest in the history of the Indian subcontinent, or the British empire, or colonial history in general should read this book.

I was struck by how much damage one man--the Marquess of Wellesley, governor general of India and brother of the Duke of Wellington--managed to do. What a different course history might have taken had men like General William Palmer or William Kirkpatrick held the highest post. But, alas, Wellesley was merely in the vanguard of a new generation whose interest lay not in exploration and trade, but rather in establishing Britain as the dominant world power at the center of a vast empire.

Veronica says

Without having any specific interest in India, I seem to have read quite a few books about India over the last couple of years, and William Dalrymple has a lot to do with it. I really liked his *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi*, and I'd heard many good things about *White Mughals* – all justified. This book is remarkable. Yes, it's a history book, but you can read it like a novel. Think of it as a kind of Indian *War and Peace* – the cast of characters is even larger, and it does indeed address war and peace, private concerns and national politics. Dalrymple did an impressive amount of research, and his knowledge of India enabled him to discover some incredible primary sources that had never been translated.

The central love story of this book is fascinating, and sheds a completely different light on the British in India. Gone are the stereotypes of Victorian gentlemen in stiff suits, eating roast beef for Sunday lunch and viewing "the natives" as barely human. Kirkpatrick and others like him integrated completely, learning the local languages, wearing Indian dress, and marrying or at least living with Indian women (plural in some cases – Sir David Ochterlony had 13 wives, each with her own elephant!). Dalrymple captures the moment when this open exchange of cultures began to change, with India and its people becoming just resources to exploit. It also brings home just how much British imperialism was responsible for creating a gulf between Indian cultures – Hindu and Muslim – which did not exist before.

The book is full of fascinating details – rather too many sometimes. Dalrymple obviously loved doing the research and will rush off at a tangent at the slightest provocation, discussing Mughal architecture, gardening practices, festivals and the like, sometimes at too great a length. Equally, if some minor character turns out to have an interesting background, we will get a quick potted biography. And there are lots of footnotes, but you don't have to read them all.

Such is the detail gleaned from letters and a contemporary Persian autobiography that you feel as if you

know these people, except for Khair un-Nissa, who perhaps inevitably is a shadowy figure behind the screens of her *zenana*, seen only through others' eyes. So vivid is the characterisation that despite the huge cast, I never found it necessary to consult the list at the front to remember who was who.

Saddest is the fate of so many Anglo-Indian children, born of English fathers and Indian mothers, who, in order to safeguard their future prospects in an increasingly racist imperial culture, are sent to school in England at the age of four or so, and most likely never see their mothers or grandparents again. Amazingly, in one final twist, Dalrymple manages to track down a last, touching correspondence between Kirkpatrick's daughter, now a mother herself, and her Indian grandmother, last seen when she was four.

Caroline says

Oh, I loved this book. I could hardly put it down. I confess I know very little about the years before the Raj, before the British Crown took over India from the East India Company, so this book came as a delightful, entrancing revelation. During the years of the British Raj, the lines - social, political, religious, caste and class - dividing British from Indian were very clearly defined and adhered to, but this was not the case in the early years of the East India Company. Many officials had bibis, Indian courtesans or mistresses; many kept a *zenana*, a harem of sorts; and some, fewer it is true, married Indian wives and raised Anglo-Indian children.

This book is the story of those years when it was not deemed entirely unacceptable to embrace Indian culture - most particularly the story of James Achilles Kirkpatrick, the Company Resident in Hyderabad, and Khair un-Nissa, a relative of the Prime Minister of Hyderabad. Their love affair was quite scandalous - there were no fewer than four enquiries into James' conduct by the Company, and he was more than prepared to resign his position and career to be with Khair, although it seems from the evidence that it was she who initially pursued him, and not the other way around!

Dalrymple's own summary serves quite well - "in a time, and a society, when women had few options and choices, and little control over their lives, Khair had defied convention, threatened suicide and risked everything to be with the man she had eventually succeeded in marrying, even though he was from a different culture, a different race, and, initially, from a different religion."

James Kirkpatrick represented the last gasp of the 'white mughals', the British officers and officials who whole-heartedly embraced the syncretic Hindu-Muslim culture of the Deccan of the time, performing and respecting the religious ceremonies, wearing the native costumes, falling in love with the women, often converting to Islam, and raising their Anglo-Indian children with feet in both worlds. Shortly after James' death, the world changed, not just with the Mutiny, and embracing the native culture was to become anathema - British ideals and mores were imposed from the top down, and the British hierarchy would no more associate with the Indian populations than the Hindu brahmins would with the untouchables. One cannot help feeling that something indescribably unique was lost; as Dalrymple argues, the years of the white mughals demonstrates there is nothing inevitable about the 'collision' between East and West, that these cultures are not irreconcilable, and that only bigotry, prejudice, racism and fear hold them apart.

Z says

I bought this book in September 2007 during a five-year stint in Hyderabad. It was a very dry read to begin with, and while I kept meaning to finish it, it gathered dust, eventually accompanying me relentlessly as I left the city and went on to live in several different cities and countries.

A few weeks ago I noticed the book glaring accusingly at me from my bookshelf - it had been 10 years, and I still hadn't accorded it the respect of reading it. So I did.

I wish I had read it while in Hyderabad since I could have followed the Khair-un-Nissa Trail and seen many of the tokens and remnants of her life in person - the fascinating life of a Mughal wife to a white Britisher. I did enjoy the book and found Dalrymple's research impeccable as ever. My only grouse - it is indeed a dry read, owing mostly to the considerable extra anecdotes in the footnotes (several footnotes cover over half the page on which they are found!). These really should be moved to the endnotes so that the central storyline is more readable.

Anand says

This book is a historical, romance, thriller, cultural pluralism, politics and many more things all rolled into one. In describing the blossoming love between James Kirkpatrick, an Englishman, with Khair U Nissa, a Hyderabad noblewoman (a teenage girl actually), the author has brilliantly produced a work of scholarly persuasion that enlightens us to the late 18th century and early 19th century cultural pluralism of India under the Mughals and the increasingly imperial British.

As an Indian, we have only learnt about the latter half of British imperialism in India, by which time the colonialist had a single point agenda- to transform and rule. This book, however, narrates an almost romanticised period of 1790s to 1820s, during which many Englishmen were at much ease to get transformed by the local culture and milieu, and believed in governance rather than rule. James was one such officer, who, despite being at a relatively higher posting as a representative 'Resident' of the British at Hyderabad, had acquired and imbibed much of what the local environment had to offer, right from clothes, to living, to food. For his love, he eventually converted to Islam, and because of his marriage, was almost derided to the point of losing his job, career and reputation. It was a perfect example of East meeting West, something that in today's intolerant times of fundamentalist beliefs becomes pertinent to ponder over and learn from.

Read it if you are an Indian, for it will show you an India that we never knew of, and will be amazed not just by story of love but also by the sheer narration of the socio-political situation of India, and the fact that the British rule did not cover entire India at any given point in time. Read it if you are English, for it will show you a side of the English who saw only symbiosis between East and West, between Christianity and Islam. Read it if you are from anywhere else, for it will introduce you to an era long bygone, from which one be inspired to become tolerant of the dissimilarities around us.

True, like any historical research work, we may only get a picture that the author wanted us to see. But then, that is true for most historical records and "history" in general. Highly recommended!

Simran Khurana says

Finally, I have finished reading this 500 page long, historical romance. I had tried to read it once, but I admit that I abandoned it midway because I was apprehensive that I will ever finish reading the book. But the book haunted me enough to make me pick it up again, and I gave it another shot. So here is my review of the book:

1) As always, my recommendation is that ONLY if you are a history buff, pick it up. It is a detailed documentation of Mughal, Hyderabad, and English era, and you don't want to be embroiled in a story that

takes you deep recesses of uncharted territories of history, especially if you are not fond of it.

2) You need some patience and focus to read this one. Unlike Dalrymple's *The Last Mughal*, this book weaves in and out of the principal story. Because it is not just a romantic novel, it is a factual repository of historical events of the 1800s. You can't blame the author for not 'spicing it up'. Because there is no physical evidences that vocalize the turbulence of the times. However, Dalrymple has done enough justice to piece together scraps of information from various parts of the world to make it a veritable story.

3) The book reveals the other side of English connection with India. We Indians have been brought up with the staple diet of poker faced Britishers who spoke Hindi, as if they were abusing someone. I had always felt that something was amiss. It is nice to know that India impacted the British in unimaginable ways and the cross-pollination of cultures did happen. As Dalrymple puts it, "India has always had a strange way with her conquerors. In defeat, she beckons them in, then slowly reduces, assimilates, and transforms them."

4) There were some sections that tested my tenacity. I must say that the book left me enriched and educated; because I no longer feel that history is what you read in textbooks. History is what you perceive based on your own intelligence. I never take history at face value again. To me, this book opened doors to a forgotten era, and shattered existing myths. Once again, Dalrymple, you enchanted me!

Czarny Pies says

Ce livre offre le lecteur un portrait extraordinaire des rapports sociaux entre les colonisateurs et les colonisés dans l'Inde à la fin du XVIIe siècle et le début du XIXe siècle par l'entremise de l'histoire de l'amour tragique entre un administrateur colonial britannique (James Kirkpatrick) et une jeune fille de la noblesse moghule (Khair un Nissa). En 1800 (l'année de leur mariage) on désapprouvait fortement de tout lien d'amitié ou d'amour entre un Britannique et un Indien. Cependant les pressions sociales n'étaient toujours pas assez fortes pour empêcher les jeunes amoureux à se marier et à payer un prix terrible pour leur amour. Trente années plus tard les pressions sociales auraient été assez forte pour prévenir une telle union. "White Mughals" est alors l'histoire du durcissement des règles de jeu sociales en Inde coloniale.

Je suis suffisamment vieux d'avoir connu bien des gens qui avaient vécu dans les colonies britanniques en Afrique et en Asie. Comme tout les Nord-Américains qui n'avaient jamais vécu dans les colonies, j'étais absolument choqué par les attitudes méprisantes et haineuses tenues par des anciens colonisateurs envers les indigènes des pays colonisés. Maintenant, les jeunes ne rencontrent plus des anciens colonisateurs et ils doivent lire des livres comme "White Mughals" afin de voir la vraie face du système coloniale/imperial. Un seul bémol: ce livre admirable manque drollement de clarté. Bien qu'anglophone de naissance, je l'ai trouvé très difficile à lire à maintes endroits. Si vous n'avez pas une grande expérience avec des textes anglais je vous conseille d'attendre la traduction française qui sera inévitablement plus claire.

Bettie? says

Description: *Conjuring all the sweep of a great nineteenth-century novel, acclaimed author William Dalrymple unearths the fascinating story of the British Resident at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, James Kirkpatrick, who in 1798 fell in love with the great-niece of the Hyderabad prime minister. To marry her, Kirkpatrick converted to Islam and even became a double agent working against the East India Company. Shedding light on the many eccentric Westerners during this period who "turned Turk," adopting Indian customs, dress, and religions, Dalrymple brings to life a compelling and largely unwritten story of*

Britain's rule over India.

Opening: **On 7 November 1801, under conditions of the greatest secrecy, two figures were discreetly admitted to the gardens of Government House in Madras.**

501 pages; withdrawn from Hampshire County Libraries. Maps, and photos galore; of wrist-breaking proportions.

5* City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi

4* Nine Lives

5* In Xanadu: A Quest

6* From the Holy Mountain: A Journey among the Christians of the Middle East

5* The Age of Kali: Indian Travels & Encounters

5* Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan

3.5* White Mughals: Love And Betrayal In Eighteenth Century India

NONFIC NOVEMBER 2015

Shahid Raja says

The White Mughals by William Dalrymple has three parallel narratives. First narrative tells the tragic love story of James Kirkpatrick, 'the thoroughly orientalist' British Resident of East India Company in Hyderabad and Khair un Nissa, a beautiful young Muslim noblewoman of royal descent. The saddest and most tragic part of the whole story is that after the death of James Kirkpatrick, their two children are separated from their mother under the policy of the East India Company to send them to England being children of a British citizen. The daughter Kitty becomes a friend and muse of Scottish writer and philosopher Thomas Carlyle and re-establishes contact with her grandmother in India

Second narrative is the social history of 19th century India. Set in Hyderabad India of the 19th century, the book describes in meticulous details the warm relations that existed between the British and some Indians in the 18th and early 19th century documenting the inter-ethnic liaisons between British officers and Indian women

Third narrative is the geopolitical context of late 18th century India, the rivalry between the English and the French for the control of colonies as well as the power struggle among the various Indian states for self-aggrandizement in the twilight years of the decaying Mughal Empire.

At a very higher plane, it also examines the interactions of Christianity and Islam, emphasizing the surprisingly harmonious relationship between the two in pre-modern era. Based on his exhaustive research, Dalrymple draws a fascinating picture of sexual attitudes and social etiquette of the Indian nobility and Indianised English employees of the East India Company. He discerns an increasingly racist and dismissive attitude among the British ruling class towards mixed race offspring, after the rise of Evangelical

Christianity.

Katherine ??? says

TRAGIS!!!!

Inilah satu kata utk menggambarkan nasib Khair un-Nissa, keponakan perdana menteri dan keturunan Nabi Muhammad SAW ini. Sulit menggambarkan karakternya krn banyak surat-surat yg ditulisnya sudah lenyap atau tidak terlacak oleh author. Tapi yg saya tangkap dari yg saya baca di buku ini, sosok Khair adalah gadis muda pemberontak, yg sepertinya memiliki ketertarikan tinggi pada para perwira Inggris yg tampan. Khair langsung menyukai sosok James Achilles Kirkpatrick yg ramah dan "sangat India" pd pandangan pertama, walaupun perbedaan usia, kebudayaan, agama nyaris menghalangi mereka utk bersatu. Mereka memang akhirnya menikah krn Khair keburu hamil dan James adalah seorang gentleman dan sudah kadung gandrung dgn gadis belia ini (usianya baru 14 tahun saat itu) dan bersedia pindah agama demi menikahi gadis ini. Tentu saja hubungan mereka membuat geger para residen Inggris di seantero India dan mendapat rintangan dan halangan bertubi-tubi, mulai dari atasan James hingga kakek Khair yg menentang keras hubungan mereka, walau tidak sedikit juga teman-teman James serta mertua James yg merestui dan mendukung hubungan mereka.

Setelah menikah dan memiliki 2 anak, putra dan putri, James yg menyadari dirinya sekarat, terburu-buru mengirim kedua anaknya tsb ke Inggris. James sendiri tidak kalah menyedihkan saat meninggal tanpa didampingi seorangpun yg dikenal. Khair yg tidak pernah bertemu dengan anaknya kembali, menyusul satu dasawarsa kemudian, mati muda dlm keadaan diasingkan, dikucilkan dan dikhianati serta sangat merindukan anak-anaknya yg dipaksa lepas dari dirinya. Kenapa hal ini hrs dilakukan James? Karena sentimen ras dan agama tampaknya sudah tidak terelakkan lagi di India terutama pada yg berdarah ras campuran spt anak-anaknya (Anglo-India). Maka utk menyelamatkan masa depan mereka, James terpaksa mengirim anaknya kepada ayahnya dan secara terperinci utk secepatnya membaptis kedua bocah tsb.

Buku ini sangat terperinci mengenai kehidupan para Mughal putih alias para perwira yg tinggal di India pada akhir abad 18 dan awal abad 19 ini. Jadi nyaris di awal hingga pertengahan, agak membosankan membacanya. Tapi grafiknya mulai meningkat dan intens sejak pertemuan James dan Khair. Ada pertanyaan yg tidak mau hilang di kepala saya, mengapa para ibu (ibu dan nenek Khair) sangat mendorong hubungan cinta terlarang Khair dan James ini? Apakah krn James lebih punya uang drpd tunangan yg ditolak Khair? Apakah krn kepribadian James yg super memesona hingga si ibu dan nenek rela mengumpulkan cucu gadis mereka yang sangat cantik ini, dan menentang semua resiko demi terlaksananya cinta yg bakal menimbulkan skandal ini? Saya tahu pernikahan James - Khair menguntungkan dari sisi politis kerajaan Hyderabad tsb, tetapi apa keuntungan tsb layak diambil oleh para ibu tsb? Terbukti setelah kematian James dan semua pihak kuat yg mendukung pernikahan tsb, kehidupan mereka berubah 180 derajat. Agak miris juga saya membaca kisah si ibu Sharaf un-Nissa sepeninggal anaknya tsb, hidupnya menjadi benar-benar melarat dan kerinduan sangat besar utk melihat cucu-cucu dan keturunannya.

Saya berterima kasih krn pengarang masih menulis kisah kehidupan Katherine Aurora Kirkpatrick alias Kitty hingga ajalnya di bab terakhir, sbg garis penghubung terakhir Mughal putih tsb. Menyedihkan rasanya saat membaca timeline sejarah setelah kematian James - Khair, dunia yg pernah dijembatani James dgn penuh toleransi dirusak parah oleh orang-orang yg curiga, pendendam, pembenci ras lainnya dan menganggap ras yg lain utk dijajah. Pokoknya mengharu-biru di bab terakhir buku ini. Saya acungkan utk ketelitian dan

perincian luar biasa sehingga bayangan saya ttg kehidupan para Mughal putih tsb di abad 18-19 sangat hidup di benak saya.

Laura says

Just arrived from Australia through BM.

This is the story of James Achilles Kirkpatrick and Khair un-Nissa who converted to Islam and married her despite the opposition from both cultural sides.

Even being the British representative at the court of Nizam of Hyderabad, he also became a double agent, working for the Nizam against the East India Company.

Page 4:

Clive needed to know the truth about the East India Company's Resident at the court of Hyderabad, James Achilles Kirkpatrick.

Page 11:

India has always had a strange way with her conquerors. In defeat, she beckons them in, then slowly seduces, assimilates and transforms them.

Page 54 - India has perceived as a suitable venue for ruthless and profitable European expansion, where glory and fortunes could be acquired to the benefit of all concerned. It was a place to be changed and conquered, not a place to be changed or conquered by.

Some pictures of the British Residency at Hyderabad:

Original steel engraving drawn by Capt Grindlay, engraved by W. Miller. 1844:

Photograph of the British Residency in Hyderabad, taken by Deen Dayal in the 1880s, from the Curzon Collection, 1892:

Mansoor Azam says

Its only because of the name of Willam Dalrymple that i picked this one. But, by God, what a book. hats off to the writer. It builds on interestingly and like one of those Sydney Sheldon novels you just don't want to put it back. Always intriguing and woven in the mysteries of the oriental East.

The book sheds a light on late eighteenth and nineteenth century life and politics of princely state of Hyderabad. From the Nizam to the power brokering imperialist British to a commoner in the street, one gets an overview of every thread of life.

The plot of the book is woven around a love tale of a British Colonel and a high born local Muslim lady.. its

Manab says

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The whole concept of the British in India conjures up images of domination, arrogance and greed, so I was eager to learn about Britishers who valued Indian learning and culture. As Dalrymple notes: "at a time when respectable academics talk of Clash of Civilisations, and when East and West, Islam and Christianity appear to be engaged in another major confrontation, this unlikely group of expatriates provides a timely reminder

that it is indeed very possible - and has always been possible - to reconcile the two worlds."

This book will be of interest to anyoneone who has travelled in India and is interested in Indian history.
