

[Kerala's Ramakrishna Mission Granted 'Non-Hindu' Status](#)

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Over three years ago, the Ramakrishna Mission in India's Bengal state sought for and received minority religious status, a move which allowed them to retain control over the Vivekananda Centenary College and win a dispute with the college's teachers. A firestorm of complaint followed, with Hindus objecting to the argument that the spiritual heirs of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda were no longer Hindus. [Sec HINDUISM TODAY, March, 1986.] Now, in a move made with a good deal less commotion, the Kerala branch has also been granted minority status. Under Indian law, institutions of religions which constitute minorities in the country are granted much more autonomy from government control than are Hindu institutions.

The Kerala designation did not require court action. It was implemented directly by the state's then chief minister, Ramakrishna Hegde. Ignoring his Education Ministry's recommendations to the contrary and not waiting for a report on the issue from the Department of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Hedge approved the RK petition on April 7, 1988. The Ramakrishna Vidyashala (school) in Mysore was then exempted from certain state school requirements regarding appointment of staff and admission of students.

While the RK Mission has portrayed the Bengal and Karnataka moves as simply ways to retain control of their school system, few Hindus are aware of how passionately the Mission has argued for its "non-Hindu status" In their original Bengal court affidavit they state, "The religion of Sri Ramakrishna is the religion separate and different from that of the Hindus...Ramakrishnaism has its separate God, separate name, separate church, separate worship, separate community, separate organization and above all, a separate philosophy." They also contend that, "An attempt to equate the religion of Ramakrishna with the Hindu religion as professed and practiced will be to defeat the very object of Ramakrishnaism and to deny his gospel."

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