

# Rethinking forum

Convenes in Chicago

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The Rethinking Forum is a network of scholars and activists committed to the birthing of Christ-centered movements within Hindu cultures and communities. The Forum sponsored its second annual national consultation in Chicago January 2-4, 2004, with 75 people in attendance.

A basic paradigm for contextual ministry among Hindus was again discussed, considering "Hinduism" as a *multi-religious* phenomenon that is most helpfully considered as a *civilization*.

The key challenge: the gospel must become incarnate within that civilization without being syncretized with any of the various religious aspects of "Hinduism". Hindus who come to faith in Christ should be encouraged to maintain a truly Hindu identity, and so should avoid identification with Christianity (which also has *civilizational* and not merely *religious* components). Hindu disciples of Christ need to work out their discipleship to Jesus within their own cultural traditions and within their own families. One presentation at the Chicago consultation introduced two individuals

who shared their story of transitioning from Hinduism first to traditional Christianity and then to this contextual discipleship to Christ.

Three practitioners of contextual ministry among Hindus shared from their experiences, observing that rationalistic apologetics are not helpful, but emphasis instead should be given to friendship and ministry through intercessory prayer. The music group Aradhna presented the ministry of *bhajans*, a Hindu style of spiritual song which is perhaps the central key in non-confrontational presentation of Christ in Hindu contexts. The *bhajan* is a repetitious song with a simple melodic line that is often sung antiphonally. *Bhajan* refers to both the songs and the style of spiritual song, a style very popular among Hindus

and which has been used by Indian Christians as well, particularly those from high-caste Hindu families. (Western music has been dominant among Indian Christians.) Biblical studies in contextual ministry were a final component of the seminar.

The next plenary meeting

of the Rethinking Forum is scheduled for May 6-8, 2005 in New York City. Contact Jamie Bean at [info@rethinkingforum.com](mailto:info@rethinkingforum.com) for more information or for a copy of a magazine on "Rethinking Hindu Ministry."

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**The gospel must become incarnate within that civilization without being syncretized with any of the various religious aspects of "Hinduism".**

**AMERITRIBES**

- closely partnering with sending churches
- team approach to ministry
- focus on tribal peoples of western U.S. and Mexico
- servant evangelism through community development leading to the establishment of indigenous churches

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