

HINDUISM, AFRICAN HINDUS AND 'NEO-HINDUISM': BETWEEN NOMENCLATURE AND AUTHENTICITY

Abamfo Ofori Atiemo

Abstract: This article examines how African converts to Hinduism in the Hindu Monastery of Africa (HMA) negotiate the authenticity of their identity as Hindus and the orthodoxy of their teachings and practices in the context of status and identities, potentially, imposed on new movements by scholars and others through the use of certain taxonomies. Drawing widely from literature, which it relates to a field study of the Hindu Monastery of Africa (HMA), located in Ghana's capital of Accra, it examines the concept of 'neo-Hinduism'. It concludes, in the light of recently adduced evidence in literature, that the term is of dubious validity and, therefore, not adequate as a descriptive term for movements such as the HMA.

Key-words: Africa (Ghana), Hinduism, Neo-Hinduism, Nomenclature, Authenticity.

Introduction: 'Neo-Hinduism' has become an established nomenclature for a number of religious sects and practices related to Hinduism. Sometimes, it is used as a cover term for most manifestations of contemporary Hinduism as presented by the nineteenth century interpreters of Hindu traditions such as Rammohun Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Yet the work of these reformers, largely, opened the way to non-Indians to share in the religious heritage of India. However, the appropriateness of the term is a subject of contestation, especially, as there is also a growing sense of distinction between 'traditional Hinduism' and 'neo-Hinduism' with the former being held as more authentic than the latter. This creates a crisis of religious identity for many who consider themselves Hindu, especially, non-Indians who have converted to Hinduism. This is the case of the members of the Hindu Monastery of Africa (HMA) in Ghana, which is completely African in leadership and membership but claim Hindu orthodoxy for their brand of Hinduism. They refuse to be described as neo-Hindu, probably because they perceive the power of nomenclature to define identity and assign positions and roles in society¹. It appears they find the term unacceptable because it seems to call into question the authenticity of their claim to being Hindu². In this article, I first report about the HMA and attempt to locate Hinduism in the family of religions; and examine the idea of 'Neo-Hinduism' in the light of new evidence put forward by scholars. I then, on the basis of the evidence, conclude with a discussion of claims by the HMA to Hindu authenticity.

Hinduism in Ghana: One of the earliest mentions of Hindu presence in Ghana was in a survey report published in 1958 by Ione Acquah. According to the report, in 1931, there were twenty-one Indians in Accra and in 1955 their population had risen to ninety-eight³. These were mainly Gujarati merchants who had set up shops or been employed as shop-keepers. However, Indians in Ghana have, for a long time, in keeping with traditional Hindu practice, refrained from any proselytizing activity.⁴ Elom Dovlo argues that the contemporary impact of Eastern spirituality in Ghana is due mainly to the emergence of Oriental new religious movements rather than orthodox Hindu presence.⁵ Several new religious movements of oriental background arrived in the country and other parts of Africa in the 1960s. This development seems to have been part of a general spread of Eastern religious movements, remodelled in North America, to various regions of the world.⁶ The International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and the Buddhist Nichiren Shoshu and Soka Gakkai came to Ghana as part of this development.⁷ However, there were other channels through which Hindu influences seeped into Ghana. Mention could be made of the Ghanaian soldiers of the Second World War who returned from Burma with Hindu symbols and artefacts and Hindi movies which circulated widely in the country and contributed to rising perceptions about India's mystical powers.⁸ In large measure, the processes of Hinduism's initial rise and spread in Ghana were marked by a certain level of spontaneity.

The Hindu Monastery of Africa (HMA): The HMA is one of the several Hindu groups in the West African country of Ghana. There are others such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), the Sathya Sai Baba Mission and Brahma Kumaris. Unique about the HMA is its local Ghanaian origins. Unlike the others, it is home-grown but at the same time, claims orthodoxy, with its Swami linked to Swami Krishnanda as his diksha guru. Founded and led by Swami Ghananand Saraswati, the HMA is extending the frontiers of Hinduism in Ghana. The monastery has attracted the attention of the international media, probably because it appears unusual.⁹

The monastery has its roots in a small group of curious seekers who gathered around an enthusiastic and intelligent young man called, Kwesi Essel, who felt drawn toward Hindu spirituality. This group was formed in Accra in the 1950s.¹⁰ In the early 1969, members of the group contributed money to sponsor Essel to go to India for more knowledge. He went to Rishikesh and enrolled in the Forest Academy of the Divine Life Society of Swami Sivananda. The training he had equipped him well and on his return in 1971, he reorganised his group into an ashrama and eventually, named it the African Hindu Monastery. Some members of the Indian community began to participate in his activities. In March 1975, Swami Krishnand Saraswati of the Human Service Trust who

was on a visit to the Hindu community in Ghana learnt about him and arranged to meet him. After meeting and working together for a few days, the visiting Swami became convinced of the commitment of Essel and initiated him into sannyasa, with the name, Swami Ghananand Saraswati. Currently, the movement claims to have more than five thousand members throughout Ghana.

Hinduism as Religion: Some Hindus do not accept the term, 'religion' as an appropriate description of their tradition. They often appeal to the Sanskrit term, Sanatanadharma, (eternal law) and explain that what has been designated Hinduism should better be understood as a 'way of life' than a religion.¹¹ It is argued that since the term Hindu, originally, means Indian, Hinduism describes their total way of life as a people, not only in the religious sense; especially, since religion and other sectors of life were traditionally, not divided.

While there is some merit in this position, the separation of the life of a people in a modern nation-state into religious and secular departments would naturally require that what comes to be designated as 'religious' be named. In that sense, the isolation of the religious sphere from other departments of life in India and the increasing acceptance of the term Hinduism must be seen as related developments. It is true from the literature that the term Hindu, originally, was used by foreigners to refer to a geographical area and the people inhabiting it.¹² However, its use as a term describing the religious identity of the people of India also goes far back into history:

“Hindu” was originally an ethnic designator. But the ample evidence from the fifteenth- and sixteenth- century writers show that by that time, the word “Hindu” had been adopted by vernacular-language authors and had in some contexts taken on a more specifically religious sense.¹³

The conception of a religious sphere separate from the secular, ensures that 'Hindu' as a religious category is not equated with ethnicity or national citizenship. It is the conceptual separation of the category of religion from the secular sphere that has also made possible the phenomenon of the non-Indian Hindu. This allows a foreigner to become a Hindu in the religious sense, without becoming Indian by nationality. The idea of a 'secular state', which implies a dichotomy between the secular and the religious, seems, so far, the best arrangements for nurturing modern values such as human rights and other freedoms meant to protect individual liberties. It is also ideal for negotiating consensus building in the context of highly multi-religious public spaces. Yet, a neat separation between religion and politics in the fashion of Western democracies is something that can be held only in perpetual tension in a non-Western country such as India.

The use of the term 'Hinduism' in the religious sense does not seem to be an issue any more as many Indians who adhere to their traditional religion have come to accept it and widely

apply it to their extremely diverse beliefs, ideas and practices.¹⁴ This becomes even more understandable in the context where, through several processes of historical encounters, many Indians have become adherents of other religious traditions (or non-religious) and therefore, do not consider themselves Hindus in the religious sense.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the term Hinduism might mislead outsiders to gloss over the diverse nature of groups, ideas and practices that constitute the tradition. The tradition is so diverse that one would not be far from right to talk about 'Hinduisms' instead of 'Hinduism.' But this seems to be the trend in most world religions. Though the bewildering variety of sects, practices and teachings subsumed under Hinduism is unmatched by any tradition, yet internal diversity is not unique to Hinduism. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam have all grown into many different branches over the centuries, leading to situations where orthodoxy can only be determined within particular branches. In other words, what is considered universally orthodox in any of these traditions is no longer easy to state, except within the particular denominations or theological traditions. There are many different centres of authority, which are all autonomous, within all these traditions; and it is no longer easy for any one central figure or body to state what is right or wrong with respect to teaching and practice.

Drawing the boundaries around religion in the context of this work is a challenging task. Any definition offered must be appropriate to both the Indian and Ghanaian contexts.¹⁵ Currently, historians of religion are suspicious of definitions that pretend to go beyond specific contexts. In view of this and the diverse nature of Hinduism in its local Indian and transnational forms, a family resemblance or a polythetic understanding of religion, should be most appropriate. A polythetic view of religion, contrasted with a monothetic one, does not isolate a single attribute or a single set of attributes or functions as the defining property of religion as found always and everywhere; and, which therefore, must be possessed by every phenomenon called religion. Rather, it defines religion by a number of attributes or dimensions which have been found to recur in religion and proposes that a phenomenon does not need to possess all the attributes in a set to qualify as religion. That is, it is sufficient for designating a phenomenon, religion, if it possesses, at least, some of those attributes.¹⁶ For example, Ninian Smart proposes seven of such dimensions, which have been found to belong to the class of phenomena usually considered religious. They are: ritual, narrative or mythic, experiential and emotional, social and the institutional, ethical and legal, doctrinal and philosophical and, lastly, the material dimension. Most religions have all or some of these elements.¹⁷ Both in Ghana and India, 'religion' or 'being religious,' involves most of Smart's dimensions; and Hinduism, in its varied manifestations has most of these. All the various schools

may not have all the dimensions, or hold each of them to the same degree of importance. However, each branch of Hinduism, at least, has some of these dimensions. Therefore we can safely treat Hinduism, whether in India or Africa, as a religion.

'Neo-Hinduism' or 'Hinduism'?: It is natural that religious traditions experience changes as they encounter new situations in the process of growth and development. Probably, very few religious traditions have remained static and survived. Over the years, Hinduism, like most other traditions, has gone through changes in its encounter with the wider world, especially, through the British colonization of India and the Indian diaspora. The resultant developments include the differentiating categorization of the tradition into classical/traditional/orthodox Hinduism, neo-Hinduism and transnational Hinduism. Apparently, this categorization implies that changes that have occurred within Hinduism have led to the emergence of expressions that are not organically connected to the 'eternal dharma.'

Usually, new expressions that arise within established traditions are discussed within the framework of 'renewal', 'reform' or 'new' movements, which in some way, are regarded as standing in historical continuity with the old. It seems that, apart from Hinduism, instances in which such new expressions are designated with the prefix 'neo' are not many in the history of religions. Although the dictionary definition of the prefix 'neo' is 'new,' or 'in latter form,' in certain instances it has carried the negative connotation of something being presented in a subtly disguised form to dupe a target group. Furthermore, in religious traditions, 'new' or 'latter' expressions that are deemed to be unconnected to the old, especially, the presumed historical version considered pure and perfect in the great narratives, are normally looked upon with suspicion.¹⁸ This is one of the reasons why the debate about the origin and the appropriateness of the term, 'neo-Hinduism' is important. The other reason why it is important to clarify this issue in the context of this article is that it would make it clearer whether those non-Indian Hindus in Africa and elsewhere have not been converted to something other than what they think they are professing.

According to Nicholson, it was Paul Hacker who coined the term 'neo-Hinduism.' However, Hacker himself says that he borrowed the term from Robert Antione.¹⁹ But Hacker used the term to indicate that new developments within Hinduism of which previous writers had used such terms as 'reform' and 'renaissance,' were novel and significantly different from 'surviving traditional Hinduism.'²⁰ He argued that the many different traditions, which are together called 'Hinduism', were never connected in any self-conscious way until the Western European writers, especially, the British created it.²¹ The issue is not about 'Hinduism' as a term; it is about whether, before the

nineteenth century, the different schools of thought and practices, which are together called by that name, ever had any self-consciousness of their identity as belonging to the same family. Hacker's position has become the conventional one. It holds that 'what passes for contemporary Hindu thought (or more broadly, modern Hindu thought) is a species of "Western-influenced neo-Vedanta" propagated worldwide by the likes of Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.'²²

According Hatcher, it was the missionaries who first used the term, 'neo-Vedanta'²³ to describe the Indian reformers' interpretation of the Vedanta; and the meaning was neither positive nor neutral; it was negative. It meant 'something new-fangled, contrived, and therefore, dubious.'²⁴ In that case, as Nicholson suspects, Hacker, a Christian apologist, must have coined the term, 'neo-Hinduism' to underscore his criticisms of modern Hindu claims as largely inauthentic.²⁵ Indeed Hatcher thinks so: 'Just as the 19th Century missionaries questioned the authenticity of neo-Vedanta, 20th Century scholars have been prone to doubt the authenticity of what they call, neo-Hinduism.'²⁶

What makes the view that Hinduism, in its modern manifestation, is entirely the creation of the nineteenth century reformers and Orientalist scholars unacceptable is the implied suggestion that the Hindu thinkers believed a lie created by the British and expounded on it to create 'an entirely new religion that had little to do with the self-understanding of their own ancestors.'²⁷ In that sense, the term 'neo-Hinduism' carries, in its origin, the negative connotation of a parody; and as Nicholson reveals, many Hindus see the hypothesis on which this conclusion is based as 'a slap in the face, the final culmination of Western imperialist scholarship on India, portraying faithful Hindus as passive dupes and Hinduism as nothing more than a fraud perpetrated by the imperialists themselves.'²⁸

Most scholars agree that the nineteenth century Hindu reformers were influenced by factors, hugely among which were their Western training and orientalist depictions of Hinduism. Yet, to claim that contemporary Hinduism has no connection with its pre-nineteenth century forms is an exaggeration of the effect of outside influence on the tradition. As Nicholson has successfully argued, the idea of Hindu unity is neither a 'timeless truth' (as maintained by some Hindu thinkers) nor 'a fiction wholly invented by the British to regulate and control their colonial subjects.'²⁹ David Lorenzen has provided evidence showing that an idea of 'Hindu religion' existed in the period between the 12th and the 16th Centuries; and that it was 'firmly established long before 1800.'³⁰ This religion, he points out, was 'theologically and devotionally grounded in the Bhagavad-Gita, the Puranas and philosophical commentaries on the six darsanas.'³¹ By this he refutes the view that

there was no set of beliefs and practices common to the various Hindu schools and sects before the 19th Century as held by Stietencron, for example.³²

He also challenges the view that the term 'Hinduism' as used of the religion of the Hindus was first used by Westerners. He adduces evidence to show that the term was in use earlier than 1829, usually cited as the date it first appeared. He cites two instances in 1816 and 1817, in which Ram Mohan Roy, 'a son of the soil' used the term to describe the religion 'practiced by our ancestors.' Nicholson supports this position, maintaining that certain thinkers, in the same period as Lorenzen cites, 'began to treat as a single whole the diverse philosophical teachings of the Upanishads, epics, Puranas, and the schools known retrospectively as the "six systems" (Sad Darsana) of mainstream Hindu philosophy.'

The plausibility of this position gets stronger if one imagines that as India began to encounter a situation of religious pluralism, different from its own internal pluralism, there would emerge a sharper awareness of religious difference in the society. For example, the rise of a break-away group such as Buddhism, and the presence of Islam, must have led to a clearer sense of Hindu self-identity consciousness. Nicholson and Lorenzen, in their separate works, have demonstrated that the works of medieval Hindu authors clearly show that 'those people known as Hindus shared religious practices that differed from those of other groups, particularly Muslims.'³⁵ By this they do not mean those medieval authors used the term, 'Hinduism.' They only mean that Hindus shared religious practices that were different from the other groups and that they were conscious of the differences between them and those other groups.

Confronted with such evidence, one cannot help to conclude that while the so-called 'neo-Hinduism' represents a modern interpretation of Hindu traditions; it is not an artificial creation, wholly unrelated to traditional or classical Hinduism. In its diverse modern manifestations, Hinduism may still be seen as a unity and in continuity with its classical and medieval forms. A long history of continued dialogue, from time immemorial through the medieval period and to the modern times has produced the varieties of ideas and practices, which together respond to the designation, Hinduism.³⁶

Within the context of its own long history, neither the reinterpretation of its traditions, nor the borrowing of ideas and practices from other traditions can be deemed contradictory to its nature. Innovation, diversity and eclecticism are not new in Hinduism. Writing about innovation in Hindu ritual, Shirley Firth argues that, 'Despite the claims of some pandits that there is only one way to perform a particular ritual, the content of the rituals is constantly being renegotiated and developed according to need.' She mentions Menski, who shows 'that classical Hindu law favoured

continued ritual innovation and flexibility.¹³⁷

The Hindu reformers never denied the non-Hindu influences in their work. However, there was no uncritical adoption and use of foreign philosophical and religious elements. As Nicholson puts it, '... their engagement with Hindu traditions was a creative negotiation between many different Indian and non-Indian cultural influences, not a wholesale acceptance of modern European values and rejection of premodern Indian ones.'³⁸ Basham, who surveyed various developments in Hindu history, since the 'classical' period, concluded:

Hinduism in the modern age is characterized by its adaptability. Using a foundation of classical Hindu thought and practice, Hindus of all types are adjusting to their present time and place. This flexibility and openness, while following the age-old traditions and teachings of the sages, will permit Hinduism to remain one of the world's major religious forces in the future.³⁹

On a critical examination, the seemingly innovative practices of the groups subsumed under 'neo-Hinduism' may be found to be in continuity with ancient traditions of the faith. Chatterjee cites some useful examples (albeit for a different purpose). She points out, for instance, that:

The combination of devotion and belief in miracles to be found in the Sai Baba cult ties in with traditional belief in the *alaukika* powers of holy men. The Krishnamurti adherent is of a radically different kind. The discourse method, the questioning technique, the refusal to acquiesce to easy answers... and the complete absence of any 'miraculous' setting, ties in with the Upanishads. In the Sri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi type of devotionism ... centred in a figure who attracts by the very authenticity of his own religious experience. They exemplify the great tradition of those who, in the eyes of their devotees have risen above daily bondage and who are therefore both exemplars and independent foci of devotion.⁴⁰

Hacker himself admits that,

In fact, Neo-Hinduism and Hindu traditionalism are not two definite systems but rather two distinct mental attitudes. It may even happen that one and the same person combines elements of both ways of thinking. Even in the past, Hindu groups often absorbed foreign elements. These certainly changed the appearance of the religion of the respective groups. But at the same time most of the old values retained their previous vitality.⁴¹

Hinduism, true to its nature, has gone through a necessary transmutation that makes it not only a 'house holder' religion but also transnational. Its flexible nature has, in an age of globalization, enabled it to become globalized; transcending national and ethnic boundaries. Hinduism has become transnational in two main senses. First, through the Indian diaspora, Hindu temples adorn many cities around the world; second, through several cultural encounters with peoples of other regions

of the world, and also through the influence of the many missionary-oriented Hindu New Religious Movements, it has drawn many non-Indians into its fold.

The phenomenon of the African Hindu, with which I am concerned in this paper, falls under the second. However, the danger that needs to be watched is the impression that seems to be created that Advaita-Vedanta is the whole of Hinduism.⁴² Though, it is the dominant school of thought in Hinduism in contemporary times and the basis of the philosophical teaching of most of the new movements,⁴³ the other schools have not been obliterated. In fact, many of the reform movements are eclectic, combining elements from different philosophical schools, sects and regions. In the same way, many contemporary individual Hindus express allegiance to several different gurus and groups at once. This is close to what Chatterjee has called, 'multiple allegiance,'⁴⁴ which is proven to be an established feature of the tradition in its classical as well as contemporary form. In that sense neo-Hinduism as a descriptive term for new movements in Hinduism is of dubious validity. It is beset with the same kind of dubiety that surrounds such terms as 'popular,' 'syncretistic' or 'superstitious,' which religious scholars from within traditions, sometimes use to refuse authentic status to expressions they do not agree with; especially, those of the marginalized.⁴⁵ Such terms are polemical categories employed by the dominant or the powerful to denigrate the religious beliefs and practices of, usually, the weaker segments of society.⁴⁶

The HMA, orthodoxy and authenticity : For the membership and leadership of HMA, to use a descriptive term such as 'neo-Hinduism' for their group is completely unacceptable. They consider themselves as orthodox Hindus and, make arguments to that effect. Traditionally, to be a Hindu is to be Indian; there have been and, still are, movements that are wont to refuse authentic Hinduism to non-Indians.⁴⁷ Consequently, in the realm of scholarship, when Hinduism outside India comes to be discussed, the focus is almost always on the Indian diaspora. This is still the case, even when scholars purport to write about 'transnational Hinduism.'⁴⁸

However, this approach seems not to take sufficient account of the fact that since the appearance of Swami Vivekananda in the West, the phenomenon of the non-Indian sannyasin has become part of the contemporary manifestation of Hinduism. Obviously, it is not every Indian Hindu that considers this development acceptable, and many temples, especially, in South India would refuse entry to non-Indian devotees; yet, it is a fact that several modern ashrams in India have non-Indian devotees.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, as argued above, Hinduism has become transnational and is separated from nationality or ethnicity; therefore Hinduism as a religion does not coincide with ethnicity or nationality.

Furthermore, the caste system, which was previously held by some scholars as the most important defining element of Hinduism, is better considered an aspect of traditional Indian social system rather than religious.⁵⁰ This is especially, so as the system is found to cut across all the religions in India. That is, as a socio-cultural element, it has been carried into religions such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism by Indian converts to these traditions.⁵¹ In that case, caste becomes irrelevant to Hinduism and does not bar non-Indians from converting to the faith without locating themselves in a caste. To the question, 'How do you feel as an African (Ghanaian) practicing Hinduism?' swami Ghananand responded:

I feel very normal practicing sanatadharma as a Ghanaian because of the universality of the religion. As a matter of fact, the practice of Sanatanadharma may be linked to Indians due to the fact that they have tried to publicise the practice worldwide. In reality, this practice has been with us Ghanaians or men since creation.⁵²

In that answer by the Swami, is embedded the claim that Hinduism is native to Ghana and therefore its Ghanaian converts are authentic Hindus. It seems the most important element that binds the various groups together and can serve as the measure of Hindu orthodoxy is adherence to the Vedas. Indeed, the Vedas have been identified as the most important defining element of Hinduism. Brian Smith, arguing along similar lines, has appropriately defined Hinduism as, 'the religion of those humans who create, perpetuate, and transform traditions with legitimizing reference to the authority of the Veda'.⁵³

Thus the HMA in Ghana is quite orthodox as it is claimed by their leaders and members. In their teaching and practice they begin and end with the Vedas. They already claim Africa has its roots in the Vedas because the teachings of the Veda had been present in Africa for so long but the absence from Africa of a literary culture caused Africa to lose it; but fortunately it has been preserved in India and has been restored to Africans, once more. Placing itself in the Smarta⁵⁴ sampradaya, the HMA has a broad ethos that allows devotion to several deities at the same time; therefore their activities attract a large number of regular visitors from the Indian Hindu community in Ghana. This reinforces their public image as 'orthodox' and their religious identity as authentically Hindu.

When confronted with the 'African' in the name of the monastery as admission of the foreignness of their movement within orthodox Hinduism, the response of the leadership was that it was intended to assert the legitimacy and the presence of Africa within the world Hindu family. For them, the name is to affirm Hinduism as not only the oldest religion in the world but also a universal tradition to which everyone is admitted without regard to ethnic or racial background. It

is to make Africa more visible within the universal fraternity of those who derive their life principles and values from the Vedas.⁵⁵

Conclusion : Caught between nomenclature and authenticity, leadership and membership of the Hindu Monastery of Africa (HMA) in Ghana insist that what they profess is not neo-Hinduism but *sanatana* Hinduism. The examination of the concept of 'neo-Hinduism' reveals important facts as well as forcefully argued opinions by scholars that question its validity as a category of analysis. Since it implies, in the words of Brian Hatcher, 'something new-fangled, contrived, and therefore, dubious',⁵⁶ we may conclude that it does not fit the situation of the African Hindus of the HMA in Ghana who make claims to orthodoxy and authenticity.

Notes and References

1. M. B. Ramose, *'Birth, Death and Truth: An Essay in Memory of Chukwudi Eze'*, South Africa Journal of Philosophy. Vol.27, No. 4, 2008, p. 327.
2. In a series of interviews and discussions between the leadership of the HMA and the comparative religion class of the University of Ghana from November 2011 to April 2012, some of them looked quite unruffled when a student referred to their movement as 'neo-Hindu'. Later on the same day, when I engaged one of the leaders, a retired physics professor of the University of Ghana, in a discussion over the issue he explained that, theirs was orthodox Hinduism, 'nothing more, nothing less'.
3. Ioné Acquah, *Accra Survey*, University of London Press, 1958, p. 43.
4. Swami Ghanananda Saraswati, "Africa is Ripe for a Strong Hindu Future: Black African Swami evaluates the past and future impact of Eastern Spirituality", *Hinduism Today*, August 1998, pp.1-2.
5. Elom Dovlo, "Africans in Saffron Robes: Ghanaian Experiences in Oriental Spirituality" Abamfo O. Atiemo, Ben-Willie Golo and Lawrence Boakye (eds.), *Unpacking the Sense of the Sacred: A Reader in the Study of Religion* London, 2014, p.34.
6. For a survey of the movements in East Africa see Hanna Kinoti "The Challenge of New Age Movement and Oriental Mysticism.", In A. Nasimiyu-Wasike & D.W. Waruta(eds.), *Mission in African Christianity: Critical Essays in Missiology*, Nairobi, Uzima Press, 1993, pp. 89-107.
7. See Dovlo, Elom, "The Nichiren Shoshu in Ghana", *Research Review* (New Series) Vol.10, Nos. 1 & 2, 1994, pp. 46-60.
8. Albert K. Wuaku, *Hindu Gods in West Africa: Ghanaian Devotees of Shiva and Krishna*, (Leiden/ Boston: Brill, 2013, p. 44.
9. See for example, report by Rajesh Joshi, 'Ghana's Unique African Hindu Temple,' BBC News, South Asia, 29th June 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10401741> (accessed, July 13, 2012); article by Trisha Gupta, 'The Swami of Accra,' *Tehelka Magazine*, Vol. 16, issue 32, 15 August, 2009.
10. See Elom Dovlo, 'Hindu Monastery in Africa'. In *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*. Ed. Peter B. Clarke, Routledge, 2005, pp. 242-243.
11. Louis Renou, *Hinduism*, New York: George Braziller, 1961, p. 18.

12. John Stratton Hawley, 'Naming Hinduism.' *Wilson Quarterly*, Summer, 1991, pp. 20 – 34; see also, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A Revolutionary Approach to the Great Religious Traditions*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962, p. 63.
13. Andrew Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2011, p. 200.
14. Brian K. Smith, 'Exorcising the Transcendent: Strategies for Defining Hinduism and Religion,' *History of Religions*, 27: 1, Aug., 1987, p. 35.
15. See contributions to Jan G. Platvoet and Arie L. Molendijk (eds.), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion. Contexts, Concepts, and Contests*. (Series: Studies in the History of Religions, 84 - Leiden/ New York/Killn: E.J. Brill) 1999.
16. Martin Southwold 'Buddhism and the Definition of Religion' *Man*, New Series, Vol. 13, No. 3, Sep., 1978, pp. 362-379. Cf. Rodney Needham, 'Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences' *Man*, New Series, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1975, pp. 349-369.
17. Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989
18. Newer groups that arise within old traditions often insist that they represent a return to the purer version of the faith, which has become corrupted over the years.
19. Paul Hacker, 'Aspects of Neo-Hinduism as Contrasted with Surviving Traditional Hinduism.' In Wilhelm Halbfass (ed.) *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedanta*, A New York University Press, 1995, p. 230.
20. Hacker, 'Aspects of Neo-Hinduism,' p.231.
21. Hacker, 'Aspects of Neo-Hinduism,' p.231.
22. Brian A. Hatcher, 'Contemporary Hindu Thought.' In Robin Rinehart (ed.) *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture and Practice* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 179.
23. Actually, the Hindu Traditionalists also used the term or its Bengali version, abhinava Vedanta against the innovations introduced by Ram Mohan Roy. See W. Halbfass, *India and Europe. An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, 1988), 219 – 224.
24. Hatcher, 'Contemporary Hindu Thought,' 193.
25. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, p.187.
26. Hatcher, 'Contemporary Hindu,' p.194.
27. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, p. 2.
28. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, p. 2.
29. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, p. 2.
30. David N. Lorenzen, *Who Invented Hinduism? Essays on Religion and History*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 2.
31. Lorenzo, *Who Invented Hinduism?* p.2.
32. Henrich von Stietencron, 'Religious Configurations in Pre-Muslim India and the Modern Concept of Hinduism.' In *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*, Vasuna Dalmia and Henrich von Stietencron, eds. New Delhi: Sage, 1995, pp. 51 – 81.
33. Lorenzen, *Who Invented Hinduism?* p.3.
34. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, p. 2.
35. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, p. 198.
36. Basham, *The Origins*, p.115.
37. Shirley Firth, *Dying, Death and Bereavement in a British Hindu Community*, Leuven: Peeters, 1997 195.

38. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, p.143.
39. Basham, *The Origins*, p.115.
40. M. Chatterjee, *Circumstance and Dharma*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2010, p.49.
41. Hacker, '*Aspects of Neo-Hinduism*,' p.232.
42. Raman observes, "For the last one hundred years, Indian neo-Vedantins like Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan have propagated the idea of Advaita in such a way that the European scholars who are new to the study of Indian philosophy have been led to think that it is the whole of Hinduism." See N. S. S. Raman, *Methodological studies in the History of Religions: With Special reference to Hinduism and Buddhism*, Shimla: Institute of Advanced Study, 1998, p. 131.
43. Basham, *The Origins*, p.110.
44. Chatterjee, *Circumstance*, 47.
45. P. H. Vrijhof, 'Conclusion' in P.H. Vrijhof and J. D.J. Waardenburg (eds.) *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies Paris/The Hague*: Mouton, 1979, p. 691.
46. Manuel Mejido, 'The illusion of Neutrality: Reflections on the Term "Popular Religion" in Social Compass, 49/2 (2002) pp.295 – 311.
47. Brian Hatcher suggests that such movements as Arya Samaj, the Mahasabha or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and others promote Hindutva as the 'ultimate litmus test of Indianness.' See Brian Hatcher, 'Contemporary Hindu Thought,' in Robin Rinehart (ed.) *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture and Practice*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004, p.185.
48. See for example the contributions on Hinduism in P. Pratap Kumar(ed.) *Religious Pluralism in the Diaspora*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006; Knut A. Jacobsen and P. Pratap Kumar (eds.), *South Asians in the Diaspora: Histories and Religious Traditions*(Leiden: Brill, 2004); Paul Younger, *Playing Host to Deity*, (Oxford University Press, 2002); T. S. Rukmani (ed.), *Hindu Diaspora: Global Perspectives* (Montreal: Department of Religion, Concordia University, 1999).
49. As far as early as 1947, Swami Sivananda, the founder Divine Life Society observed, 'many Europeans and Americans are even now Hindus by faith and practice.' See Swami Sivananda *All About Hinduism* (The Divine Life Society, 1947) 6. On my visit to the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh in June, 2012, I met and interacted with three non-Indian swamis – a Swiss, an American and an Argentine.
50. R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 8.
51. Brian K. Smith, 'Exorcising the transcendent: strategy for defining Hinduism and religion', *History of Religions*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Aug, 1987, p. 38.
52. In email correspondence through Narayana Nyarko, an assistant of Swami Ghanananda, in June 2012.
53. Smith, 'Exorcising the transcendent', p. 40.
54. The *Smarta* (also spelled, Smartha) *sampradāya* combines the principles of the *varṇās'rama*-dharma with *pūja* to the major deities - Vishnu, Siva, Surya, Ganesha and Durga, A. L. Basham, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, Oxford University Press, 1990, p.109.
55. Email through Narayana Nyarko, June, 2012.
56. Hatcher, '*Contemporary Hindu Thought*,' 193.