

# [Article] Bhajans and Biblical Theology: An Evaluation of the Indigenous Indian Devotional Song Genre's Educational Potential



RAY BURBANK

[Ray Burbank](#) is currently a divinity student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. His research interests include Indian Christian theology, Hindu bhakti traditions, and contemporary missiology in Hindu contexts. Ray and his wife Lauren have two young sons.

Songs have been a vital part of worship and teaching in Christian congregations. Relatively little effort, however, has been given to indigenous devotional music in the Indian church. I define indigenous Indian devotional music as music that is written by Indians, from the heritage or background of the composer's specific Indian culture. Many Indian Christians default to Western hymns or Western-styles of contemporary Christian music for public and private worship. In a typical worship service, only one out of three songs is indigenous (Dicran 2000, 5). Christian songs exist in the vernacular languages of India, but often these are either translated from Western hymns, set to Western melodies, or, if indigenous, they are simply given lower priority in favor of modern English songs by internationally known artists. This practice can be especially difficult for new believers from Hindu backgrounds. These young believers may struggle to adapt to the foreignness of music in church. Because many Indian believers come from Hindu backgrounds, they are more stirred to reverence by their own traditional style of devotional music, a genre called *bhajan*.

Especially among Protestants in North India, there are mixed views regarding the appropriateness of churches using bhajan-style songs for worship. C. H. Dicran claims that while there has been interest, and even excitement, toward bhajans within some Indian seminaries, this reaction has yet to spread to the majority of local churches (2000, 8). Two primary objections are raised against the use of bhajans in church. The first is that since the bhajan, as a musical genre, was originally developed by Hindus who used it for worship of idols, the church therefore should not write songs in that same style to worship Christ. This objection is based on a genetic fallacy of rejecting something because of its origin. It fails to assess the theological validity of the actual content of Christ-centered bhajans. The second objection is simply that bhajans are too old-fashioned. Critics voicing this objection assert that younger generations prefer contemporary Christian music that uses electric guitars, drum sets, and the musical structure of a modern rock song. As we will see later, however,



even bhajans can be adapted in instrumentation and melody and yet remain truly bhajan. Indigenous, Christ-centered bhajans in India can be used not only for the cultivation of reverent worship among Hindu-background believers but also as an instructional means of conveying biblical truth to Christ-followers.

### **Bhajan introduction**

“Bhajan” is a term that describes a devotional song sung to a deity. It’s derived from the Sanskrit word *bhaj*, “to share, partake,” and is related to the term *bhakti*, “devotion” (Beck 2000, 254). Bhakti is also the name for a Hindu tradition which focuses on personal, loving devotion to God. Bhajans were developed within the bhakti tradition by medieval bhakti poets such as Ramananda, Surdas, Kabir, Tukaram, and Mira Bai. The personal nature of a song such as this one from Kabir (15th century AD) is unmistakable:

I would caress this day! It is dearer to me than all other: for my Beloved is a guest in my house to-day. My chamber is radiant with His Presence; my courtyard is blessed. Lost in admiring His great Beauty, my longings sing His name and are glad: I wash His feet with my tears; I gaze into His face; I offer my body and soul, and all I have, to my Lord. My Beloved, my Treasure has honored my house. What a day of joy is this! At the sight of my Lord all evils flee from me, and my heart feels the buoyancy of delight. Yea, today my Beloved is a Guest in my house: and this day is dear to me above all others. (Appasamy 1930, 67–68)

The use of bhajans by Christians in India is not a new practice. One of the earliest Christian bhajan writers was Purushottam Choudhary (1803–1890), born to a *brahmin* family and raised in present-day Orissa. His family practiced *Vaishnava bhakti*, a religious tradition devoted to Vishnu. When Choudhary turned to Christ at age 30, his background in the worship styles of his family’s bhakti tradition greatly influenced his expression of worshiping Christ. As an itinerant evangelist and Baptist pastor, Choudhary wrote over 130 songs and remained faithful to the Lord until his death at age 87 (Joseph 2004, 14). In this paper, I’ll present one of his songs and suggest observations of its theological implications.

Another important figure in Christian bhajan composition is Narayan Vaman Tilak (1861–1919). Tilak was born in the state of Maharashtra to a brahmin family and, like Choudhary, was raised in his family’s bhakti tradition. After turning to Christ at around the age of 34, Tilak wrestled with the foreign nature of the church in India. He felt a deep longing to bring the gospel to his Hindu community in a way that would stir their hearts, and he knew that bhajans should be central to this effort. This doesn’t mean, however, that Tilak wrote *Yesu bhajans* only for the purpose of contextualized evangelism. Tilak wrote bhajans because they came from his heart. This

style of song was Tilak's natural way of expressing worship. This can be seen in a number of ways which will be observed later in this paper. Tilak's bhajans continue to be sung in Marathi churches today.<sup>1</sup>

People like Choudhary and Tilak pioneered the use of bhajans in Christian worship. But this style of music is now being put aside in favor of Western worship music. I believe that bhajans, a musical art rooted in Indian soil, should be revived by the church in India. As Darren Todd Duerksen (2015) has shown, the place most in need of Yesu bhajans today is the new house churches that are starting among high-caste Hindu people.

A significant characteristic of bhajans is that they are meant to be sung together by a congregation, not by a solo performer in front of an audience, as in Indian classical songs or even modern Bollywood songs. Normally, a bhajan is "lined out," with one person singing a line that the congregation then repeats. This format continues throughout the song. The congregational nature of bhajans should encourage church planters and elders as they consider how bhajans can be used in their gatherings.

Bhajans are also characterized by their repetitive and flexible nature. Lines of a bhajan can be repeated after the leader, so the audience doesn't have to read lyrics while singing. This can be helpful for congregations comprising illiterate members. The repetition also makes bhajans easier to learn and remember. Bhajans are flexible, in that the leader can add or alter words and phrases as needed. This can be useful for teaching purposes, such as singing about the topic of that day's sermon. I will say more later about the use of bhajans for teaching purposes.

### **Yesu bhajan theology**

In this paper I will present three Yesu bhajans, noting three kinds of elements in each: biblical elements, uniquely Indian elements, and potentially problematic elements. Biblical elements will be mentioned because my main argument is that bhajans can aid in teaching biblical theology to Hindu-background believers. Uniquely Indian terminology and thought patterns will be noted because this shows how Yesu bhajans can speak to an Indian's heart in a way that Western Christian music often cannot. Finally, noting potentially problematic elements will ensure that a realistic picture be painted. Since Yesu bhajans are poetic expressions of worship and indigenous expressions of theology, certain terms and concepts might be misunderstood, depending on the context. These misunderstandings could result in the development of

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<sup>1</sup> For an insightful account of Tilak's life, see Richard 1998. To find many of Tilak's songs in English translation, see Jacob 1979.

unbiblical theology among a congregation. Several historically contentious terms and concepts will be analyzed with regard to each bhajan.

### “Yesu Raja”<sup>2</sup>

<i>Yesu raja trilokanaath</i>	King Jesus, Lord of the three worlds
<i>Deen dukhee ke tum ho vidhaataa</i>	You are the God of the wretched and distressed
<i>Laaj sharam more raakhiyo jagat mein</i>	Protect my honor, save me from shame in the world
<i>Tum bin naheen koe doojaa re</i>	Without you there is no other
<i>Paapin kaaran liyo avataaraa</i>	On account of sin you became incarnate
<i>Diyo praan diyo chhutkaara</i>	You gave up your life and acquitted us

This bhajan, “Yesu Raja,” was written by Mumtaz Masih (1916–1975). Born to a famous family of musicians, Masih served as an instructor of music and evangelism at North India Theological College. His musical training was renowned throughout the state of Uttar Pradesh, and many of his songs continue to be printed in hymnbooks (Dicran 2000, 104).

Several biblical elements are notable in “Yesu Raja.” First, the term *trilokanaath*, translated as “Lord of the three worlds.” These “three worlds” are not different planets, but rather the sky, the earth, and the underworld (Aradhna n.d.). Thus, Jesus is described as Lord of heaven, earth, and under the earth. When describing Jesus as trilokanaath, Philippians 2:10–11 may come to mind: “So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” In “Yesu Raja,” a believer sings this biblical truth in just one word. Trilokanaath can help believers from Hindu backgrounds better understand the lordship of Jesus Christ. The term is not only a biblical concept in the song but also a uniquely Indian term. It is difficult to find a single English term that would sum up the teaching of Philippians 2:10–11 as well as “trilokanaath” does.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Mumtaz Masih, “Yesu Raja” (Aradhna n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> It should also be noted that the suffix *-naath* is used in a variety of ways to describe a divine Lord, depending on the adjective. Some Indian believers, for example, describe Jesus as *muktinaath*, “Lord of Salvation.”

Another biblical element in “Yeshu Raja” is the description of Jesus as being “the God of the wretched and distressed.” This concept could be used to teach a number of biblical truths. Jesus has shared in the same sufferings his people endure (Hebrews 4:15); though he is God on high, he is near to the lowly (Psalm 138:6); God is not an impersonal force, as some Hindu Vedantic schools teach; the God of the Bible is sovereignly involved in the events of a person’s life (James 4:8, John 15:5, Hebrews 12:6).

Other biblical elements evident in “Yeshu Raja” include the honor and shame dynamics in the Bible,<sup>4</sup> the exclusivity of Christ, the incarnation of Christ, and the atonement. The exclusivity of Christ should be especially noted here, from the words “Tum bin nahi koi dooja re.” Biblical soteriology claims that there is salvation in no other name than that of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). This doctrine is difficult for many Hindu seekers to accept, and many new believers from Hindu backgrounds struggle with it. It is typically not logical arguments that have produced genuine convictions in Hindu-background believers on this issue. Instead, it takes time being immersed in scripture and wrestling with God in prayer for this understanding to develop. During this process, bhajans may play a crucial role. As the more mature believers allow new believers time for true comprehension to develop through scripture and prayer, they can guide new believers to bhajans which speak of salvation in Christ alone. Singing “Without you there is no other” throughout the day can have a significant influence on a learner’s theology.

Another uniquely Indian element of “Yeshu Raja” is its use of the word *avatar* to describe the incarnation of Christ. This word is a Sanskrit term that originates in the two major Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. The word “avatar” is often used to describe the various incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu. Whenever trouble arose on the earth, Vishnu would become incarnate as a human, such as Krishna, or as an animal. “Avatar” is a very familiar word to Hindus and is probably the closest Hindi/Sanskrit term one could use in translating “incarnation.” Hindus have many assumptions about the meaning of avatar, some of which would be in line with the incarnation of Christ. These include the idea that God became a human, that the incarnated one is from heaven and different from any other man, that this incarnation happened at a specific point in history, and that the incarnated deity lived among humans. Also, as Subin Raj has noted, an avatar has come on a mission to destroy evil and establish righteousness in the earth (2014, 95).

“Avatar” is also the most problematic term in “Yeshu Raja.” Though the word is the closest translation of “incarnation,” it is also loaded with unbiblical connotations. The incarnations of Vishnu were many, even including animals, while Jesus Christ is the one and only incarnation of God. Some Hindu traditions do not

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on this topic see Mischke 2015.

believe that an avatar is a truly historical person, but is instead an appearance of God among men (Boyd 1979, 128). The incarnations of Vishnu came to defeat different manifestations of evil, and only for a period of time. Many of these incarnations had to be revised and returned to earth to conquer another enemy. As Raj explains, “The incarnation of Jesus is a once-for-all event. It is complete; there is no need to revise it, and there is no cyclical coming of His incarnation again” (2014, 98). Vengal Chakkarai (1926), who supported the use of “avatar,” argues that Jesus is the true avatar precisely *because* he is the permanent incarnation of God, actively involved in the believer’s life.

Using “avatar” in a Yeshu bhajan can thus be complicated. Indian theologians such as Chakkarai and Raj have different views. Even those who have felt free to use the term in their teaching, however, always acknowledged the need for qualifications and safeguards in its use. Each church leader must judge the term’s value, based on the particular context.

### “Deep Jale”<sup>5</sup>

*Deep jale Prabhu naam rahe mere mandir mein, mandir mein*

Keep the lamp burning so the Lord’s name will remain, remain in the temple, remain in my heart

*Saanjh savere yeh man gaaye Yeshu tera naam, Prabhu Yeshu tera naam*

In the morning and in the evening my soul sings to you Jesus, your name, Lord Jesus your name

*Naam rahe man mein, Prabhu naam rahe man mein*

Let your name remain in my soul, Lord, for your name to dwell in me.

*Deep jalaaye rah nihaaroon, darshan ko Prabhu darshan ko*

I am lighting the lamp and watching the road, to see, Oh Lord, to see you

*Aan baso dil mein, Prabhu aan baso dil mein*

Come dwell in my heart, Lord, come dwell in my heart

*He Prabhu daataa vishvidhaataa, naman karoon, Prabhu naman karoon*

Oh Lord, Giver of life, Creator of the world, I bow Lord, I bow before you

<sup>5</sup> Anil Dev, “Deep Jale” (Aradhna n.d.).

*Raag jage man mein anuraag jage man mein*

Passion awakens in my heart, and love stirs in my soul

The author of “Deep Jale” is Anil Dev, a Catholic priest of the Matridham Ashram in Varanasi. Dev is a leader of modern Yeshu bhajan composition, and many of his songs have been published and recorded by the group Aradhna.<sup>6</sup> “Deep Jale” talks about abiding in the Lord Jesus all day and watching for his return.

“Deep Jale” suggests many biblical elements—for example, a reminder of Jesus telling his disciples, “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4a). The singer of this bhajan is seeking to remain in the presence of the Lord all day. He speaks of letting the Lord’s name “remain in the temple,” referring to his “heart,” or his body (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). The singer wants his soul to sing to Jesus “morning and evening,” in the day and in the night (Psalm 1:2). This bhajan also praises Jesus’s name. Much could be taught about the weight and power of Jesus’s name through this bhajan (Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:9–10).

The most significant Indian element in “Deep Jale” is the singer’s charge to “Keep the lamp burning so the Lord’s name will remain.” In most Hindu homes, businesses, and temples, an oil lamp is kept burning in a specific place, usually in front of an image of that place’s god. These lamps burn throughout the day, signifying a continual divine presence or blessing. “Deep Jale” redeems this concept to speak about the biblical teaching of abiding in Christ throughout the day.

Two terms in “Deep Jale” are problematic in their attempt to use Indian concepts to teach biblical truth. The first is the Hindi word *mandir*. It simply means “temple,” but it is always used in reference to a Hindu temple. In “Deep Jale,” “*mandir*” is meant to refer to the biblical concept of the body as a temple (1 Corinthians 6:19), not an actual building. This can present problems in understanding for some Hindu-background believers, and caution should be practiced to clarify the intended meaning when singing this bhajan.

The second potentially problematic term in “Deep Jale” is *darshan*, “an opportunity to see or an occasion of seeing a holy person or the image of a deity” (McKean 2005). This word most commonly refers to the moment when a Hindu goes to a temple to seek the image or statue of a god for worship. Many Hindus travel to places such as the famous Tirupati temple in South India to take *darshan*, because of the esteemed idol of Venkateshwara which resides there. The author of “Deep Jale,” however, uses “*darshan*” to express the believer’s wish for Jesus to manifest himself (John 14:21). This phrase in “Deep Jale” can also refer to the

<sup>6</sup> Aradhna is the leading producer of professional recordings of Yeshu bhajans. For a full discography, see <http://aradhnamusic.com/discography/>.

believer's waiting to see the return of the Lord Jesus. The parable of the ten virgins who lit oil lamps to await the return of the bridegroom could be referenced while singing this bhajan (Matthew 25:1–13). The use of "darshan" could either powerfully motivate the Indian believer to long for the nearness of Jesus and his return, or cause confusion and misunderstanding. Again, believers leading the singing of bhajans must exercise wisdom.

### "Spiritual Thirst"<sup>7</sup>

*Paani dyaa paani, trishta mi*

Water, water, bring!

*Nako kuvyachen, nako nadeechen, aanil jeer konee.*

Not by the well's water, not by the river's, ease my suffering

*Dyaa aisen keen trshaa na laago, peetan jon phirunee.*

Holy river after river weary my wandering

*Sarv jalaashay paahun aalon, shramlon mee bhramunee.*

He who drinks never more thirsts, that living water bring

*Jaa, jaa hoil Prabhu Yeshu-chyaa trapti tugshee charaneen*

At the feet of Jesus only does that water spring

*Aksay jeevan, kashtavinodan Prabhuvn nach bhuvneen.*

Life abundant, everlasting, Christ is offering.

The author of "Spiritual Thirst" is Narayan Vaman Tilak, the great Marathi Christian poet introduced earlier in this paper. This bhajan was written in Marathi, Tilak's native language. The bhajan exhibits not only clear biblical truths but also multiple examples of the influence of Tilak's bhakti-tradition roots on his expression of biblical truth in bhajans.

"Spiritual Thirst" can teach that Jesus gives living water (John 4:10). Tilak here writes that this living water Christ offers brings abundant, everlasting life, and the one who drinks it will never thirst again (John 4:14). This

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in Jacob 1979.



is a rich metaphor for use in teaching. Soteriology is evident also when Tilak specifically describes Jesus as the “only” source of eternal life. Again, the truth of Jesus as the one Savior of the world is a crucial conviction for Hindu-background believers.

This biblical concept of living water may be even more powerful for the Indian believer than for the Western believer. “Holy river after river weary my wandering,” writes Tilak. Hindu culture recognizes many “holy rivers,” the Ganges being the most famous. Every year, hundreds of thousands of Hindus travel to these rivers to wash themselves. Their belief is that the river’s water can purify and cleanse them of all impurity. Tilak uses this familiar concept to say that traveling to all of these holy rivers has wearied him; none of them can cleanse him. Only at the feet of Jesus does one find the true holy water. This uniquely Indian concept can be a very powerful avenue for explaining biblical truth to a Hindu-background believer.

Two other uniquely Indian elements in “Spiritual Thirst” reveal Tilak’s bhakti background. The first is in the general theme of thirst. The bhajan begins with, “Water, water, bring!” This communicates a desperate thirst. One is reminded of Psalm 42:1, “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.” This earnest desire, thirsting, and yearning for God is present in much bhakti literature and music. In another bhajan written by Purushottam Choudhary, he also speaks of thirsting after God, saying, “O Christ, my soul thirsts for you!”<sup>8</sup> Choudhary also describes how he has “tasted the joy that is everlasting and incomparable.”<sup>9</sup> Thirsting for and tasting the joy of Christ is both biblical and Indian. The hope is that believers who sing these bhajans will taste that same joy and worship.

The second bhakti concept is the phrase “at the feet of Jesus.” “The feet of God” holds a very reverent place in the bhakti tradition, and many poems and songs praise the feet of a deity or express a longing to reach the feet of the deity. This particular discipline is called *pada bhakti*, devotion of the feet. The idea is that if a person could reach even the lowest part of God, every desire of the heart would be fulfilled. Also, the idea of reverence and child-like submission to God is central to *pada bhakti*. Sundara Rao has shown that this adoration of the feet of Christ is common in many Indian Christian bhajans (1983, 71).

Tilak likely adapted the traditional understanding of *pada bhakti* to a biblical worldview; he did not reject it in his worship of Christ, nor in his publication of Yeshu bhajans. Tilak writes, “At the feet of Jesus only does that

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<sup>8</sup> Purushottam Choudhary, “Thrahimam Kreesthu Naada.” *Thrahimam*, no. 4 (Chennai: Impact Zone India, 2012). See <https://youtu.be/uIDGs7-E72U?t=1m41s>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://youtu.be/uIDGs7-E72U?t=2m25s>

water spring.” Choudhary also references the feet of Christ in many of his bhajans (Joseph 2004, 118–21). In one bhajan, Choudhary writes, “In hope, I’ve reached your feet at last.”<sup>10</sup> His only hope is found at the feet of Jesus. Only at the feet of Jesus is everlasting life found, and only from there does that living water spring.

References to the feet of Jesus in “Spiritual Thirst” can also cause difficulties. Pada bhakti’s emphasis on humbling oneself at the feet of God, while certainly a biblical practice, could deflect another biblical concept: the confidence a believer has before the throne of God because of Christ (Hebrews 4:16). While it is right for a believer to prostrate oneself before the Lord in humility, it is also right for the believer to remember in that moment his new identity as a child of God. Taken to an extreme, pada bhakti could obscure the reality of the torn veil (Mark 15:38; Hebrews 10:20).

These two traditional bhakti concepts—thirsting for God, and approaching God’s feet—are important to note in Yeshu bhajans because they can aid the teacher in communicating biblical truth and helpful connecting points are an important goal. A teacher who leads Hindu-background believers in singing bhajans wants to take what is familiar in their worldview and see where it is helpful for immersing them in the riches of the scripture. This can be done in a biblically faithful and culturally communicative way. Tilak and Choudhary, two faithful servants of Christ, are a solid example of this kind of teaching through bhajans.

### Concluding evaluation

As we’ve seen, bhajans are very flexible and allow for considerable spontaneity, not only in adapting their content but also in singing them during a worship service. If the church gathers and an elder preaches on a text of scripture—say, for example, on abiding in Christ (John 15)—the preacher could spontaneously and intentionally sing the chorus and first verse of “Deep Jale.” This can be a wonderful supplement to the preaching, or *pravachan*, by engaging the hearts of the congregation in reverent meditation on the word of God, as well as engaging their minds as they sing the truths of scripture. The congregational, flexible nature of bhajans will greatly aid the elder or teacher in engaging the hearts and minds of the people.

The repetitive nature of bhajans is another benefit for teaching, because repetition aids memory. Believers will better remember these biblically rich bhajans as they go about their daily activities. They will set their minds on heavenly things rather than earthly things (Colossians 3:2). Also, the repetitive nature of bhajans teaches the believer the skill of scripture meditation. The bhajan lyrics are not themselves the word of God, but the biblical truths they convey can aid the process of hiding God’s word in the believer’s heart. While the

<sup>10</sup> <https://youtu.be/uIDGs7-E72U?t=8m21s>

believers turn God's word over in their minds, the bhajan can help expound on the text in a fresh way. Thus, the congregational, flexible, and repetitive nature of bhajans provide many benefits in teaching biblical truth to believers from Hindu backgrounds.

Another area of teaching with bhajans is the sharing of truths from the gospel with Hindus. It is important to patiently walk alongside Hindus with the gospel message. Many Hindus will only embrace something as true if it corresponds with their real-world experience. They seek what makes a difference in the totality of their life. This is why believers must do the patient work of walking alongside Hindus as they process what it means to follow Jesus. Most Hindus come to embrace Jesus in a gradual way, experientially. Though verbal proclamation of the gospel is essential and necessary, Hindus also need to experience the power of the risen Christ and see what it means to be a disciple.

The Sanskrit word for "experience" is *anubhav*. As it relates to receiving Christ, *anubhav* is the process by which a nonbeliever experiences the reality of Jesus as Lord. Timothy Shultz says, "For Hindus, this *anubhav* is an introductory experience of the benevolent power of Jesus Christ, who surprises them by revealing Himself to them" (2016, 71). It is an invitation to "come and see" (John 1:46), to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). During the *anubhav* process it can appear as if the Hindu seeker is learning how to be a disciple before actually being a disciple. This is done, for example, through reading the Bible together in a dialogical manner. Jesus said that the one who keeps his word is the one who loves him, and it is to this person that Jesus will manifest himself (John 14:21). Prayer can also be a significant way for Hindus to experience Christ. A believer can pray together with a Hindu friend. When the friend mentions something troubling his family, the believer can pray, either there on the spot or in a more formal setting with the family members. This provides a context in which the power of God can be made manifest.

Few things stir up a heart more than song, and bhajans can be crucial for discipleship among Hindus. The way bhajans engage the heart and mind helps the truths of God's word penetrate a person's heart. When a believer helps a Hindu friend learn Yeshu bhajans that sing of the atonement, the incarnation, the salvation in Jesus's name alone, and the living water of Christ, the Hindu experiences Christ in a way that allows him or her to "see" Christ more clearly. I am not suggesting that bhajans be treated simply as a tool for a desired end. Anyone can perceive an insincere attempt at worship. Those who wish to sing bhajans with Hindu friends must do the hard work of learning the songs well enough to be able to genuinely worship Jesus while singing them.

In conclusion, consider the story of Rajesh.<sup>11</sup> Rajesh is a young man in India who began to trust Christ several years ago. Rajesh was born to a high-caste Hindu family, grew up in a city, and received a high level of education. A believer met Rajesh while he was in college, and it soon became evident that Rajesh was very interested in spiritual matters. Through gospel conversations with Rajesh and his roommates, an ongoing relationship centered around Christ developed between them. During this time Rajesh began to read the Bible, pray to Jesus, and sing Yeshu bhajans. When Rajesh recruited several of his classmates to join a Bible study, the main attraction of the gathering for these young Hindus was singing bhajans. This gathering met regularly for two months, after which it was clear that Rajesh had placed his full devotion in Jesus alone. Soon Rajesh began to introduce his other friends to Yeshu bhajans. Later, he recorded himself singing Yeshu bhajans and sent them to his mother, so that whenever she missed him as he was away at college, she might be consoled. Rajesh's Hindu mother loved listening to her son sing Yeshu bhajans. Rajesh's story illustrates how powerful bhajans can be.

People involved in making disciples among Hindus ought to consider the use of Yeshu bhajans. Faithful men such as Choudhary and Tilak pioneered the biblical use of this music genre that teaches believers and helps them worship. This indigenous style of devotional music can bless a Hindu-background congregation in teaching them biblical theology and furthering the spread of the gospel among their Hindu communities.

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<sup>11</sup> Pseudonym

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