

UNDERSTANDING AND REACHING SOUTH ASIANS

Diversity of India:

- 29 states and 22 official languages, each with its own set of dialects, foods, dress, and festivals
- The richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor coexist side by side
- Spiritually, you'll find a wide range of beliefs, the vast majority of Indians and South Asians in general identify as Hindu, but India is also the birthplace of religions like Sikhism and Jainism
- One of the main tenets of Indian ideology is this concept of "Unity in Diversity"

Learning Indian Culture:

- We must be intentional and immersive learners
- The entry points of engagement are endless: sports, food, current events, movies
- The more you experience, the easier it becomes to connect and to build bridges
- In order for trust to be built with South Asian Hindus, they must know not only that we are looking to love them, but that we are looking to love and understand them on their terms, not just ours

Distrust of Christians:

- A great number of Hindus actually arrive in the West already knowing that Christians want to tell them about Jesus
 - Most assume that our intention is to convert them for selfish and often financial gain
 - Many equate evangelism with colonialism
 - To convert is to turn their back on their own culture
- There is a usually unspoken but sometimes even verbalized need to know why you are being so nice to them or who is providing the funds so that you can serve them
- For us to communicate the gospel without first communicating our deep love and respect for our friends and for their culture is to do our witness a great disservice

Hinduism:

- There is no one doctrine or one theology or even one god that necessarily unites all Hindus
- There are over 33 million gods
- Gives structure to culture, and society, and family
- A matter of social and personal significance, with social and personal obligations
- For most, to give this up is nothing less than to give up their own identity

What Does It Look like to Share Christ with a South Asian?

- Share spiritual truth early and often in relationships – but do it with an understanding that worldviews don't often shift in a day
 - Do it in smaller pieces, one concept at a time, in the form of stories, personal testimonies, and sometimes even in the form of questions
 - There is great power in the question, "Why?" for the asker, it allows us to step deeper into our friend's world as we uncover an underlying story, meaning, purpose or intention
 - Learning to live in a deeply relational way, truly living life among those whom we desire to love and serve, it is setting aside our western conceptions of time and personal boundaries
 - There is power in praying for your friends, and there is power in praying with them
 - For many Hindus, the journey to know Jesus is one taken over many small, sometimes even imperceptible steps: from trusting a Christian, to growing in curiosity, to actively pursuing, to finally accepting the gospel and stepping into new life
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