



# The Indian Mutiny

*Saul David*

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## **The Indian Mutiny** Saul David

In *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* Saul David explores one of Britain's most harrowing colonial battles.

In 1857 the native troops of the Bengal army rose against their colonial masters. The ensuing insurrection was to become the bloodiest in the history of the British Empire. Combining formidable storytelling with ground-breaking research, Saul David narrates a tale at once heart-rendingly tragic and extraordinarily compelling. David provides new and convincing evidence that the true causes of the mutiny were much more complex, and disturbing, than previously assumed.

'A fine achievement by a huge new talent' William Dalrymple, *Sunday Times*

Saul David is Professor of War Studies at the University of Buckingham and the author of several critically acclaimed history books, including *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (shortlisted for the Westminster Medal for Military Literature), *Zulu: The Heroism and Tragedy of the Zulu War of 1879* (a Waterstone's Military History Book of the Year) and, most recently, *Victoria's Wars: The Rise of Empire*.

## **The Indian Mutiny Details**

Date : Published 2003 by Penguin (first published 2002)

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Author : Saul David

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Genre : History, Cultural, India, Nonfiction, War, Military, Military History, Literature, 19th Century

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# From Reader Review The Indian Mutiny for online ebook

## Bishwaksen says

Well-researched and well-paced, it feels more like fiction than the fantastic historical report that it really is. Its an excellent read. Only criticism - and only since I am Indian - is the relative lack of accounts from the Indian perspective.

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## Rickard Brivald says

Extremely interesting if a bit difficult to read at times. Love Saul David books.

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## Vik says

Saul David does a sterling job of providing an entertaining and gripping account of the Indian mutiny which all but sealed the fate of the East India Company which was subsequently dissolved in 1858.

Once the narrative gets going it becomes very hard to put down this book and very little foreknowledge of the subject matter is demanded. There are sections when the some of the seiges and battles can get a bit repetitive but luckily those sections are few and far between.

I would recommend this as a starting point for anyone who wants to find out more about this pivotal event in both Indian and British history. The mutiny inspired the first serious attempts at independance from British rule but it also strengthened the British Empire when they were victorious.

The book focuses on the title so if you are looking for more background on the events leading upto the mutiny, British India or the East India Company this would not be the book for you. However, if you wanted to know about how the mutiny started, the misrepresentations in the British press and a very well put together account of the mutiny and subsequent rebellion attempts then jump straight in, you won't regret it.

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## Simon Bendle says

Saul David does a good job explaining both big and small matters - everything from the complicated causes of the uprising to what exactly was "grape-shot"? But Christopher Hibbert tells this fascinating story with more flare and more humour.

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## David says

What with Post-Colonialism, the rise of Asia, and the sputtering BRICs reviewing a book such as The Indian

Mutiny: 1857 is a challenge. Nonetheless, Saul David's introduction to the Indian Mutiny, or the First War of Indian Independence [perspective is everything], is an excellent example of Narrative History -- history where character, incident, plot, story, and crisis, rather than analysis, are brought to the foreground. This is not to say there is no analysis, this is, however, kept to a minimum. What Mr. David does is to bring the story to the foreground and from this point the reader can engage with an analysis of the causes and moral interpretations of the event and the British Raj [The British Empire in India].

On the whole, no matter what one reviewer, Jvalant N. Sampat, on Amazon suggests [Modern Mein Kampf is the title of the review], the author's text is a balanced, unemotional reading of the Mutiny and its consequences. Even Mr. Sampat in the comments section of his review concedes that he "may have gone overboard". This is to be expected in a world where India is now a power to be reckoned with and has issues with the hundreds of years [1526-1947] they were ruled by foreigners [Mongols/Mughal Empire and Ferenghi - Europeans...Ferenghi is also spelt Ferengi and, yes, this is where Star Trek took the name...Ferenghi was a bastardization of Franks via the Arabs and to India. Ferenghi were European Traders].

Nonetheless, The Indian Mutiny: 1857 is an excellent introduction to the subject and is reasonably fair to both sides. That said, many post-colonialists will take issue with the reading, as has been mentioned above.

Recommended for readers of history with a special emphasis on the British Empire and the British Raj as well as those interested in The East India Company.

Rating: 4 out of 5 stars.

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### **russell barnes says**

Not nearly as swashbuckling as David's Victoria's Wars, but then the Indian Mutiny wasn't particularly glorious, for either side.

However saul david does an interesting thing with his history; a bit like niall ferguson's empire, he makes a convincing case for some surprising reasons for the mutiny that don't follow the usual theories of the Empire being evil and the Sepoy's being an oppressed multitude.

It's one of those books where you need at least three different bookmarks to mark your place, the maps section, the glossary and the timeline, which surely is the sign of a great book?

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### **Paul Collard says**

I love history books but I have to admit I sometimes struggle to read them from cover to cover. That was not a problem with Saul David's account of the Indian Mutiny. Saul's writing makes the history as gripping as any novel and I devoured the book loving every minute. With historians as good as this it really makes a novelist's life hard.

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## **Chris F says**

Well written and readable Saul David does a great job of a complex topic.

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## **Wendy says**

let's take bets on whether i will ever read this book!

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## **Philip says**

Well written and researched. I enjoyed this insight into the mutiny and the conflict. The mismanagement of the Indian soldiers by the East India Company played i the hand of the mutineers.

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## **Rajiv Chopra says**

This is an extremely good introduction to the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The story is well told, and is told with a rare pace that kept me hooked throughout. The book seems to have been extremely well researched, and the causes for the mutiny well analysed.

In the end, the chief conspirators remain in the shadow, and the British Empire reigned supreme. Maybe, as he said, India was not ready. we sometimes forget that mutinies and their spread are extremely complex stories, and that they cannot be ascribed to simple, single incidents as they are in schools.

He seems to have a great deal of admiration for the Rani of Jhansi, and it shows.

My only quibble, is that there is a lot of material about the atrocities that the British people suffered at the hands of the Indians, and not enough about the other way around. This could be because of the paucity of material from the Indian perspective.

Having said that, the book is very well balanced, and finely nuanced. This is a complex bit of Indian history, and he has done a fantastic job in bringing it to life.

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## **Eleanore says**

“War, anyways, is made up of a bit of slaughter and a bit of routine and doesn’t bear being looked into too closely,” wrote Italo Calvino in a short satire of medieval romanticism entitled “The Nonexistent Knight.” Representing both a provocative sentiment and an important warning to any who delves into the more vivid and violent episodes of history, these words might usefully be applied to Saul David’s recent work on the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Building upon an impressive array of primary sources and new scholarship, David weaves analysis together with a detailed narrative of the complex and violent series of events that, within a few short months, shocked the very core of the British Empire and permanently transformed the nature of

British rule in India.

Saul David presents a number of distinct and interesting arguments. He deals convincingly with the traditional perception of the cause of the mutiny: the British distribution of new ammunition cartridges greased with pork and beef fat. He summarizes evidence to show that the “contaminated” cartridges operated as a pretext, albeit an important signal and unifying symbol for both Muslim and Hindu alike, concealing a deeper and more complex agenda of politics and grievance. David also documents the long, steady breakdown of trust between the Indian sepoy and their British officers in the decades leading up to the Mutiny with both sympathy and nuance. He corrects the notion that the East India Company’s Officers were of the same class as the British Army, noting that “In truth they came ‘from the pseudo gentry,’ from the genteel poor and from the sons of East India Company servants...” Such details make more poignant the moments in the later narrative, as when Queen Victoria declares that, “There is not a family hardly who is not in sorrow and anxiety about their children, and in all ranks – India being the place where everyone was anxious to place a son!”

However, the quality of analysis and insight that begins to emerge from the initial chapters and from the several written appendices stands awkwardly beside the emotional, graphically detailed treatment of the Mutiny itself. David focuses upon the mutinies that occurred in Delhi, Lucknow, and Cawnpore, locations of critical importance in the Mutiny’s progress, yet dwelling on events seemingly selected for their cold-thrill of horror. He describes the massacres of Fatehgarh and Satichaura Ghat at great length and detail. While sensational and significant in their own time, David’s palpable and recurrent emphasis on the “white women and children” angle critically unbalances the rest of the work. An invisible knight of a different order, the historian should know that the tragedies of history are sometimes better served by distance than by romance.

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