

REDIRECTING THE HISTORY OF INDIA

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1. Introduction

This article has its origin in the following trilemma: if you ask a Muslim or a Sikh in India he or she is more likely than not to claim that although the Indian state claims to be a secular state, it is in effect a Hindu state; and if you were to ask a Hindu whether the Indian state is a secular state the likelihood is, an increasing day by day, that he or she would say: it claims to be one but in effect favours the minorities and discriminates against the Hindus. If, however, you asked the members of the legislatures, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary of the Indian state, they would in all likelihood assert that India is a secular state. This adds yet another dimension to the issue. The religious minorities form one horn; the religious majority the second, and the secularists¹ the third horn of this

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¹It is often claimed by some secularists that they are Hindu but secular, or Muslim but secular, thereby generating the possibility that it is possible to belong to a religion and to be secular at the same time. There is some truth in this claim but it obscures the following major historical development: "If one major strand in the process of secularisation is the religious emphasis on the distinctness of a transcendent God from the world of nature, and a second, the sovereign independence of the same God from all human social institutions, religious as well as political, then a third, of no less importance, is the secularisation of culture through the vindication of the autonomy of reason. Christianity's origins in the Hellenistic world meant that from the first it attempted to interpret its Judaic heritage in the light of Greek philosophy. The secularisation of nature and society already carried the implication that these realities had their own intelligibility. Christianity took the further awesome step of assuming that God also was, at least to some degree, rationally intelligible. For the next thousand years, Christian theology expounded its scriptural base in terms of Platonist-Augustinian, and later Aristotelian, models. In the Aristotelian model developed by Aquinas, it is precisely because they depended on the nature of God that created realities share the intelligibility common to Being. The dignity and role of reason thus received religious legitimation, and in the centuries after the Reformation had both strengthened the this-worldly focus of the Christian calling, and weakened the church's dominance of intellectual life, reason found a voice

dilemma – and, if I may be permitted to mix metaphors – the simultaneous claim by each that its ox is being gored constitutes the trilemma.

If the trilemma has been correctly identified then it demands an explanation. This article is an attempt to offer one such explanation. However, before I proceed any further, I feel duty-bound to identify the limitations to which my analysis is subject:

(1) I am neither a political scientist nor a lawyer by training. Hence, I remain open to correction on matters pertaining to these aspects.

(2) I am an Indologist by background but here again my interests incline more towards Hindu religion and philosophy as distinguished from Hindu law, so here too I remain open to correction.

(3) As all human beings are liable to error, academics not excluded, I remain open to error on account of this human condition, and, therefore, open to correction in this way as well.

2. Classical vs. Modern Indian Models of Secularism

It is my thesis that all the three horns of the trilemma are making a valid point because despite claiming to be a secular state the Indian state has in actual fact (1) functioned more like a classical Hindu state, and (2) unlike a modern secular state.

independent of theology and gave birth to modern philosophy and science. This secularisation of knowledge in time went far beyond its religious origins. Many modern worldviews deny that religion has any relevance at all in the political, economic and social spheres, or go further to question the existence of God and the validity of all conceptions of religious transcendence. 'Secularism', as it is generally called, constitutes a profound challenge to religion in its entirety. Often, in recent years, the word 'secularisation' has been used to imply the inevitable, and desirable, demise of religion. It should be obvious that in this use, the word has taken on an ideological edge derived from what we have called secularism. In other words, it is a myth embodying the 'interest' of groups (especially intellectuals) who aspire to succeed to the position of cultural authority once held by churches (Michael Mason, "Developing Secularisation Theory" (unpublished paper), 4, presented at the International Conference on Religion, Melbourne, July 12-17, 1992; emphasis added).

Given the pluralism of the Hindu religious tradition and its long and chequered history, it would be misleading to characterize a single model or paradigm as constituting the model of the Hindu state.² It is in order to take this into account that I have chosen to characterize the mode I have in mind as the classical one. To be even more precise, by a classical Hindu state I mean the model of a Hindu state which emerges from a study of *Dharmaśāstras* of Manu, Yajñavalkya, etc.³ Even here internal differences exist but a broad pattern is identifiable.

Four aspects of this classical model are particularly relevant to the present context. (1) That in the matter of conquest of another country, usages of the captured country should be respected (Manu VII. 202-203; Yajñavalkya I. 342-343). (2) That according to this model it is the duty of the Hindu state to ensure that non-Hindus within this state abide by their own separate norms (Yajñavalkya II. 192). (3) That all Hindus are not equal in the eyes of the law: crime and punishment is caste-specific as also occupations. For instance, (a) a Brahmin may not be condemned to death but has to be banished from the kingdom when attracting the death penalty (Manu VIII. 380-381); (b) he pays a lower fine, for instance, for defaming a member of a lower caste (Manu VIII. 267-2268), (c) his priestly vocation is hereditary (Manu X. 1-5), and (4) That when it comes to Dharma, the specific dharmas take precedence over general ones.⁴ This point pertains to the distinction between *sādhārana* or *sāmānya* and *viśesa* dharmas, *viśesa*, that is to say, specific to one's *varna* and *aśrama*. The presence of the *sāmānya* or *sādhārana* dharmas is sometimes overlooked. Hence, we will do well to remind ourselves that "Apart from the specific qualities required to be possessed by the members of each of the four *varnas*, all *Dharmaśāstra* works attach the highest importance to certain moral

²See K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, Bangalore: Bangalore Printing and Publishing Co., 1967; Bhasker Anand Saletore, *Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions*, London: Asia Publishing House, 1963; Harmut Scharfe, *The State in Indian Tradition*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989.

³These *Smritis* should be distinguished from the later ones, such as those of Narada, Brhaspati and Katyayana. See Indra Deva and Srirama, "The Articulation of Juridical concepts in later *Smritis*" in Daya Krishna, ed., *India's Intellectual Traditions*, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1987, 63-91.

⁴Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952, Vol. II, 504-507.

qualities and enjoining them on all men. Manu X. 63, Yāj. I.222, Gaut.Dh.S. VIII. 23-25, and Matsya 52. 8-10 prescribe for all *varnas* a brief code of morals, such as ahimsa, truthfulness, non-stealing (i.e., no wrongful taking of another's property), purity and restraint of the senses. The *Mitākṣarā* on Yāj. I.22 explains that the word '*sarvesām*' therein states that these moral qualities if practised are the means of Dharma for all men from *brāhmanas* to *cāndālas*.⁵ These dharmas read like the Hindu version of the preambles to modern constitutions which promise "liberty, equality, fraternity" or life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.⁶

Although the Indian state claims to be a secular state I consider that its actual behaviour conforms remarkably to the model of the classical Hindu state on these points. Let me to illustrate this claim with the help of some examples.

(1) The examples from the history of modern India which come closest to conquest of sorts are the cases of military operation in Kashmir in 1948 when it had to be liberated from foreign occupation and in Bangladesh in 1971 when the country had to be liberated from what was deemed as foreign occupation by the former residents of East Pakistan. In both the cases the laws and usages – Islamic in this case – were preserved. In fact, in the case of Kashmir, such protection is offered by an Article (370) of the Constitution.⁷ In the case of Bangladesh it has even been allowed to lapse into an Islamic state after the attempted secular experiment failed. Even during this experiment the local laws and usages were left intact. This may be contrasted with the imposition of a secular constitution on Japan by the USA after its conquest, i.e., the secular usages of the USA were imposed on Japan. This is particularly significant as the framers of the Indian Constitution drew on the secular provision of the American and Australian constitutions in particular in framing the Indian Constitution. Australia imposed the religion of the immigrants on the Aborigines whose local laws and usages were disregarded and have barely

⁵P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962, Vol. V, Part II, 1637.

⁶They are also remarkably similar to the *yamas* of the Patanjali's *Yogasutras* (II.30), which are also declared to be universal (II. 31).

⁷See Jugmohan, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited, 1991, 232; also see chapter VI.

and belatedly been legally recognized only in 1991. Until the 1960s the aborigines were not even included in the Australian population census figures, perhaps to bolster the legal fiction that when the British landed in Australia the land was uninhabited.

The Indian state has thus acted in a thoroughly Hindu way in the cases of Kashmir and Bangladesh in contrast to the manner in which other secular countries followed up their conquests.

(2) One may begin by clarifying this point that the Hindu state was to oversee the practice of non-Hindu religions within its border. Thus Yajñavalkya (II. 192) "prescribes that the king should guard against breach the distinctive usages and conventions of guilds (of artisans), of traders, of heretical sects and bands (of soldiers)." The word used for heretical sects is *pāsānda*, which is defined in the commentaries as inclusive of those who reject the authority of the Vedas, such as the Buddhists and the Jains. There is, however, also some evidence which controverts this point. Thus, Manu IX.225 prescribes that the king should banish heretics, and, according to Yajñavalkya (II.70), a *pakhandi* is not a proper witness. Similarly, Gautama IX. 17 directs a *snātaka* not to converse with *mlecchas* and impure persons. The overall evidence, however, seems to support the view that it was the duty of the Hindu state to protect and even at times to supervise the life-style of the non-Hindus. P. V. Kane upholds the basic point that the usages of heretical sects were to be respected, and handles the evidence to the contrary just cited as follows: "These passages may be explained in various ways. Probably the prescriptions of Gautama and Manu refer to an age when the schism caused by Buddhists and Jains was not very old and feelings between the followers of the Veda and the heretics ran high. But most of these prescriptions are addressed to the followers of the Veda as individuals. They do not negate the requirements laid down by Nar., Br., and other that the king (though of a different persuasion) was to enforce among heretics their own usages. It can be said without any fear of contradiction that at least from the 4th century A.D. onwards the policy of the state in India was 'to protect all religions, but to interfere with none.'"⁸

⁸Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol III, 883. Thus "in traditional Brahmanical political thought, cultural pluralism within the state was accepted and

Literary and historical evidence seems to support Kane's view.⁹ For instance, in the Sanskrit play, the *Mrcchakatika* of Śudrāka, the Hindu king appoints a former acquaintance turned Buddhist as the head of Buddhist *Vihāras* in his kingdom after the dynastic revolution.¹⁰

By enacting the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights of Divorce) Act of 1986 the modern Indian state was, thus, just acting like the classical Hindu state, by providing the Muslims be governed by their own personal law.

(3) The classical Hindu model provides for special privileges for certain *varnas*. The modern Indian state has merely inverted and displaced its application, from the sphere of criminal law to that of education and administration. Now minorities enjoy special privileges under Article 30 of the Constitution denied to the majority. They are the new Brahmans, as it were. Similarly, the educational privileges enjoyed by the Brahmins within Hinduism have now been transferred to the scheduled castes and tribes at an all-Indian level and to the backward classes in several states.

Even the logic underlying the redistribution of privileges is arguably similar. The Brahmans claimed their privileges on the basis of their good karma of the past which caused them to be born as Brahmans. The new privileges are offered to the depressed classes on the basis of their past *karma* – but historical rather than reincarnatory in this case. The privileges are a compensation for karmic inequity suffered by them in the past.

There is, however, a wrinkle involved. In the classical Hindu model an attempt was made to match privileges with responsibilities – thus the Brahmans and kings had to uphold higher moral standards of purity and charity compared to the other *varnas* (Manu VIII: 336-339). No such

king was the protector of everybody's dharma; being that was his dharma. Only in very exceptional circumstance, apprehending disorder, might the king have used his authority to abrogate certain customs or usages. Hence the idea of a state religion was not entertained." T. N. Madan, "Secularism in Its Place," *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, 4 (November 1987), 752.

⁹See Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. V, Part II, 1011-1015.

¹⁰Kasinath Pandurang Parab, ed., *The Mrichchhakatika of Sudraka with the Commentary of Prthvidhara*, Bombay: Nirnayasagar Press, 1094, 292.

attempt has been made by the modern Indian state, presumably because the privileges are offered to redress past grievances.

It must be noted in general that although the Constitution proclaims a horizontal concept of equality in the preamble, it sometimes adopts, in fact, a vertical concept of equality. It is useful to distinguish at this point between horizontal and vertical concepts of equality. According to the horizontal concept of equality, all are to be treated on par. According to the vertical concept of equality, all are not treated on par. However, the application of the principle of equality takes the form of matching privileges with responsibilities. Thus, at least in some cases, when the higher castes enjoyed higher privileges, they also had to bear proportionately greater responsibility. The punishment prescribed for theft, for instance, is greater the higher the caste, even though the amount involved is identical.¹¹ Such a vertical concept of equality has a very Hindu flavour.

It is such a vertical concept of equality which, when operating in the area of privileges, renders a "notwithstanding" clause possible. A Brahmin, thus, could not be executed notwithstanding the fact that he was guilty of a crime requiring execution. Horizontal equality requires that all have equality of opportunity to obtain a particular job but the secular Indian state had to resort to the concept of vertical equality when reservations were introduced for scheduled castes and tribes to redress past wrongs. Hence the "notwithstanding clause," with which the affirmative action had to be protected in the Constitution by the insertion of Article 15 (4) through the first Amendment Act of 1951.¹²

(4) Manu lays down the dharma or duties of the varnas and the āśramas in detail. These many called *viśesadharmas* as they are specific to a varna and āśrama. He also, however, lays down dharma common to all, which he calls *sāmāsika* dharma (Manu X. 62). Although which of these takes precedence over the other is a point of central and continuing debate in Hindu ethics, the majority view among the exponents of the classical model of the Hindu state seems to have favoured the priority of the *viśesa*

¹¹Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, New York: Doubleday, 1969, 107.

¹²See Donald Eugene Smith, *India as a Secular State*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963, 117.

dharma over the *sāmānya*¹³ of which the following is a commonsensical example: one should abstain from taking life in general, a soldier's specific dharma to fight and kill overrides this general prescription.

In this context the modern Indian state set out to assert the priority of the *sāmānya* dharmas – liberty, equality, fraternity in modern parlance – over the *viśesa* dharmas. The Directive Principle regarding the establishment of a uniform civil code for all Indian citizens is a good example of this point. However, it has gone back on this now and retreated towards preferring *viśesa* over *sāmānya* dharma and in doing so is acting like a Hindu state.

It could be maintained that, at least, in criminal cases equality before the law has been maintained. Surprising as it might appear, even this point can be understood in relation to the modern Indian state in the classical Hindu way. For the effect of British paramountcy in India was to reduce all the varnas to the same status – that of slaves or shall we say, Śudras. Mahatma Gandhi explicitly stated: "If I had the power, I should declare that we are all Hindus, all of the same varna."¹⁴ But of which varna? Mahatma Gandhi goes on to say: "Indeed, in my opinion, at the present moment, we are all predominantly shudras, so long as we are serfs (under the British)."¹⁵ Moreover, the Ilbert Bill controversy during the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon (1880-1884) clearly reinforces this point – for the British were not prepared to treat the Indians as their equals in administering the law.¹⁶ After all, even "Manu's philosophy of man and society must be viewed in the context of this tension between equality and hierarchy, equality of some sort among the members of a particular varna even for the purpose of recognizing that they belong to the same varna and

¹³Scharfe, *The State in Indian Tradition*, 213.

¹⁴M. K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, ed. Bharatan Kumarappa, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1950, 381.

¹⁵Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, 10.

¹⁶Percival Spear, ed., *The Oxford History of India*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, 689.

hierarchy among the varnas."¹⁷ Like Manu, what the modern Indian state has done is to redefine varnas and *jatis* and their privileges and liabilities.

3. Proximity of Indian State and Hinduism

Not only has the modern Indian state in effect been functioning as a Hindu state, it has clearly not functioned as a secular state in the usual sense of observing a wall of separation between the church and the state; certainly not where Hinduism is concerned. Three such areas may be identified here: (1) Administration of Hindu temples, (2) Hindu personal law, and (3) legislation pertaining to Sati.

Government interference in the administration of Hindu temples is so massive that it was identified years ago by Donald Eugene Smith as a potential threat to Indian secularism. He wrote in 1963: "The second major problem for the secular state is the extensive state interference in Hindu religious institutions. The close supervision or even outright administration of temples and maths was one of the traditional functions of the Hindu state. In independent India there is a clear trend for the state to revert to its former role in temple administration. The trend is justified by pointing to the need for reforms in financial administration which the state alone is equipped to bring about. The state has, thus, become the principal agency of Hindu religious reform. In present-day India there is a strong tendency for the state to do for Hinduism whatever it cannot do for itself because of organizational deficiencies."¹⁸ Smith also explained how such a role of the state might erode secularism: "If the state deals with the religion of a minority, there are definite political checks which will tend to limit the extent of the interference. When Hindu legislators and administrators deal with their own religion, that of the majority, there are no such checks. State interference in Hindu temples has been limited somewhat by the

¹⁷A. M. Ghose, "Manu's Conception of Man and Society" in Krishna, *India's Intellectual Traditions*, 558.

¹⁸Smith, *India as a Secular State*, 496-497; emphasis added. He goes on to say: "In the case of temple administration, there is also a decided tendency for the state to become closely identified with Hinduism through state Hindu religious endowments departments. The distinction between the negative function of regulating temple administration to prevent abuses, which the government is empowered to perform, and the positive promotion of Hindu religion, is either not understood or ignored." Smith, *India as a Secular State*, 497.

judiciary's interpretation of article 26 of the Constitution, but it is still very extensive. What is almost totally lacking is the consideration that the concept of the secular state itself imposes certain definite limitations on the functions of government. Not everything that needs to be done by the state."¹⁹

As the interference of the Indian government in matters of Hindu personal law is too obvious to require documentation²⁰ or demonstration I now move to a consideration of the controversial issue of *Sati*.

This point requires extremely careful consideration, as the humanitarian argument against the abolition of *Sati* is so overwhelming that it might interfere with a rational examination of the issue. Happily the point to be made is quite plain: in abolishing *Sati* and its glorification,²¹ clearly the *sādhārana* dharma of *ahimsa* or non-violence was being upheld against the *viśesa* dharma of *himsa* or violence where violence is defined as inclusive of violence directed not only towards other, but also oneself. However, as is well-known, the entire tenor of new-Hinduism has been directed against the practice of *Sati*. Now is the time to make the crucial point: That the entire general thrust of the neo-Hinduism has been to accord priority to *sādhārana* dharma over *viśesa* dharma. Therefore this move of the government is in keeping with the temper of neo-Hinduism. However, this process of generalization or universalization is confined by the new Indian state to the Hindus, thus, again de-universalising it by not undertaking similar measures for improving the status of women among the non-Hindu religious communities of India. Such a selective secularisation delegitimizes the state's claim of offering secularism as a *sādhārana* dharma over the *viśesa* dharma of the various distinct religions themselves.

Crucial to the appreciation of this point is the realization of the full extent to which reformist neo-Hinduism has moved in the direction according priority to *sādhārana* over *viśesa* dharmas. This is best illustrated by the acceptance of the *Bhāgavadgita* as the Hindu scripture

¹⁹Smith, *India as a Secular State*, 497.

²⁰Smith, *India as a Secular State*, 497-498.

²¹Sakuntala Narasimhan, *Sati: Widow Burning in India*, New York: Doubleday, 1990, Appendix.

par excellence.²² Rammohun Roy cited it in support of abolition of Sati;²³ Mahatma Gandhi in support of abolition of untouchability.²⁴ The modern reading of the text drastically modifies the traditional understanding of *varnasrama* dharma. *Varna* is seen as based on action and not on birth²⁵ (with the notable exception of Gandhi)²⁶ and, hence, nothing more than a process of vocational rationalization, while *asrama* system is virtually dispensed with as the *Gita* is seen as incorporating *nivrtti* in *pravrtti*.²⁷ Such a generalization of Hinduism goes hand in hand with universalization which views all religions as valid approaches to the divine.²⁸

4. Indian Secularism: A Double Betrayal

We are now in a position to offer an explanation for the trilemma identified at the beginning of this paper: that the Indian state claims to be a secular state; but that it is regarded as anything but both by the minorities and the majority community. From the point of view of the minorities the fact that the Hindus constitute a majority in India and their views come to influence if not prevail in several cases such as the question of banning cow-slaughter, the inclusion of Jainas, Buddhists and Sikhs, under the legal category of 'Hindu' for purposes of the Hindu Marriage Act, the performance of Hindu rituals at public ceremonies, etc. The minorities tend to view the Indian state as a Hindu state, or as, at least, dominated by the Hindus.

However, what is really crucial for the continuance of the secular state is how the majority community – the Hindus – view it, for if the Hindus turn against it then it would be hard to retain a democratic system

²²K. M. Panikkar, *The Foundations of New India*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963, 36-46.

²³Arvind Sharma, et al., *Sati: Historical and Phenomenological Essays*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998, Chapter 11.

²⁴Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, 315-316.

²⁵K. M. Panikkar, *Hindu Society at Cross Roads*, New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1961, 40-41.

²⁶Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, 370.

²⁷M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1949, 51-56.

²⁸S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1948.

of government. In this respect the Hindus see themselves as victims of a double betrayal: the Indian state has betrayed both the secular tradition of the west and the reformist thrust of neo-Hinduism, whose congruence had made the establishment of India as a secular state possible in the first place.²⁹ Moreover, under it, the minorities do enjoy some constitutional rights not available to the majority community.

If, despite this evidence, the Indian state continues to claim that it is secular, then this claim is best understood in terms of Thomas Lukmann's view that secularisation is a kind of a contemporary myth. It is a myth which is "shaped by the need of the intellectuals to give a comprehensive account of the origins and essence of their time, their unique place in history... An account of the emergence of the modern world, which is felt to differ absolutely from what came before it."³⁰ Thus, India's governing intelligentsia has apparently uncritically appropriated this myth.

5. Resolution of Indian Secularist Trilemma

One may now tackle the more thorny issue of the resolution of this trilemma as distinguished from its explanation. This would require behaviour-modification on the part of all the three parties to the trilemma.

a) The Indian State

The Indian State must endeavour to treat all its citizens on an equal footing. At the moment it is perceived as treating the minorities one way and the majority community in a different way. It will give the right signal in this respect by taking steps towards the formulation of either a uniform civil code or leaving the personal law of every religion untouched – at least, from now on. The former course is preferable to the latter but the latter may be politically more palatable.

b) The Minorities

The minorities should not continue to enjoy more rights than the majority as they do, for instance, under Article 30, this equalization could be

²⁹Smith, *India as a Secular State*, 493-495.

³⁰Thomas Luckmann "Theories of Religion and Social Change," *Annual Review of the Social Sciences of Religion* 1 (1977), 17.

achieved in two ways: either by withdrawing the extra rights from the minorities or by extending them to the majority community as well. Again, the former course of action is probably to be preferred but the latter may be politically more feasible.

c) The Majority Community

It is in respect to the majority community that the conclusion I have arrived at surprises me most and may surprise others as well. Surprise is too mild a word for it. It is almost painful and the only comfort I can find is in the following words of Walter Bagehot: "One of the greatest pains to human nature is the pain of a new idea." To put it bluntly, it seems to me that the Hindus must ultimately take the maximum share of the blame for the present situation for the following reason. Instead of setting their own house in order themselves, they have used the state as an instrument for doing so – the way many Hindus are not willing to take life themselves but are not averse to enjoying eating meat if the animal has been butchered by someone else. The Indian state has been emboldened by their own delinquency into arrogating powers to itself for initiating religious changes and reforms which the Hindus should have undertaken on their own initiative, and becoming arbitrary and reckless as a result in treating them.

The reason why the Hindus have to rely on the state is because they possess no representative regulatory body of their own to do so. As professor M. N. Srinivas once remarked, Hinduism is acephalus at the top, although polycephalous at lower levels. It must evolve a pan-Indian representative body which can both speak for the Hindus and to the Hindus. The Hindus cannot simultaneously dodge their responsibility in this respect and ask the Indian state to abstain from practicing its pseudo-secularism at their expense.

6. Conclusion

I know this proposal is controversial but, in my judgement, also as inevitable as it is controversial. To conclude in the idiom of the tradition itself: the movement of reform in this respect, of providing Hindus with authoritative spokesperson – set in motion by Adi Sankaracarya by setting

up, according to tradition, the four mathas³¹ must now be carried by modern Hindus to its logical conclusion. This forward movement, it can be argued, was arrested by the political subjugation of the Hindus and the consequent struggle for survival. This forward movement, now that Hindus are no longer a subject people, should be resumed, and should culminate in the creation of a single all-India body which could credibly speak for all Hindus, or, at least, a majority of them. I see it as the only way of averting two catastrophes: the Hindus themselves making a grab for the Indian state itself or the Hindus continuing to suffer at the hands of the anti-Hindu character of the present-day pseudo-secularism in India. In fact, the danger of discrimination at the hands of the so-called secularists might even be greater than they suffered under phases of Islamic and Christian hegemony; for, at least, the latter had a religion while the secularists have none³² and as the *Bhagavadgita* says: any religion is better than no religion.

³¹P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. II, part II, 906; also see William Cenkner, *A Tradition of Teachers: Sankara and the Jagadgurus Today*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983.

³²Madan, "Secularism in Its Place," 757-758.