

## "What is Hindu about Modern Hindu Law?: the Sanskrit Story"

Donald R. Davis

The complex and contrived history of modern Hindu law has been the subject of increasing interest by colonial and postcolonial legal historians of India. Few, if any, studies, however, address either the general problem of justifying personal law systems philosophically and politically in the modern world or the specific problem of the nature of modern Hindu law as a personal law system. In particular, I am interested in the question of whether modern Hindu law as a personal law system protects any essential element of Hindu religion. To answer this question in part, I will focus on only one aspect of the specific problem, namely the tenuous connection between Sanskrit Dharmasastra texts and the codified modern Hindu law. I will analyze the supposed links between traditional texts and modern legal provisions as a prelude to concluding that modern Hindu law does not in fact protect any crucial aspect of Hindu religious life that wasn't itself constructed as such during the colonial period.