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HISTORY / ESSAY

India's Conservative Revolution

Where the postcolonial Left meets the Hindu Right



ILLUSTRATION BY SANKALPA RAYCHAUDHURY

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A STRANGE THING HAPPENED at a conference on “Decolonization of Indian Mind” organised by a Hindu nationalist outfit in 2017 and attended by the bigwigs of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the politburo of the Hindu Right. One of the

speakers, Rakesh Sinha, a member of the RSS who would soon become a member of the upper house of the Indian parliament, gave a presentation that would fit right into a seminar on postcolonial and decolonial theory in any Indian or American university.

Speaking in chaste Hindi, Sinha took his rapt audience through the depravity of colonialism, its lingering after-effects and the need to replace the stories the West tells about history, reason and progress with Indian metanarratives. The purpose of decolonisation, he said, was “the colonisation of the West by a Hindu metanarrative—not to enslave it, but to save it from itself.” This “long journey” to the conquest of the West has to begin at home, because only after we get rid of the Western mindset in our own colleges and universities can we aim at installing “Vedas and Upanishads as core courses in Harvard University,” he said. Sinha’s missionary ambition is an echo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s oft-repeated promise to make India the *Vishwaguru*, the guru to the world.



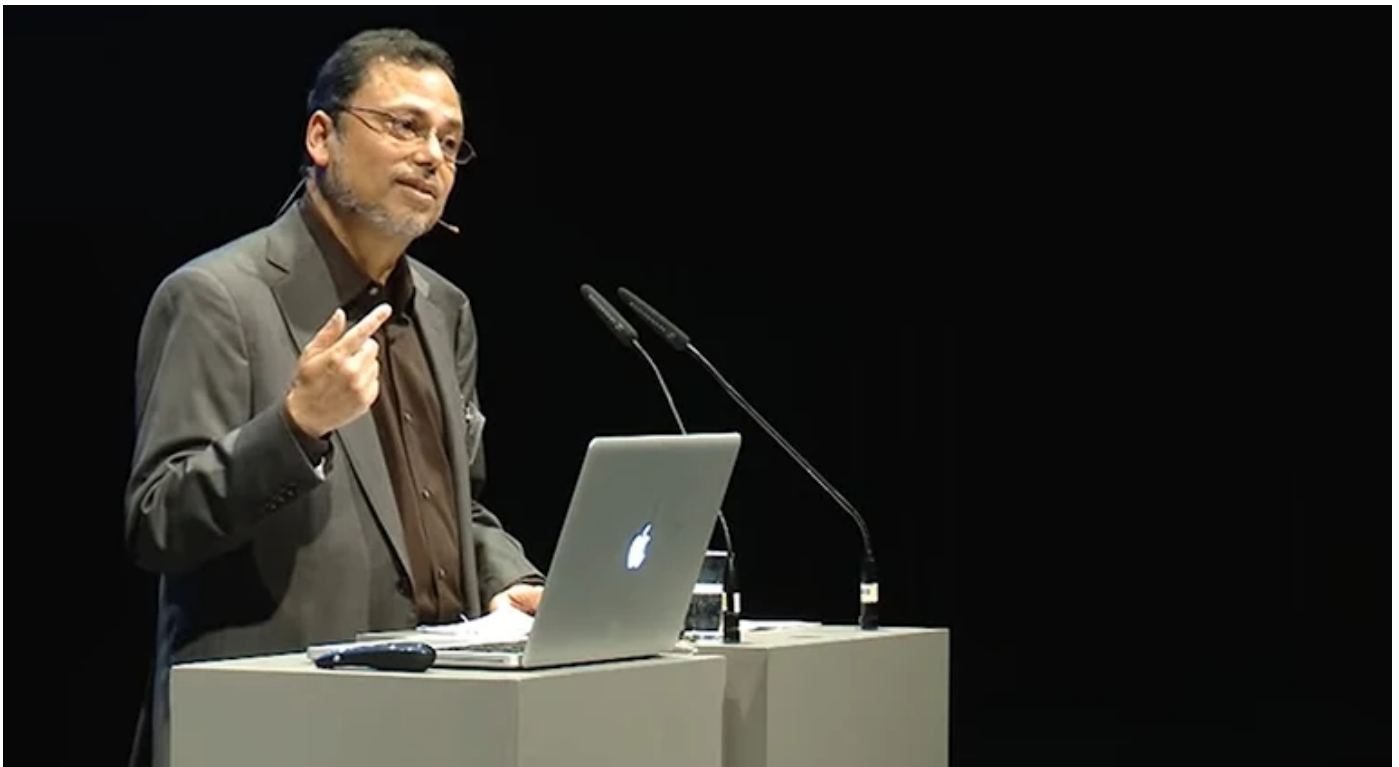
A conference on “Decolonization of Indian Mind” organised by a Hindu nationalist outfit in 2017 and attended by the bigwigs of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the politburo of the Hindu Right.

What, then, would bring about this decolonisation at home and abroad? The first step is to put Europe in its place and reject the pretension of universality of its ideas. At this point, Sinha drew on the Palestinian-American academic and writer Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism and the broader postcolonial “breakthrough” it inspired. He cited Dipesh Chakrabarty’s *Provincializing Europe*, an acclaimed classic of postcolonial theory, praising Chakrabarty’s courage in declaring Europe a “mere province” rather than the whole universe. To Sinha, this made Chakrabarty a true nationalist: “what was the task of *rashtrawadis*”—nationalists—“that task has been carried out by Dipesh Chakrabarty.” He then exhorted his audience to

learn from postcolonialists and subalternists despite their supposed Marxist sympathies: “just like Lord Rama sought wisdom from the demon-king Ravana.”

SUCH ENTHUSIASM FOR left-leaning luminaries of the postcolonial pantheon—everyone from Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Franz Fanon to Edward Said, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Spivak and Ashis Nandy—at a gathering of the hardcore Hindu Right may appear out of place at first sight. But, as I argue in my recent book, *Postcolonial Theory and the Making of Hindu Nationalism: The Wages of Unreason*, the warm public embrace of the postcolonial Left by the Hindu Right is far from unexpected. Indeed, Sinha’s lecture is only the visible tip of the iceberg that I bring to light in my book.

The postcolonial Left and the Hindu Right, my book demonstrates, have become strange bedfellows. Postcolonial theory, along with its younger cousin decolonial theory, is providing fresh ammunition and pathways for the Hindu Right to seize on scholarly respectability for its views. The shared ground between the two “enemies” is not limited to name-dropping or superficial appropriation of postmodernist jargon. Rather, there is a deeper ideological convergence in their devaluation of universal values for cultural particularities. Both defend tradition against modernity, popular religious expressions against secularism, and argue that there can only be culturally relevant ways of knowing and living. Above all, both sides rage against the “colonisation of the Indian mind” by Eurocentric ideas that are robbing us of authenticity. Both sing the same song, with the same refrain: Down with Eurocentrism! Decolonise Now! Swaraj in ideas!



Dipesh Chakrabarty’s *Provincializing Europe* is an acclaimed classic of postcolonial theory and, of late, has been appropriated by the Hindu Right.

The contemporary Hindu Right, I argue, is only the latest chapter of the

conservative revolution against Enlightenment rationalism and secular humanism that began with the Indian Renaissance in the late nineteenth century. Conservative revolutionaries in the Weimar Republic declared war against French Enlightenment and British liberalism because they were alien to the *kultur*, culture, of the German *volk*, people. And India's conservative revolutionaries, too, sought to defend and revive India's *volksgeist*—national spirit—which they claimed lay in Hindu “spirituality,” against the “materialist” and “atheist” West. To that end, they sought to purge the alien ideas they encountered under the British in the uniquely Hindu style of hierarchical inclusivism. (This style of inclusivism is the dominant practice of Hinduism, which treats various philosophical schools of thought and religious traditions as not erroneous or false but as falling short of the fullness of the ultimate truth known only to the Advaitic—non-dualist or monistic—tradition of Hinduism.) They did not reject the Enlightenment ideals of scientific rationality and liberalism outright, for an open confrontation of contradictions has never been the Hindu way. Rather, they appropriated the ideas they found threatening and treated them as inferior adjuncts of Hindu dharma, which they described as spiritually holistic. They accepted the letter but denied the spirit of liberal ideas.

The contemporary Hindu Right has inherited this conservative drive to rejuvenate the Hindu soul and purge it of impurities. To that end, the Modi administration has launched a campaign to “decolonise the Indian mind,” and has injected a heavy dose of ancient Hindu sciences and philosophy into all levels of education, from primary schools to “centres of excellence” in universities. The “decolonisers” are mining the scholarly work of postcolonial and decolonial theorists because they find “epistemic violence”—the erasure of supposedly Indian ways by Eurocentric conceptual categories—congenial to their agenda of making India great again, by making it Hindu again. They see the postcolonial Left as the enemy of their enemy and, therefore, their friend.

FOR NEARLY FIVE DECADES, since the Emergency—India's first brush with authoritarianism, in the 1970s—prominent Indian intellectuals who claim to speak for social justice and cultural rights of the marginalised have been waging a war against the ideal of secular modernity that India set upon at the time of Independence. The thrust of the argument is that India's experience of modernity is inauthentic, imposed from above by elites who accepted the colonial legacy of scientific reason and secularisation as universally valid and universally desirable values. Against this claim of universality, the critics find a deep difference, even incommensurability, between India and Europe.

These anti-secularist intellectuals set certain conditions for creating a modernity that is authentically “our own.” Our critics insist that the philosopher Immanuel Kant's directive of escaping the tutelage of all external authorities by daring to think for oneself—the famous *Sapere Aude*, “have courage to use your own reason”—will not work in India in the manner it worked for Europe in the Age of Enlightenment. For the once-colonised, they argue, true intellectual independence

requires that we first escape the apprenticeship of our erstwhile colonial lords and masters. Only then can we dare to think for ourselves, on our own terms and in our own cultural idiom. Thus, to live more authentically in the modern world, we are urged to rediscover indigenous modes of living and thinking that are still alive among the non-modern masses, who are marginalised and condescended to by Westernised elites.

That the use of reason for the once-colonised must lead to a renewed appreciation of the precolonial past is most forcefully argued by Partha Chatterjee, a leading light of subaltern studies. In an essay titled “Our Modernity,” Chatterjee argues that whereas Kant can rhapsodise about the modern as an escape from the past, we, the victims of colonialism, have no choice but to see “our modernity” as an escape from our colonised present and to “transpose our desire to be independent and creative ... to our past.” Until we undo the regime of colonial knowledge, “we would forever remain consumers of universal modernity; never would we be taken seriously as its producers.”

This segment of the Indian Left has produced withering critiques of the “Western” values enshrined in the Constitution, especially the commitment to secularism and the cultivation of a sceptical worldview. They see these values as the cast-off clothes of Europe that do not fit Indians, turning them into pathetic mimics. What unites these critics is a suspicion of the Enlightenment ideal of rational progress—the belief that there are universally valid ways of knowing (that of modern science) that are objectively more reliable than others, and that with better knowledge, we can make genuine progress towards a better society. Theirs is a *total* critique of modernity that sees scientific reason itself as an idea tainted by Western metaphysics, colonial domination, Orientalism and racism. I refer to these critics of Indian modernity collectively as the postcolonial Left.



A turn away from state-led development to a neoliberal market economy eventually brought the Bharatiya Janata Party to the commanding heights of Indian politics.

The rise to academic prominence of the postcolonial Left through the last quarter of the twentieth century coincided with the meteoric rise of the Hindu Right in India. The same shock to the Indian polity—the imposition of the Emergency—that led many on the Left to rethink the trajectory of Indian modernity also brought the RSS into the public sphere from which it had been banished after the murder of MK Gandhi. The same turn away from state-led development to a neoliberal market economy that enabled “Third World” intellectuals to move to centres of learning in the “First World” where they would take a poststructuralist turn, also brought the Bharatiya Janata Party, a political front of the RSS, to the commanding heights of Indian politics. By the late 1990s, the BJP had abandoned its earlier view of the state as a protector of society against the markets and embraced the market (or rather, crony capitalism) as the main driver of societal transformation. The BJP has adroitly welded neoliberal economic policies with a toxic populism centred around Hindu civilisation, which pits an “us,” the bearers of traditional Hindu values, against “them,” the non-Hindu minorities and the godless, Westernised “elite.” I refer to the twenty-first-century manifestation of Hindu nationalism as the Hindu Right.

HINDU NATIONALISM BELONGS to the family of conservative revolutions against the Enlightenment and liberalism, of the kind that brought down the Weimar Republic and prepared the cultural grounds for Nazism. (I establish this in my book, which recounts the intellectual history of the past fifty years and looks at

the disaster that follows when cultural despair leads the Left to renounce the promise of the Enlightenment.) India's conservative revolution began around the turn of the twentieth century with Vivekananda, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo and other leaders of the Swadeshi movement, and continued through Gandhi's leadership of the Indian National Congress. These pioneers of Indian nationalism sought to domesticate the liberalism they encountered under colonialism by subsuming modern science into Hindu mysticism, while defending the institution of caste as a superior, more harmonious and communitarian alternative to the liberal ideal of rights-bearing individuals thrown into the vagaries of the marketplace.

Their objective was to revive the eternal "soul" of their ancient nation, which was to direct India's tryst with the modern world. India was to seek its own "alternative modernity" that was compatible with the "eternal" values of its Hindu civilisation. The Constitution, written at a time when India had gone through the trauma of Partition and when secular liberals such as Nehru and Ambedkar had the upper hand, was a departure from the Hindu revivalism that has been a prominent feature of Indian nationalism. The conservative revolution did not just turn over and die once the Constitution came into force. It continued to live a subterranean life in the Sangh Parivar, the family of Hindu supremacist outfits directed by the RSS, which now controls the levers of power.

Postcolonial theory's romance of the virtuous, non-modern "subaltern" victimised by Western rationalism and secularism shares the spirit of Weimar conservatives who sought to defend the kultur of the German volk against the soulless and materialistic *zivilisation*. Like the Weimar conservatives, Indian postcolonial thinkers were driven by a cultural despair over the "nonsynchronous contradiction," or *ungleichzeitigkeit*—literally, unequalness of time—caused by the rapid but uneven spread of capitalist modernisation that had led to radically different lifeworlds existing together at the same time, in the same space, and often in the consciousness of the same person. Their cultural despair drove a sizeable segment of the Indian Left, like their Weimar counterparts, to seek an exit from modernity (or, rather, "colonial modernity") itself. They sought an "alternative modernity" that would be guided by the traditional values of the non-modern masses who were being left behind by modernisation. Unlike the Hindu conservatives, they were motivated not by the dream of reviving the Great Vedic Tradition but by a sympathy for the marginalised masses whose world they feared was being trampled by the modernising zeal of the technocrats and elites running the show. The problem, however, is that the "little traditions" of the subaltern derive their sense of the sacred from the same Great Tradition that the Hindu nationalists want to revitalise.

In their critique of modernity, the postcolonial thinkers have ended up meeting India's real conservative revolutionaries who have been "provincializing Europe" long before it became a fashionable leftist slogan. Postcolonial and subaltern-studies scholars have stigmatised the same Enlightenment values of scientific

rationalism, secularism and individualism as “Eurocentric” and culturally alien to the folkways of the subaltern, which the nationalist thinkers from Vivekananda to Gandhi had deemed too materialistic and individualistic for a nation as “spiritual” and as integrally “communitarian” as India.

While the nationalists had treated the “spiritual” as the unchanging essence of India, postcolonial thinkers, as the sociologist Vivek Chibber points out, treated the “subaltern” as the bearer of an unchanging and non-secular consciousness that valued community, religion and honour instead of material interests and utilitarian calculations. The category of the “peasant”—the paradigmatic subaltern of subaltern studies—as Chakrabarty writes, acts as a “shorthand for all the seemingly nonmodern, rural, non secular relationships and life practices that constantly leave their imprint on the lives of even the elites in India and their institutions of government.”

Just as the nationalists had sought an “alternative modernity” that would deliver the material goods made possible by modern technology without the Western “vices” of individualism, materialism and atheism, postcolonialists have sought a modernity that values non-modern subaltern values. Meanwhile, the old idea of modernity has died a slow death and reversed the decline of ignorance, blind faith and the chokehold of traditions.

But the anti-modernist Left has met the Hindu Right only halfway, for they have no sympathy whatsoever for the civilisational populism that the latter has ignited. No votary of a postcolonial or decolonial position has ever condoned the vicious Islamophobia of the Hindu Right or approved of the authoritarian turn that India has taken under Modi. For all their critique of Eurocentrism, postcolonialists remain committed to the political values of egalitarianism and liberal democracy. The anti-Enlightenment Left has met the Hindu Right on the metapolitics but not on politics.

But—here is the rub—their relentless attacks on the foundations of secular modernity have disabled a rational critique of Hindu metaphysics and the deadly traditions it sanctions and have thereby allowed the fire of Hindu chauvinism to spread. By recklessly propagating the cult of the non-modern subaltern, the high priests of postcolonial and decolonial theory have succeeded in tilting the intellectual centre of gravity toward a politics of nostalgia and revival, which is the natural terrain of the Right. Consequently, there is now a void where there should have been a strong, principled, secular democratic front against Hindutva’s onslaught on all that was once decent and promising in the idea of India.

Before we examine the scholarly debt that the Hindu Right owes to the postcolonial Left, it would be useful to analyse the axioms of postcolonial thought that have dominated the intellectual scene in India.

INDIAN INTELLECTUALS HAVE PLAYED an outsized role in the creation and elaboration of postcolonial theory. Two out of the three founding figures of

postcolonial theory, the so-called “Holy Trinity”—Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi K Bhabha—are of Indian origin, now living in the United States. The scholars whose names have become virtually synonymous with postcolonial theory and subaltern studies—notably, Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Prakash, Vinay Lal, Aditya Nigam and Nivedita Menon—all have roots in India, with some living in the country permanently or part-time.

I suggested in my book that there is not one but two origin stories of the sensibility that calls itself postcolonial—one American and the other Indian. The first began in 1978 in the literature department of Columbia University in New York, with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. The second began around the same time in post-Emergency Delhi in the writings of Ashis Nandy, the self-described “anti-secularist,” and among a group of historians belonging to what came to be known as the Subaltern Studies Collective, who were beginning to explore Indian history from the perspective of the non-elite masses. As many of these scholars moved to American and European universities, their concerns with the direction of Indian modernity merged with the Saidian–Spivakian stream, which itself was a part of the poststructuralist and deconstructionist stream of social theory that declared an end to all universally shared norms and ideals. As the Indian stream made contact with poststructuralism, it imbibed the latter’s anti-realist and relativist outlook, and its focus shifted from the lives of the subaltern to a textual critique of colonial modernity.

There is no founding document or manifesto of postcolonial theory. In my reading of the postcolonial literature as it evolved from Nandy’s initial intervention, I have identified the following four themes that have dominated the Indian debates. First, beyond economic and political injustice, colonialism committed another kind of injustice, namely “epistemic injustice,” which results in mutilating and silencing the worldview of the colonised people.

Second, epistemic injustice did not end with the formal end of colonialism. Colonialism has an afterlife in India because Indian elites—be they Marxists, secular-minded liberals or Hindu nationalists—continue to do what the colonial powers used to do: judge the folkways of the common people. Liberals and Marxists try to reform the subaltern consciousness through the inculcation of scientific rationality, while Hindutva nationalists try to reform Hinduism by fitting it into a monotheistic and pseudo-scientific mould, justifying spiritual traditions of yoga and *vedanta*—the ideas of the vedas—using the language of modern sciences. Secularists and Hindu nationalists, according to postcolonial critics, are equally colonised, because they measure the lifeworld of the non-modern masses against European standards, which they deem to be universally valid and universally desirable.

Third, the non-elite masses—the subaltern—have a mental and moral landscape that is independent of the Westernised secularists and the self-Orientalised Hindu

elites. In the subaltern mind, the gods are real, Puranic myths are more meaningful than history as told by historians, and the natural world has fuzzy edges that are not clearly demarcated from the spiritual (the Absolute Spirit, Brahman, that manifests itself as matter) or the supernatural (the *shakti* of gods and goddesses). In the subaltern world, community counts more than utilitarian calculations of moneymaking and competition, living with nature counts more than productivity and efficiency, and tolerance of difference is the norm. To think that the subaltern view of the world is merely a leftover from the past, or a premodern survival, and to expect Indians to become more secular and utilitarian as the country modernises, is to remain imprisoned in a Eurocentric mindset that sees the West as the end of all history and the goal of all development.

Fourth, the recovery of subaltern consciousness is necessary for “epistemic decolonisation” that would end the “violence” of post-Enlightenment ideas. The subaltern lifeworld must become a living option for the elite if we want to feel at home in “our modernity,” rather than forever exist as consumers of imported ideas. It is necessary, therefore, to “provincialise” Europe so that the shoots of an alternative, indigenous modernity can have a chance to grow.

Along with these founding assumptions, two other tropes have been influential in India: “strategic essentialism,” as theorised by Spivak, and “hybridity,” as theorised by Bhabha. Strategic essentialism—a term describing the temporary and tactical use of collective identities for political struggle despite internal differences—has served as a permission slip to use ideas opportunistically to “fight the other side.” As Spivak herself put it:

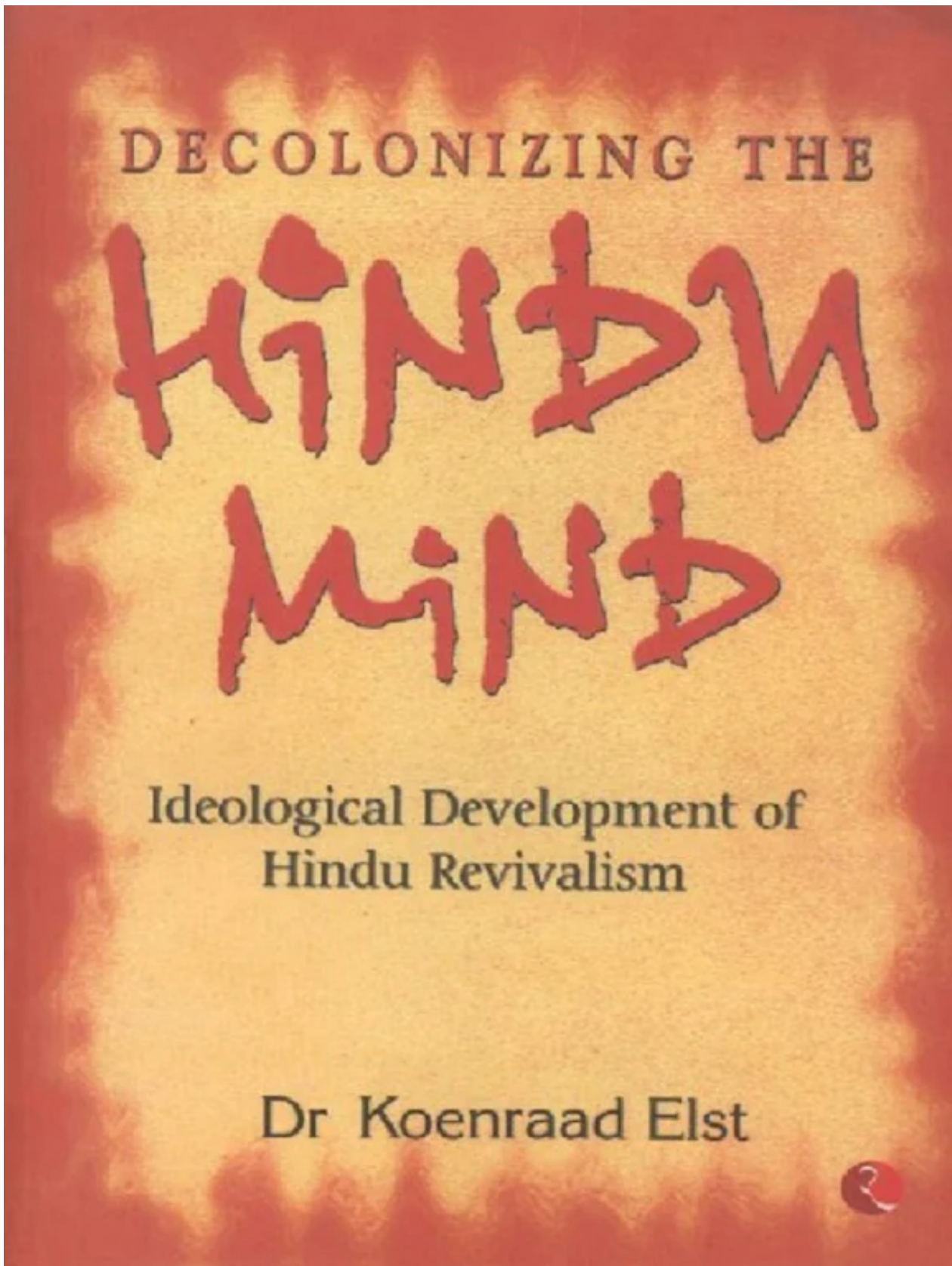
It is absolutely on target to take a stand against the discourses of essentialism [and] universalism ... But strategically we cannot ... *You pick up the universal that will give you the power to fight against the other side*, and what you are throwing away by doing that is your theoretical purity. [Emphasis added.]

As we will see below, the Hindu Right has used strategic essentialism to its advantage, embracing Orientalist essentialisms when they serve to bolster their cultural pride and condemning them, in a Saidian sense, as colonial constructs when uncomfortable issues such as caste and patriarchy are raised.

Bhabha’s concept of “hybridity” and its cognates—Nandy’s “critical traditionalism,” or Nigam’s “borderless philosophy”—are like the holy water of the Ganga, which can remove the sin of essentialism and confer “agency” and even “resistance” to the colonised. The problem with all this hybridity talk is that combining any idea with any other, regardless of their contradictions, is how Hindu hierarchical inclusivism has always worked. Hinduism thrives on encapsulating contradictory ideas into its own all-encompassing spiritual monism. A classic example of such hybridity is how Vivekananda managed to read Darwin’s purely naturalistic idea of natural selection, which has no room for divine agency, into the spirit-centred cosmology of vedanta and yoga. Hybridity is no “resistance”

to colonialism; it is rather how Hinduism “modernises” and rejuvenates itself by assimilating and disarming foreign ideas.

AS WE SAW WITH the conference on decolonisation, the intellectual harvest of postcolonial theory did not stay confined to academia. It did not take long before what I call “Hindu Postcolonial Studies” began to take shape. This school is made up of Hindu nationalist intellectuals who embrace the Saidian critiques of the colonial construction of India from a distinctly dharmic perspective. Whereas the postcolonial Left challenged Eurocentric metanarratives to let the subaltern speak, Hindu Postcolonial Studies combats “colonial consciousness” to empower the Hindu majority and to make India the guru of the world.



Koenraad Elst, in his 2001 book, *Decolonizing the Hindu Mind*, accuses the RSS of being too secular and not defending the pagan practices of ordinary Hindus because of their bias toward monotheism.

In the last two decades or so, a new breed of Hindu Right intellectuals has emerged, who call themselves “*baudhik* Kshatriyas” or intellectual warriors—Kshatriya being the traditional warrior caste. If you read the recent writings of some of their superstars whose books sell like hot cakes in India—Koenraad Elst, a

Belgian Islamophobe and a pagan with dubious connections with the European New Right; Balagangadhara, another Belgium-trained critic of “colonial consciousness”; Rajiv Malhotra, the well-known muckraker who runs the US-based Infinity Foundation that propagates Hindu exceptionalism; and J Sai Deepak, who wants to decolonise the Indian Constitution—three things become clear. One, they share the postcolonialist impulse to “reverse the gaze” and judge the West from a Hindu perspective. Two, Edward Said and Walter Dignolo (another guru of decolonisation) are their guiding stars, whom they appropriate “strategically,” and finally, they share the anti-realist, social-constructivist epistemology of postcolonial theorists while “strategically” rejecting their anti-essentialism.

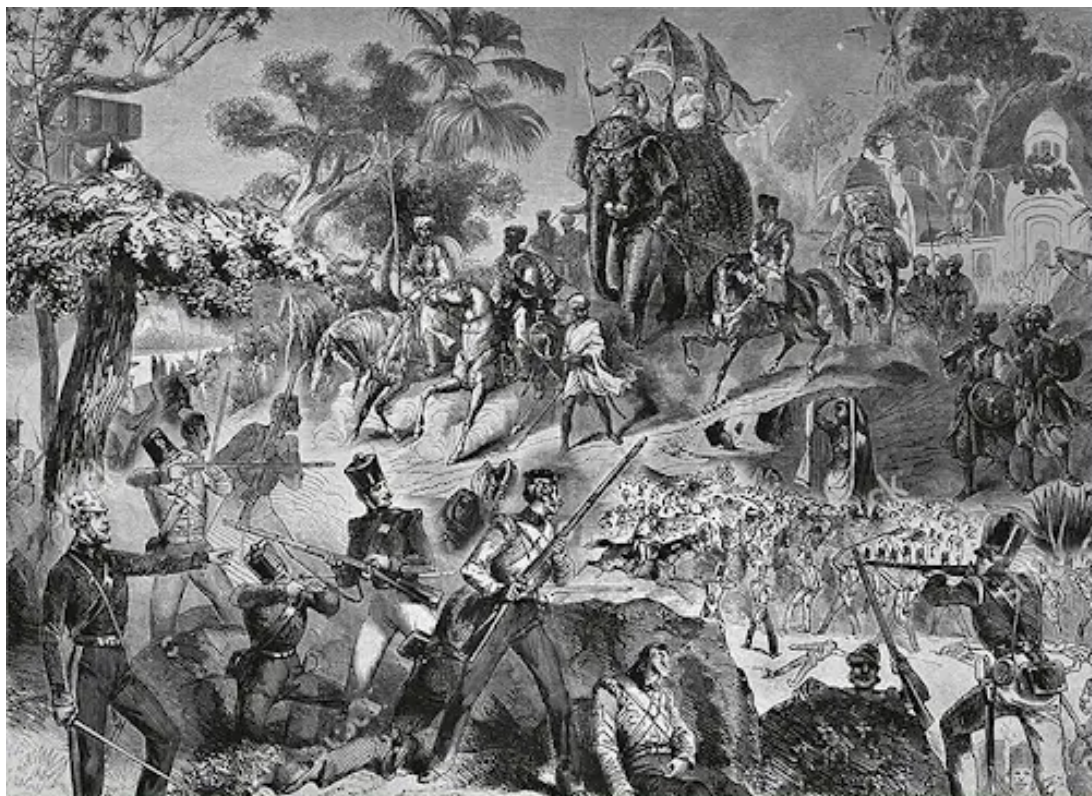
Among the anti-modernists, the indigenists—figures such as Nandy and Nigam—have long criticised Hindu nationalists for being mentally colonised. Their charge: the nationalists do not respect the tolerant folk religiosity of the subaltern and instead cast Hinduism into a Semitic mould (by adopting features common to Abrahamic religions, such as a single canon of sacred texts, a preference for monotheism which they find in Advaita Vedanta, and a Vatican and Mecca-like centre which they are building in Ayodhya). This exact criticism shows up in Elst’s 2001 book, *Decolonizing the Hindu Mind*, where he accuses the RSS of being too secular and not defending the pagan practices of ordinary Hindus because of their bias toward monotheism. Elst demands that the RSS stop seeking the approbation of secular elites, give up the Indian version of secularism as equal respect of all religions, and openly declare Islam and Christianity to be not religions but monstrous and murderous ideologies that have no place in India.

Balagangadhara places himself squarely in the tradition of Said and promises to unleash the “real” radicalism of Said’s writings that his other followers have, presumably, failed to grasp. Said is put to work by Balagangadhara to claim that there is no such thing as a “caste system” or even a religion called “Hinduism” in India; they are constructs of the “paranoid consciousness,” or hallucinations, of British Orientalists and administrators who mistook their subjective experiences shaped by Christianity for the reality of India. Here, the Saidian–Foucauldian anti-realist chickens truly come home to roost: all social scientific knowledge of the non-West is Orientalist because its background assumptions are European or Christian. Balagangadhara goes on to cite postcolonial literature to repeat the familiar refrain of the continuing colonisation of consciousness and experience in postcolonial societies. In his telling, we in India live in a matrix of “colonial consciousness” spun out of paranoid fantasies of our erstwhile rulers.

Malhotra is better known for his harassment of scholars than for his scholarship. With his best-selling books, especially his 2011 text, *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism*, he has established himself as a voice for Hindu—or, rather, “Indic”—supremacy. He places himself in the Saidian postcolonial tradition, which he praises for “reversing the gaze” on Western universalism. But he takes postcolonial studies to task for both not going far enough and for going

too far. According to him, followers of Said have been too defensive because they only try to “rescue the depiction of India society from Eurocentrism” without challenging Eurocentrism with dharma-centrism. He blames this timidity on their remaining wedded to the secularist assumptions of conventional social sciences. Postcolonial theory, on the other hand, has gone too far in its scepticism of all metanarratives because it threatens the Indian metanarrative and leaves Indians defenceless in the face of the West. For Malhotra, postmodern scepticism is fine when unleashed on the West but illegitimate when directed at the “eternal” truths of dharma.

Finally, J Sai Deepak’s 2021 book, *India, that is Bharat: Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution*, derives absolutely reactionary conclusions from postcolonial and decolonial theories. The postcolonial Left decried secularism for being unfit for India because it was a “gift” of Christianity, berated scientific rationality as silencing local knowledge, condemned human universals as Eurocentric, and dreamed of indigenising our sciences and decolonising our minds. The decolonial Left went further and insisted on complete “de-linking” from European universals in favour of creating a “pluriverse” where different cultures would be free to cultivate their gardens as they pleased.



India *that is* Bharat

Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution

J S A I D E E P A K

B L O O M S B U R Y

J Sai Deepak's 2021 book, *India, that is Bharat: Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution*, derives absolutely reactionary conclusions from postcolonial and decolonial theories.

These tendencies culminate in Sai Deepak's work, which demands a total rewrite of the idea of India, including its Constitution. India has to stop thinking of itself as a territorial nation and proudly reclaim its status as a civilisational state. This would require, as a first step, that it give up its current name, India, and begin to

proudly call itself Bharat, the name that honours the “Emperor Bharata” of the Mahabharata. The second step would be to cleanse the Constitution of its Western-Christian “onto epistemological and theological” assumptions. This would require reengineering the state whose “civilizational duty” would be to protect the country as the “homeland for Indic consciousness” and where those with non-Hindu worldviews (the Muslims, Christians and non-believers) would become second-class citizens. Sai Deepak’s book is a paean to decolonial theory (especially Mignolo, who wrote a glowing blurb for it, which he later withdrew) and an homage to Balagangadhara’s theory of colonial consciousness. If anyone needs proof of the reactionary implications of postcolonial and decolonial theory, they ought to take a good look at this text.

And if this sad saga has any message for the ivory-tower Left, it is this: be careful what you wish for.

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postcolonialism

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