Title: An alternative approach for the conversion and baptism of Brahmin Hindus in South India: a case study

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Date completed: March 1998

Granting Institution: Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS)

Description: Unpublished Thesis (DPTh): 237 pages

Abstract:

The Brahmin community has greater resistance to Christianity than any other community in India. There is almost zero percent response to the Gospel among the Brahmins. Once a Brahmin is baptized into Christianity, the community immediately ostracize him, which in turn makes the convert invalid to witness as a Christian in his own community. The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to find out the causes for the resistance to Christianity and (2) to find an alternative approach for the conversion, baptism and caring of the Brahmins in India. The study is organized into four parts: (1) description, (2) analysis, (3) interpretation and (4) action plan.

Part I: Description

This section presents a description of the study. Vasu, the main character of the case, was a Brahmin Hindu converted through personal Bible study. He was baptized a few years after his first contact with Pastor Semu, a SDA Christian Pastor. Pastor Semu was hesitant to baptize Vasu for fear of communal violence. When Vasu was eventually baptized, his family ostracized him from their home. After many trials Vasu retreated back to his former faith and fold. Thus, Vasu ceased to be a witness to the Gospel in his community. The problem presented by the case is how to convert and baptize Hindu Brahmins, without prompting ostracism by their community, and how to nurture the converts in the faith.
Part II: Analysis

This study examines the problem by (1) exploring the socio-cultural and (2) religious dynamics of the Brahmins. What are the causes that make it difficult for the conversion and baptism of a Brahmin? What causes the community to ostracize the convert? The Analysis shows that castle identity, and social security is very important to the Brahmins. Therefore, the study concludes that an alternative approach in reaching Hindu Brahmins must include a strategy in which (1) a Brahmin convert need not change his socio-cultural identity upon his conversion and (2) baptism, which is a visible symbol of becoming a Christian, should be delayed with the ulterior motive to stabilize the convert so as to witness and lead other Brahmins to the Truth, possibly resulting in group or family conversions.

Part III: Interpretation

The interpretation probes whether the tentative approach suggested is theologically sound and biblically based. This investigation begins with the biblical and theological understanding of the problem. Special attention is given to the understanding of Seventh-day Adventist writers and Ellen White on the subject of conversion and baptism of heathen such as the Brahmins in India. Further, the study explores biblical principles for conversion and baptism of the heathen. This is done by analyzing the conversion and baptism of selected heathens from the Old and New Testament experiences (era).

Part IV: Action Plan

This section provides an alternative approach for the conversion and baptism of Brahmin Hindus. The plan involves planting an indigenous church (Ashram) exclusively for Brahmins over a period of three and a half years in a Brahmin community. Provisions are made in the plan
whereby becoming a Christian will not be considered a westernization of Indian culture and being unpatriotic to the nation. The plan includes a contextualized worship service with culturally accepted practices, which will be a strength and support to those individuals who become Christians.