

Self-Presentation of Hinduism in the Modern Context

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Let us compare a sample of self-introductions of Hinduism, such as school textbook chapters on Hinduism (including the California schoolbook controversy of 2006) and catechism-type course texts used in diaspora Hindu temples' Sunday-school programmes. Then let us identify the elements which an ancient Vedic seer or a medieval Bhakti poet would fail to recognize as reflecting his own tradition, elements which have been introduced in imitation of or in reaction to the colonial and post-colonial impact of modernity, Christianity and secularism. Next, let us distinguish those cases where the innovations fail to convince for being too obviously imitative and insincere (e.g. attempts to present sectarian doctrines as pan-Hindu, such as Christian-borrowed Arya Samaji monotheism) from those where an integration of new elements in the tradition has arguably succeeded. Thus, we may contrast different elaborations of the cherished modernist Vivekananda-ite notion of "Hinduism as a scientific religion".