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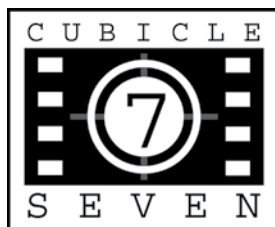SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL GAMES STORE.

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Jewel of the Empire

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Introduction

"No matter how modern India becomes, it is still very much an old country."

- **Anita Desai**

Introduction

This is the 4,967[th] year of the Fourth Age.

According to the gurus, it has been almost 5,000 years since the end of the Third Age, when King Krishna led refugees from the sinking continent of Kumarinadu to settle in India. King Krishna and the other Enlightened Ones created the Vedas, the sacred texts by which the people should properly worship the Earth Goddess. As each Enlightened One ascended, he or she became a new deity of Hinduism.

It has been 3,867 years since the Harappan Empire reigned in the Indus Valley. The gurus teach that a terrible dragon, Vritra, led the Harappan Empire and it was only the sacrifice of the Brahmin Darvani, the "last of the Gnomes," that ended Vritra's reign of terror.

It has been 2,774 years since the army of Alexander the Great crossed the Indus River and was defeated by the Nanda Empire at the Battle of the Ganges.

It has been 2,052 years since the gods, angered by Ashoka the Great's conversion to Buddhism, allowed the Mauryan Empire to crumble upon his death. Never again would India be united under a Hindu king.

It has been 1,836 years since Saint Thomas – the brother of Saint Justas – brought the Aluminat faith to India. While his mission largely failed, his example and martyrdom inspired the Nazrani, a culture that remains in South India to this day.

It has been about 650 years since Mughal invaders came from the west, bringing the teachings of Ish'Mael with them. For centuries, most of North India would be subject to Mughal rule. Hindu temples and Nithami mosques stood side-by-side in major North Indian cities.

It has been 252 years since Sir Thomas Roe stood in the court of the Mughal Emperor at Agra, marking the beginning of British influence in India. Over time, the British East India Company would spread their influence throughout India, limiting the French and the Portuguese to a few scattered outposts.

It has been 111 years since the Nawab of Bengal attempted to expel the British, leading to the Battle of Plassey and the Nawab's execution. This strengthened the Company's grip on India with Calcutta as its capital.

It has been 15 years since Company forces annexed the Punjab, following two bloody wars. The Company extended its control of North India to the Afghan border.

Today, India sits on the brink of rebellion. While the British East India Company worries about sending troops into the Crimea, it has unwittingly stirred discontent within its borders. The fires of independence are once again being stoked in Bengal, this time through communism. The Sikhs of the Punjab sense an opportunity to reverse the outcome of the Sikh Wars; and in Delhi, the last of the Mughal Emperors prepares to reassert his authority…

This is India, the Jewel of the British Empire. Like any jewel, the subcontinent is multi-faceted; a land of many peoples, religions, cultures, governments, and philosophies. It is a land of myth and mystery. It is a land of opportunity. Above all, it is a land of great adventure.

And soon, very soon, this jewel will shatter.

How to Use this Book

The Jewel of the Empire is a regional supplement for the *Victoriana 2nd Edition Roleplaying Game*. It describes the Indian subcontinent as it is at the dawn of 1867, the default starting point for Victoriana campaigns. The final part of this book outlines India's near future, the Indian Mutiny of 1868-1870.

India is ripe for adventure. From the Colonial stations in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Simla to the native states of Hyderabad and Oudh, the various regions of India provide colourful backdrops for adventure. Care has been taken to make each region an exciting place to set an adventure or even an entire campaign. Players could be Civilians struggling to keep their districts safe from predators and villager disputes, or they could be Natives secretly bringing communism to the masses in preparation for the Revolution. They could even be British East India Company naval officers keeping the Indian Ocean safe from pirates and Dutch East India Company vessels. The possibilities are endless.

India is also on the brink of war. The Indian Mutiny, which started in 1857 in our world, is only about to explode in Victoriana. In the shadow of the Crimean War and Russian subterfuge, the British East India Company will have to deal with a rebellion on multiple fronts and conflicting goals. Alliances continually shift as each faction attempts to gain the upper hand.

Part One describes the culture and society of India, including its major religions and customs. It also covers the British East India Company.

Part Two describes the geography of India and its neighbours.

Part Three offers new options for characters born in or travelling to the subcontinent. It also covers new rules for fight scenes, weapons, and magic.

Place Names In India

While writing *Jewel of the Empire* **the question arose about whether to use the English or Indian versions of place names. After all, if you can play a Native character then the Colonial terms do not necessarily dominate. On the other hand,** *Victoriana* **is set in the 19th century and the Colonial terms help evoke the Victorian Era.**

We have decided to take a mixed approach. Places established by or fully under the control of Europeans use their European names (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Pondicherry) while all other place names use the Indian terms unless the European term is so tied to the history of the Victorian period that it would be awkward to substitute Native names for them (Cawnpore, Oudh).

Part Four offers advice for Gamemasters as well as sample supporting characters and a bestiary of fantastic creatures.

Part Five contains information on the upcoming Indian Mutiny, including an adventure to get you started.

Historical Accuracy

While set in 1867, there are a number of differences between our world and that of Victoriana. As explained in the *Core Rulebook*, Victoriana is a fantastic world of sorcery and steam; one cannot add Beastmen and Dwarves, spiritual mediums and dark sorcerers, ornithopters and airships and expect that history will play out exactly the same. Thus, while the overall look and feel of Victoriana is roughly equivalent to our own 1867, there are several differences. India is no exception.

The Indian Mutiny of 1857-1858 has not happened yet in Victoriana, although it is poised to occur in 1867. The British East India Company still controls the administration of India. In Victoriana, the British East India Company is a powerful economic juggernaut, tempered only by a strong (and equally anachronistic) Dutch East India Company in Indonesia. Other historical deviations abound, which

are better explained in the appropriate sections of this book. For the most part, these deviations simply add colour and uncertainty to the present and future of Victoriana, as well they should.

In most cases, these historical deviations will not affect how you roleplay a Colonial magistrate in an Indian village or a graduate of Hindu College passing out communist literature to her friends on the tea plantations. Victoriana is a world of mystery and adventure and the historical changes help foster an exciting setting in which to play.

A Note on Classification

There are numerous terms used for people visiting or living in India. The meanings of terms such as "Anglo-Indian" and "Eurasian" even changed over time. Similarly, it can get rather tricky to differentiate between Europeans from the British Isles, Anglo-Indians and other Europeans as well as Hindu Indians, Nithami Indians, or even Nazrani Indians or Sikhs, not to mention Asian peoples in general.

For simplicity's sake, we have divided the groups into "Colonials," which represent European characters in India, and "Natives," which represent Asian characters in India. Sharper distinctions will be made when necessary.

Glossary

The following are some common terms used in India. As India is a patchwork of many different cultures and languages, there is no one or two languages that these terms come from. You can assume that the words below are so commonly used that no Colonial or Native would have a problem understanding them.

Anglo-Indian	A Colonial living in India.
Ayah	Native maid or nanny.
Baboo	Native civilian.
Bania	A businessman.
Bess(ing) Up	Colonial slang for a memsahib that uses makeup to make her skin look pale; also applied to Natives that adopt Western fashion.
Boxwallah	A travelling salesman.
Brahmin	The educated class of Hindus; more generally used for Hindu priests.
British India	A collective term for all Indian regions under Direct Rule.