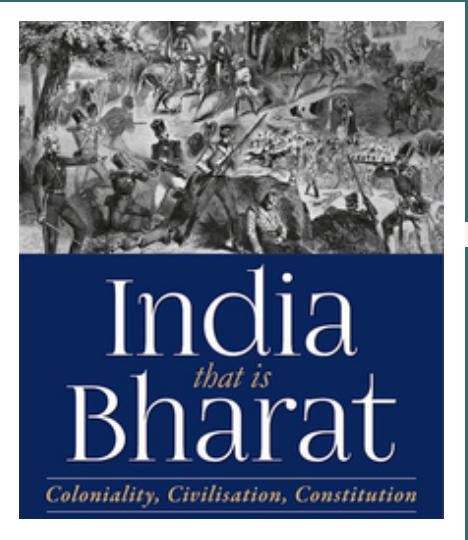


INDIA, THAT IS BHARAT: COLONIALITY, CIVILISATION, CONSTITUTION

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INDIA, That is Bharat forms the first part in a trilogy by J. Sai Deepak, a lawyer, author, and public intellectual known for his works on civilizational and constitutional thought. The book devotes extensive thought to how the identity of India has been shaped—first by colonialism and later by coloniality. True, while the era of colonialism did indeed close with the departure of the British in 1947, what was seen thereafter, says Deepak, was only the closing of colonialism but not really that of coloniality, which he holds is what ultimately informs India's institutions, its education, politics, and even the collective self-image of its people.

The central argument of the author is that India should not be looked at merely as a nation-state that began its political life in 1947, but as a civilization dating back several millennia. He demands an effort from his readers to move beyond the Western frameworks and to understand India as a civilisational entity with its own philosophical roots, social institutions, and traditions of governance. Deepak questions whether the post-independence institutions—essentially its Constitution and laws—reflect Indianness or continue to carry the imprint of the West. As he puts it,

“Coloniality ... refers to the fundamental element or thought process that informs the policy of colonialism and advances the subtler end-goal of colonisation, namely colonisation of the mind through complete domination of the culture and worldview of the colonised society.”

As Deepak says, the Constitution of India, though a powerful instrument of democracy, is substantially a derivative from European models of governance. Secularism, individual rights, and even the structure of law and administration represent an outgrowth of the Western intellectual tradition molded in a different historical and cultural context. He thus raises a very fundamental question: can ideas born in Europe's socio-political environment really capture the essence of India's civilisational identity? This book is an invitation to reflect on whether these imported ideas square with India's own philosophies, like dharma, community harmony, and collective responsibility.

One of the strong points in the book is the interdisciplinarity that it carries: Deepak mingles law, history, politics, and philosophy together to argue how the impact of colonialism has continued subtly through policy, language, and education. He writes, for instance,

“The Christian coloniser was acutely alive to the fact that language captured a culture’s journey ... To remove traces of the past in the language of the future, native children were forbidden from speaking in their languages ... a practice that continues in English-medium schools to this day.”

He also sharply critiques western developmental paradigms:

“The ‘modern’, ‘rational’, ‘scientific’, Christian European coloniser ... could not get himself to acknowledge the lived experience and traditional knowledge of native societies ... could teach him more than a thing or two about living in harmony with nature ...”



The writing dares readers to rethink what independence means-whether India has achieved not just political freedom but also mental and cultural decolonization. He warns:

This argument is particularly apt in today's perspective, when debates on cultural identity and globalization are getting increasingly loud. However, it is not an easy read because it is academically toned and too detailed. Deepak's style is dense; there are rigorous references and long passages of analysis. Parts of it will seem heavy to readers not acquainted with legal or philosophical terminology. This same depth in detail speaks to the author's serious and scholarly commitment. It is not a casual read but an intellectual journey that pays dividends with time and reflection. Personally, I found India, that is Bharat deeply enlightening. It redefined how I thought of freedom-not just the end of colonial rule but the unfinished endeavor to free our minds from their colonial frames. It made me think of how often we judge ourselves by the West's yardstick and forget our own traditions and modes of knowledge. As Deepak provocatively observes:

“Bharat as a civilisation was a reality, and reducing that reality ... to a mere talking point ... was more a proof of expediency than real conviction in the values the Indic civilisation stood for.”

The book instills a sense of pride and curiosity about India's civilisational wisdom while urging critical engagement with the ideas that shape modern governance. Finally, India, that is Bharat represents a serious and timely contribution to the contemporary discourse on India's identity. It forces readers to contemplate the unfinished task of decolonizing Indian thought and institutions. Though challenging in style, the insights are rewarding and relevant not only to students of history, law, philosophy, and political science but also to anyone interested in understanding India's journey from colonial subjugation to cultural self-realisation. Deepak's work is not just a book; it is an invitation-to reclaim the intellectual and spiritual foundations of Bharat as a living civilization .