A brief History of Modern India for UPSC Rajiv Ahir

Biography: A Brief History is a book by Nigel Hamilton that portrays, through historiography, the history of biography, and shows how biographers have portrayed and interpreted individuals' lives. The book examines the historical evolution of the biography from the ancient world to the present, from the Epic of Gilgamesh to the recent American Splendor, from cuneiform to the Internet, from commemoration to deconstruction, and from fiction to fact. Hamilton explains the evolution of the biography and autobiography or idiography its prior name. The author states the Greco-Roman era as the golden age of biography. Hamilton goes on to explore the dark ages and the rise of Christian hagiography (the biographies of saints). But this is symptomatic of the whole: even for a "brief history," Hamilton's sourcing is frequently underwhelming. Ironic, given that one of his charges to extol Plutarch, Suetonius, and Tacitus at the expense of the Gospels is that the former "were far better historians in terms of research and documentation" (37) - when Hamilton's documentation of his claims is often wanting. Hamilton could have written the history of biography that the world has been waiting for.