

Abstract

Loving Oneself through Others

The Political Theologies of Savarkar and Gandhi

This paper considers a decisive moment in the imagination of Indian independence. Imagining independence required imagining a host of ideas: independence of what? from what? and how? once independent, what will be one's relation to their former masters? what would unite newly freed subjects of disparate castes, religions, regions, classes and languages? how to link the divides between religion and politics, thought and action, means and ends, and self and other?

One way of answering these emergent questions had been through the deployment of a concept of 'the self'. In an important conjuncture of events, in 1909 Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, better known as the preeminent theorist of Hindu nationalism, and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi put forth their answers using their own conceptions of the self. The two texts they produced, respectively, *The War of Independence of 1857* and *Hind Swaraj*, are discussed here in dialogue with each other and with reference to their concepts of the self. For both, the self served as an organising principle, the site of action, regeneration, control, (non)violence, conversion, unity, and a legitimiser of the means and ends for independence. Whereas for Savarkar one could only love their self through others, Gandhi needed no others in loving oneself.