“Framing the Predicament of Indian Thought: Gandhi, the Gita, and Ethical Action”

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Abstract

Although there is such a thing as Indian thought, it seems to play no role in the way social sciences and philosophy are practiced in India or elsewhere. The problem is not only that we no longer employ terms such as atman, avidya, dharma to reflect on our experience; the terms that we do indeed use—sovereignty, secularism, rights, civil society and political society, corruption—seem to insulate our experience from our reflection. This paper will outline Gandhi’s framing of our predicament in Hind Swaraj. It will then discuss three very different examples taken from our peculiar life with concepts that will also serve to clarify and illustrate the framework I am outlining. It will then very briefly discuss how Gandhi saw the Gita as showing him a way out of the predicament.

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