

## Understanding the worldview of hinduism for evangelism purposes

### *Comprendiendo la cosmovisión del hinduismo para propósitos de evangelismo*

Philip Dangal<sup>1</sup> y Abimael Lozano<sup>2</sup>

**Introduction:** In the year of 1894, the Adventist message was first introduced in Hindu country India. Since, then thousands of missionaries have been sent to Asian countries like India, Nepal, Maldives, and Bangladesh but very few results have been accomplished. Many missionaries and Missionary Institutions have come to the realization that the work is very challenging to this specific group of people. In order to reach them and to know how they think and perceive things it is vital to understand their worldview. **Objective:** Having mentioned the above problem, this research tends to contribute in understanding the worldview of Hinduism. Only if we understand their worldview, we will be able to relate with them, and will be able to explain things in a way that both parties understands with less possibilities of being misunderstood. **Methodology:** In order to make it happen, this research followed thematic methodology, first planned the problematic issues, explained the antecedents, and found solutions of the problem. Results.- Found some elements that could serve as a bridge for religious dialogues with Hindus. When the oriental world is crying for medical assistant, medical missionary work would serve as a medium to touch their hearts, other elements that has to deal with salvation, grace, and the identity of the savior of the world is revealed using their own sacred scriptures. **Conclusions:** Investigation reached to the following conclusions: First, Understanding the worldview of any group of people, or individual helps to relate and reach them. Second, Christ's method alone will work as incredible method to reach the unreached Hindus, most of the Hindus people have

prejudice about the western missionaries but if Christ Method was followed and if we seek nothing but their good, surely they will open their hearts for truth. Third, some elements have been found in their sacred books where it reveals about the Identity of Jesus Christ and presents Him as the redeemer of the world.

**Keywords:** Worldview, Hinduism, Adventists, elements, bridge

#### Resumen

Introducción: en el año de 1894, el mensaje adventista se introdujo por primera vez en el país hindú India. Desde entonces, miles de misioneros han sido enviados a países asiáticos como India, Nepal, Maldivas y Bangladesh, pero se han logrado muy pocos resultados. Muchos misioneros e instituciones misioneras se han dado cuenta de que el trabajo es muy desafiante para este grupo específico de personas. Para llegar a ellos y saber cómo piensan y perciben las cosas, es vital comprender su cosmovisión. Objetivo: Habiendo mencionado el problema anterior, esta investigación tiende a contribuir en la comprensión de la cosmovisión del hinduismo. Solo si entendemos su cosmovisión, podremos relacionarnos con ellos, y podremos explicar las cosas de una manera que ambas partes entiendan con menos posibilidades de ser malentendidos. Metodología: para que esto suceda, esta investigación siguió una metodología temática, primero planteó los problemas problemáticos, explicó los antecedentes y encontró soluciones al problema. Resultados.- Encontré algunos elementos que podrían servir de puente para los diálogos religiosos con los hindúes.

<sup>1</sup> Facultad de Teología. Universidad de Montemorelos, México. 11140197@alumno.um.edu.mx.

<sup>2</sup> Facultad de Teología. Universidad de Montemorelos, México. alozano@um.edu.mx.

Cuando el mundo oriental está llorando por un asistente médico, el trabajo médico misionero serviría como medio para tocar sus corazones, otros elementos que tienen que lidiar con la salvación, la gracia y la identidad del salvador del mundo se revelan usando sus propias escrituras sagradas. Conclusiones: la investigación llegó a las siguientes conclusiones: Primero, comprender la cosmovisión de cualquier grupo de personas o personas individuales ayuda a relacionarse y alcanzarlos. Segundo, el método de Cristo solo funcionará como un método increíble para alcanzar a los hindúes no alcanzados, la mayoría de las personas hindúes tienen prejuicios sobre los misioneros occidentales, pero si se siguió el Método de Cristo y si buscamos nada más que su bien, seguramente abrirán sus corazones para la verdad. Tercero, se han encontrado algunos elementos en sus libros sagrados donde revela acerca de la identidad de Jesucristo y lo presenta como el redentor del mundo.

**Palabras clave:** cosmovisión, hinduismo, adventistas, elementos, puente.

### Introduction

The worldview of Hinduism can be divided into five main elements. Among these elements Vedas are considered as the supreme authority for all the worldviews, beliefs, philosophy, practices and Hindu festivals. According to Hindus, each word and message in Vedas are given from 'God' himself, therefore Veda is considered as eternal, the rule to measure all acts, source of divine knowledge and highest authority for mankind.

The second worldview of Hinduism is understood as, 'each living organism is divine in essence.' Which holds the beliefs that every living creatures have the essence of Brahman 'God' in himself. Which does not only makes man eternal and infinite but 'God'. This point of view states that there is no distinction between God and human beings. Only those who have religious thirst and searches after the Divine essence hidden within through the forms of meditations and yoga will come to the realization of Brahman that is within each soul.

Third worldview element of Hinduism

is: good or evil is natural consequences of personal actions. In Hinduism the term Karma is used to define its importance. Whether the actions are good or bad, they will reap the consequences, and the consequences could be seen in the moment when action is done, could be in the future, or could in the next life. And the way of consequences could appear in different forms such as good actions leads to the achievement of riches, prestige, born in high caste, born as high standard in life. But in other hands, bad actions reaps the bad consequences such as some accidents in present time, tragedies in future or birth as a low caste, poor in another life.

The fourth element of Hindu worldview is: Each living organism dies to move into another state of its divine essence. This concept is well known as the process of reincarnation in Hinduism. Since they believe that the soul is immortal and cannot die, but when body dies the soul, which is also the essence of 'God' takes another form or body and takes rebirth in another form depending upon his/her karma. One could take any body and could born in one of the fourteenth earth like world, that they believe exists.

And the final element of the Hindu worldview is; the ultimate purpose in Hinduism is that the divine essence be released from the cycle of reincarnation. This process is known with the term, 'Moksha' or attaining liberation. In this phase the spirit or essence of Brahman goes to mingle with the Supreme Brahman. And Hindus desire to reach to this stage. It is believed that there are different ways to reach to this stage, meditations, daily rituals and obligations are some of the ways to reach the liberation.

In the next section, different doctrines of Hinduism has been discussed. Even though this religion does not have once concrete set of beliefs, some core beliefs have been abstract. One of the important element of their belief is the concept of one 'God' and many gods. In Hinduism they have one supreme 'God' which is known as Brahman. But Brahman realizes that human beings always needs images, or some sort of forms to worship. Therefore,

Brahman manifested himself into three different individuals sometimes also reoffered as 'Trimurty' and these trimurty have been incarnated in different forms, bodies which makes 33 millions of gods and goddesses.

In the same way, mantra or holy chants are considered as vital part in Hindu worship. These chants are withdrawn from the sacred scripture Vedas and are recited every mornings. Another belief in Hinduism is about the sacred journey to the holy places such as Ganges river, holy mountains, temples etc. Hindus take journey of pilgrimage with the desire of achieving Moksha, to wash away the sins, and as a form of adoration. Another important beliefs in Hinduism is the system of sacrifices, the holy book such as Vedas, Puranas mentions about the sacrifices of animals for the pardon of sins, taking these words Hindu people sacrifice animals in during the festivals of Durga Puja.

The final element of Hindu belief is the Caste system. Caste system is divided into five different category. They believe the Brahman "God" was the one who established the caste system, therefore is it the duty of all mankind to follow and maintain in the rule.

Another section deals with the main practices in the Hindu religion. Just as the doctrines, it would be hard to define exactly all the Hindu practices but main practices have been discussed. Practices such as Puja or worship, there is a specific way or a form of doing puja ceremonies and it is a vital part of Hindu life. And other festivals such as Makar Sankranti, Diwali, Holi, Vijaya Dashami are celebrated with much joy. Each one of these practices and festivals have their unique way of celebrating.

### **Methodology**

The Methodology that has been used for this investigation is Thematic Method. Where certain topic has been elaborated and found the basic element of the Hinduism in order to understand them well and to know how do they think. And core beliefs of Hinduism were discussed, in order that to happen many books, articles,

websites were used.

Materials that are used for this Investigations are physical books from the Library, digital books in the online platform such as Google Books, Kindle, online articles and some websites. This Investigation is done with much care with a lot of respect for both religious groups of Adventist and Hinduism.

### **Results**

Final section tends to seek the answer that was established in the first and second chapter. Author gives seven different common elements of Hindus that can help an Adventist to build a bridge for religious dialogues. Medical Missionary work, following Christ's methods would help to reach them wherever they are and opens the doors for dialogues. Using their own sacred book such as Vedas, Puranas, Bhagawat Gita we can point the nature of true savior who can deliver from the sinful nature and sinful world.

### **Discussion**

There are some scholars that have done some excellent job researching about the similar topic. In the year of 2008, William Hedrick from the Liberty University presented his Senior Thesis for his Honor Program which entitled, "World-views of Hinduism." In his work he studied the Vedic branch of Hinduism in order to understand the worldviews of Hinduism. In his work he redefined the concept of 'God', Universal spirit Brahman, gods, the problem of life, and the solution. He makes it clear that his investigation holds the motive to evangelize Hindus. He concludes stating that the common bridge between Hinduism and Christianity is the path of devotion, path of service and the path of intellect.

In the same way, one of the contemporary successful missionary Gordon Christo of Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church, published an article in 'Journal of the Adventist Theological Society' in the year of 2002, with the title, "Staying Within the Boundaries: Contextualization of Adventism for India." In his article he does a theological distinction about the doctrines of Hinduism and Christianity.

And finds some common ground between Hinduism and Adventism. He gives some practical elements of links such as the philosophy of education, health, gospel and culture etc. and his motive of research is to seek the common ground to reach the unreached people.

One of the excellent research paper that was designed about building a bridge between Hinduism/Buddhism worldview elements and Christianity is by Pastor Kelly Hilderbrand, he mentioned about the concept of Karma and justice for human being. In his work, he describes the concept of Karma but from the ideology of Buddhism and compares with the concept of Justice with Christianity. He takes the two concepts as an element for a bridge, but ends stating that the concept of Karma in Hinduism and in Buddhism is cruel, righteousness by work and it shows less justice. But in other hand the grace God is amazing, justice and full of love.

### Conclusions

The investigation has come to the following conclusion: First, Five main elements of the Hindus worldview are;

God (Brahman) Inspired Rishis (Holy Ones) to reveal His secrets, each living organism is God in essence, Each action has natural consequences, each living organism dies to move into another state of its divine essence and the final one is, the ultimate purpose of Hinduism is to liberate Atman from the cycle of reincarnation. Second, some core beliefs of Hinduism are; beliefs on Deities, Beliefs on Holy Chants, Beliefs on Pilgrimage and Beliefs on Sacrifices.

Third, Some common practices in this religion are: Puja or form of worship, celebrations of religious festivals such as Makar Sakranti, Diwali, Holi and Bijaya Dashami. Fourth, there are four main elements that can serve as the bridge for religious dialogues with Hindus, Holy Scripture of Hinduism states that the ultimate redeemer is the one who is born of a Virgin which indicates the Identity of Jesus Christ, Death and suffering of Jesus Christ is mentioned in the holy Puranas, Karmas are daily actions and obligations but sal-

vation is only through supreme God, and the final element is Atonement for sins in Hinduism is through blood and their holy scriptures mentions that blood has to be of the supreme God creator. All these elements helps Adventists to point them to the true Savior that is revealed in Bible.

### Recommendations

After the framework is planted and the result is abstracted this research leaves following recommendations:

First, it is recommended to follow up on this topic to continue profound investigations on the worldview of Hinduism and elements that serves as a bridge for Adventists.

Second, It is recommended all the Adventists Institutions to teach about the concept of worldview, and specially the religion Hindus, and what can be done to win their confidence as Adventists.

Third, Adventist mission centers are recommended to re-take this subject of worldview of Hinduism and teach them to anyone who would want to go different country as missionary.

Fourth, It is recommended to buy and make it available more materials and resources about the topic Hinduism in the Library. In the Library of Montemorelos there are very limited amount of books on this subject.

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