

India:

Challenges for Prayer:

Political, economic and social challenges to the country place a great burden upon India's government. Much positive progress has been made in many areas; to consolidate and build on such progress, prayer is called for. Pray for India's leaders, that they might:

a) Continue to uphold the constitution by maintaining religious freedom and protecting religious and ethnic minorities. Religious freedom and affirmative action provisions in the constitution have recently come under threat. Some state governments have a poor record for abuse of human rights and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and Dalits; several states have passed anti-conversion laws that, among other things, deny state benefits to low-caste people who become Christian.

b) Uproot corruption in all levels of government – from national to state levels and right down to the local level. Mass media is a powerful means of exposing corruption, and the Right to Information Act forces government staff to be more accountable. With 100 of the 543 members of Parliament having criminal cases pending against them in 2010, clearly the system needs transparency. Pray for courage and resoluteness to stay the course when allowing a culture of corruption to persist is a much easier and safer option.

c) Tackle the serious ills of society with greater commitment and effectiveness – reduce malnutrition, which affects 40% of the population; improve the national infrastructure; deal with widespread use of child labor, bonded labor and female infanticide; tackle the rapid spread of AIDS and serious environmental degradation.

d) Address the growing threat of Maoist/Naxalite insurgency. The stretch of rural India from Nepal down to Andhra Pradesh is known as the Red Corridor. These movements threaten stability and security, both locally and regionally. They also threaten the healthy growth of the Church through Naxalite infiltration of Christian communities and the general disruption caused by violence.

e) Manage the economic situation with wisdom. India has the world's highest number of poor, the fourth-most millionaires and the greatest disparity between rich and poor. Millions enter the workforce every year; millions of jobs must be created to sustain them. Amid a growing economy and a growing middle class, ways to reduce poverty must also be found.

f) Wisely address increasing threats to stability, including terrorism, tensions with neighboring countries, and Hindu nationalist groups and their targets: Christians, Muslims and Naxalites/Communists.

The "New India" is a youthful, ambitious, cosmopolitan and modern entity, where differences of religion, caste and gender mean less and less. It is increasingly urban and tech savvy. The India of call centers, cricket, Bollywood, *bhangra* and globally connected Indian culture is exposed to and open to new ideas and ways of living, including Christianity. The most significant influence in this context is materialism – as capable of entrapping Hindus as any other group. This younger generation – 70% of India is under age 35, and 31% under age 15 – will shape India's future. As such, they are a hugely strategic group to reach for Jesus; completely new and different missiological strategies must be undertaken to communicate and model the gospel to them. Indian churches and missions are now focusing on this issue; initial success thus far is very modest.

India has more human need than any other nation – largely by virtue of its massive population, but also due to many areas of suffering that must be addressed through considered action and sustained prayer.

a) Poverty affects hundreds of millions, often as utter destitution that is far below any arbitrary income level mathematically calculated by international bodies. Recent economic liberalization and initiatives to assist the poorest communities will help India move further in the right direction to significantly reduce poverty.

i Poverty is predominantly rural, despite increasing urbanization. While the growing urban slums of large cities such as Mumbai and Kolkata are well publicized and contain around 75

million people, India remains predominantly a rural nation, and it is in the villages where most of the poor live.

ii Caste issues are closely tied to poverty. Most of India's poorest are from the Dalit/Bahujan/Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, many of them surviving as landless farm laborers. Their landlessness and lack of guaranteed income often lead to debt slavery, which is passed down through generations. Pray for these peoples – may they see God's justice and love demonstrated to them.

iii There is a complex relationship between poverty and overpopulation. Children are seen by many as future guarantors of assistance and income – the more, the better. India's population issues and poverty issues need to be tackled in tandem.

b) Health concerns affect huge swathes of India's population. Around 40% of children under age three suffer from malnutrition, since inadequate sanitation and lack of clean water multiply the waterborne diseases that impact mostly children and the poor. In India, an estimated 900,000 people per year die as a result of drinking unclean water or breathing polluted air. The health sector is overstretched, under-resourced and prone to corruption. India has the world's third largest HIV-positive population and accounts for one-third of the world's tuberculosis cases. Excellent healthcare and medical training were two of Christianity's finest contributions to India; these are under threat due to Christian emigration/brain drain. Pray that this important legacy might be preserved.

c) Women and children suffer disproportionately.

i Children in crisis – no country can rival India's staggering need. Of India's 400 million children under 15 years old, possibly up to 35 million are orphans. Eleven million are abandoned (90% girls); three million live on the street. There are 20 million child laborers (including many instances of bond slavery to pay family debts) – some estimates claim 50 million. Up to two-thirds of children suffer physical abuse, and one-half some kind of sexual harassment or abuse. Over 1.2 million children are involved in prostitution; many of them are Nepali or Bangladeshi.

ii Women and girls. Lower literacy and education rates, the dowry tradition, and widespread domestic abuse and the evil tradition of temple prostitution all cry out for action. Society's preference for boys, combined with the illegal application of ultrasound technology, leads to selective abortion of girls and to female infanticide. A female population deficit of 35 million – and growing – compared to the male population demonstrates the severity of the situation. Pray that these desperate needs may be addressed through loving Christian ministries and state structures. Pray that attitudes and practices in society, especially toward those most vulnerable, might be changed to reflect God's care for women and children.

Hinduism is the world's third-largest religious system. Hinduism, most broadly understood, is a civilization dynamic incorporating every aspect of life, embracing those who live in or identify with India and its culture. As a religion, it is a pluralistic network of religious beliefs and systems ranging from the philosophical (self-realization), to Vedic-influenced rituals, to popular expression (idols), to village Hinduism (animism, occultism). It absorbs elements of any religion it encounters and is widely regarded as an inclusive religion, one of tolerance and peace. Its global influence is significant through movements such as yoga, Hare Krishna/ISKCON, New Age, Art of Living and others. Many concepts of Hinduism have become part of 21st Century postmodern culture – yoga, gurus, karma, dharma, reincarnation and transcendental meditation. How can we pray?

a) Hinduism has strong cultural appeal, yet in their search for fulfillment and purpose, Hindus still long for true communion with the Creator. Pray that Christians (considered as "Western") may demonstrate, in authentic Indian cultural expressions, true spirituality and the transformation Christ brings.

b) The Hindu caste system remains a major issue. It has been only partly addressed through constitutional equality, the legal ban on discrimination and affirmative action favoring the underprivileged in education and government jobs. The rising demands by Dalits for their constitutional rights and for a share in the land and wealth of the country, and by tribals for protection of their ancestral lands and ways, are often met by obstruction, intimidation and repression. Pray that:

i The government may wisely handle the realities of casteism and the impoverishment of a large percentage of the population. This includes dealing firmly with violence against Dalit and tribal communities and applying affirmative action to all Dalits, irrespective of their religion.

ii The Christian response may be both biblical and Christlike, ministering to all oppressed people while rooting out casteism within its own ranks. About 80% of all Christians are of Dalit or tribal communities, and the average Hindu associates Christianity with the underclasses of their society.

iii The churches. Pray that in their outreach they may be sensitive to the caste networks and facilitate people movements to Christ, and that in their fellowship they may work toward elimination of the dividing walls of society. Many churches are themselves guilty of cast based discrimination.

c) *Hindutva extremism* casts a baleful shadow over India. Militant Hindus of the RSS, Bajrang Dal, Durga Bahini, Shiv Sena, VHP and Sangh Parivar have infiltrated their members into every influential part of society, gaining a notable measure of political power and patronage. They are attempting to promote revisionist histories, to institutionalize discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities and to control the media. The Hindutva ideology of “India is Hindu only” is used to justify intimidation and violence against Muslims and Christians, stigmatizing them as “foreign” faiths. Pray that:

i Communal violence might end, and its instigators repent and find Christ.

ii Christians and Christian leaders might be united and courageous in the face of widespread and localized persecution. Attacks number over 1,000 a year. They are sporadic and concentrated in BJP-ruled states.

iii The “re-conversion” program of Hindu extremists might not succeed and that threatened Christians may stand firm in Christ whatever the cost.

iv Christians may show the love and forgiveness of Christ to their persecutors.

The Church in India is highly diverse, has a long legacy and is, at the same time, vital and growing, and nominal and declining. Much of Indian Christianity is the result of people movements over the past 300 years, punctuated by local revivals. In many denominations, it remains in Western forms. Liberal theology, universalism and growing nominalism in the Church have dried up the spirit of outreach to the millions of non-Christians. Many congregations have no first-generation believers from a non-Christian background. Disputes over personalities, power and property have led to many divisions, court cases, widespread disillusionment and continuous loss of young people to materialism. At the same time, steady streams of Christians transfer from these groups to newer, more dynamic Independent churches. Pray that present pressures and the work of the Holy Spirit might bring new life to traditional forms of Christianity.

a) *The Orthodox Churches* are the oldest expressions of Christianity in India, tracing their heritage back to the tradition of the Apostle Thomas, who reputedly ministered and was martyred here in the 1st Century. Orthodox Christians number in their millions, and many denominations of other confessions are also heavily influenced by the Thomist tradition. These groups are rooted strongly in Kerala and southwest India.

b) *Catholics* represent the largest single body of Christians in India with nearly 20 million affiliates. They are known for their charitable work – most notably Mother Teresa’s legacy among the poorest of the poor and the more than 5,000 Catholic-run health-care facilities, comprising more than 20% of India’s total.

c) *The need for change in the Church* is urgent and has never been greater. Pray for:

i Unity. The National United Christian Forum brings together the Catholic Bishops’ Forum, the National Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship. The All India Christian Council serves Christians of all denominations, with over 5,000 agencies, NGOs, denominations and institutions working for human rights, social justice, religious freedom and protection of minorities. A spirit of divisiveness characterized the past; now, unity is greater than ever before, in part due to hostility from external forces. Pray for unity to mature and to endure. Greater cooperation and accountability are needed between local churches and sending agencies.

ii Indigenization of Church culture, structure and expression – for too long, churches have relied on foreign cultural forms.

iii Greater reliance on an Indian model of cell/house churches rather than on Western-style modes and places of worship.

iv Effective discipling – through coordinated, collaborative efforts – of the many being impacted by any one of the multiple methods of evangelism. Many new believers come to faith through large rallies, healings or miracles, but opportunities are few for Christian instruction to strengthen and sustain them in their faith.

v More relevance in impacting the mainstream of national life. The Church is seen as linked to the marginalized, deprived sections of society. Business, politics, arts, culture and the middle and

upper classes – all shapers of Indian society – have not yet been impacted by the gospel.

Bible-believing churches and groups are growing to a degree that far exceeds what is reflected in official figures, but it is hard to reliably enumerate the scale of growth. Current reality on the ground, however, is but a fraction of the goals expressed by the Church and by mobilization movements such as Vision 2020. Some of the many factors related to this growth are:

a) A multiplicity of dynamic, newer Pentecostal and charismatic fellowships. These have sprung up and spread to every area of India.

b) The number of evangelical denominations has increased and congregations multiplied. Several key networks link many denominations – Evangelical Fellowship of India (links over 224 denominations and agencies), Pentecostal Fellowship of India (links all major Pentecostal denominations) and Baptist Evangelical Alliance, to name a few. These are used of God to mature, stabilize and mobilize believers through prayer, conventions, pastors' retreats, and coordination of training, literature production, missions and outreach.

c) The charismatic movement in the Catholic Church began in 1972 and has spread to nearly every Catholic congregation. It has had a profound impact, brought many to new life and stimulated outreach; an estimated 10% of Catholics in India are charismatic in their faith.

d) The Yesu Darbar, a gathering of Jesus followers in North India numbering in the tens of thousands, models biblical worship and fellowship patterns in an Indian context. There are literally millions of followers of Jesus (*Yesu Bhaktas*), secret believers and unbaptized Christians outside of established denominational structures. Pray for effective discipling of this growing group.

e) Many networks interceding for the evangelization of the country have flourished, involving millions of Christians. Literally hundreds of new and often massive prayer movements and groups, many driven by women and even children, are behind much Kingdom growth in India.

f) Millions have become more open to the message of Christ through literature, widely broadcast radio and TV programs and extensively used Christian videos, films and cassettes. Indian produced Christian media is vital to effectively reach Indians with the gospel.

Training Christian workers is an important need that is immediately urgent and essential in the long term. The life and health of the Church depend on the proper development of pastors, teachers, evangelists and missionaries. In churches, poor discipling and lack of teaching and modeling of biblical life and leadership are problems. India's strong philosophical tradition and religious, cultural and ethnic diversity make adequate training crucial, but most workers are sent out with very little specific preparation for their ministry context. There are over 100,000 full-time workers in India; about half are pastoring local churches. There is, on average, one trained pastor for every six congregations. Pray for:

a) Degree-level seminaries, which now number over 100; praise God for the multiplication of these! There are three accrediting agencies – Senate of Serampore College, Asia Theological Association and Indian Institute of Missiology. Many of these seminaries are theologically evangelical. The number of seminary graduates opting for missionary service,

however, is decreasing. Pray for an increasing stream of well-trained, spiritually passionate workers with a burden for effective ministry in their nation.

b) Bible schools number over 1,000 and are doubling in number every 10 years. Evangelical institutions are full. Bible schools are moving from merely teaching theology to giving practical skills for ministry, particularly for church planting.

c) Training centers for indigenous workers play a significant role. Set up largely for church planters, these number over 100 (**FMPB, IEM, OM, ICRM, GEMS**, Missions India, Seva Bharat, Operation Agape, others). **GFA** has set up 55 such centers, with 7,000 currently receiving training.

d) New, creative ways for multiplying leaders must be developed. The need is greater than what residential institutions can produce, and 90% of pastors lack access to adequate theological training. Also, residential institutions must move beyond a Western maintenance model that has minimal impact on the non-Christian majority. Thankfully, there is a growing stream of non-formal education that is looking at how to address this challenge.

e) Training Christians – those outside of the traditional roles of pastor, evangelist and missionary

– to be effective witnesses and ministers is essential. The Indian Church must learn to have a greater impact in the workplace, especially in the newer areas of IT, business and such.

f) *The house/cell church movement* is rapidly spreading in many parts of the country, with estimates of up to 100,000 such gatherings. These movements are proving culturally appropriate, affordable, biblically authentic and very effective.

g) *The South Asia Bible Commentary* will be a boon to potentially hundreds of thousands of pastors, lay leaders and students.

The growth of Indian cross-cultural outreach agencies – in number, size and maturity – is remarkable and has occurred despite increasingly intense opposition in many cases. In 1973, there were 420 missionaries. In 2009, India Missions Association (**IMA**) alone represented over 235 organizations and 40,000 missionaries. Encouraging progress has also been made in upgrading training, improving the quality of ministry, planning strategically, setting goals, initializing research and partnering with others. Pray for:

a) *Indian mission-agency networking structures.* These play a key role in furthering cooperation, setting goals and facilitating fellowship. **IMA** is the main one, along with National Prayer and Church Transformation Initiative, UP Network, BORN, CONS and others.

b) *An increase in effective research.* Numerous agencies research India's harvest fields and harvest force. The OMID database, **IMA** and several associated members gathered data on each state, city, language, people group and even Pincode zone of India. Never before has there been such clarity about the unfinished task! Pray for ongoing research initiatives, which need to move from quantitative data to missiological strategy. Pray also for the effectiveness of the research in helping churches to visualize and fulfill the Great Commission.

c) *The Asian Theological Association-India and the Indian Institute of Missiology,* which accredit, facilitate and network mission-training schools. There are over 150 such schools; almost all started since 1980. **IET** started 27 of these.

d) *The mission agencies themselves,* for their leadership to be strategic, for provision of pastoral care and support to their workers, for fruitfulness in ministry and for spiritual unity. Newer, emerging missions are approaching the size and impact of older, established agencies.

e) *Indian missionaries serving in other lands* number over 500. Living costs for them are much higher and support is difficult to raise, given the immense need within India itself. Pray for provision of all of their needs. Reverse mission is becoming more common – such as Mizo Christians sending missionaries to the Welsh, who evangelized them in the 19th Century.

f) *OM graduates.* **OM**'s impact through implanting a missions vision is vast. The Association of OM Graduates links together 40,000 full-time Christian workers. Many of these lead some of the most effective agencies in India today.

g) *A widening of ministry to other needy sections of the population.* Hitherto, half the cross-cultural missionaries worked among tribal groups, and many of the rest among the downtrodden, marginalized or needy sections of the population. Few today work among the urban middle class and the higher castes. This needs to change, but most workers feel inadequately prepared for such challenges.

h) *Better and closer relationships between local churches and mission agencies.* Many missions agencies are supported by multi-congregational, informal prayer networks. Because greater accountability is needed between field workers and sending churches, mobilizing churches for more involvement is an increasing need. Publications by **IMA** and Mission Educational Books help churches gain mission awareness.

i) *Expatriates serving in India* now number only 1,000. Visas are increasingly difficult to arrange; student, business and medical visas are the best way forward, when done with authentic engagement in those disciplines. Some specialized roles could be filled by expatriates, for example in support of existing Indian ministries pioneering in sections of the population not easily reached by indigenous workers. International advocates are needed to adopt people groups and areas and to raise prayer support.

Ministry among the Dalits is one of the defining issues for the 21st Century Church, despite being a very complex one. The centuries-long oppression of these peoples is being made right, and Christians are at the forefront of such efforts. While the opportunity remains to reach up to 300 million with the gospel through compassionate ministry, Dalit issues extend beyond evangelism into human rights, development, education, economic empowerment and

community transformation. Specific points for prayer:

a) *The Church*, which is itself comprised mostly of people from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, has a rare opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ unhindered by caste, race, language and economic status. Initial enthusiasm for this cause could easily wane if it is treated as opportunistic capitalization rather than as biblical compassion and justice. For the gospel to be seen as valid, Dalits must be treated as equals in the Church.

b) *Dalits are a highly diverse grouping* of many races, languages and all major religions, and they have sociological and economic hierarchies even among themselves. Any ministry to Dalits must take into account the unique status and context of each group.

c) *The Dalit Freedom Network*, the primary advocate for this challenge in India, addresses issues related to Dalit rights and freedoms.

India has more unreached individuals than any other nation. Christians in India are very unequally spread – the south and northeast have a much higher proportion of Christians than the more populated north and west. Thirteen states in North India are less than 1% Christian. Pray that the Church worldwide might rise to this task. Pray for:

a) *The North India Ganges plains*, with their teeming millions, in the Hindi-speaking heartland. The states through which the Ganges flows (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal) combine to account for 382 million people. None of these states is more than 1% Christian, according to census data. There is, however, more church growth than ever in the north, from mega churches of 7,000 to networks of tens of thousands of house churches. A vision exists for 1 million churches planted in the north in the next 10 years.

b) *The great cities*, with rapid growth and a mix of great wealth and abject poverty. Chennai, Mumbai and even Hyderabad with significant Christian populations exist in contrast to Kolkata, Delhi, Varanasi, Lucknow and others where Christian witness is very small. Increasing urbanization sees millions drawn from rural areas into urban areas annually, often with little by way of resources and connections. As a result, India's slum-dwelling population now exceeds 70 million.

The world's least-evangelized peoples are concentrated in India. Of 159 people groups of over 1 million people, 133 are unreached. Hundreds more groups of fewer than 1 million are unreached. Also, 953 ethnic groups have populations greater than 10,000; of these, 205 have no church and little to no outreach from Christians. They can be found in every state, although they tend to be more concentrated in the north. A few of the most significant peoples for prayer:

a) *The Brahmin* are the priestly caste, which is the highest caste in the Hindu world. They number over 50 million, but perhaps only 18,000 follow Jesus. They are the most influential group in India, but few focused efforts to reach them have been made.

b) *Forward Castes* – the Rajput (43.0m), Mahratta (29.0m), Hindu Jat (16.0m), Mahishya (10.6m), Kayastha (8.1m), Nair (7.5m), Agarwal/Bania (5.0m), Arora (3.9m), Bhumihar (3.0m), Vellalan (2.5m), Hindu Khatri (2.1m) and others. Several others are considered

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Forward Castes in some states but Backward in others. Forward Castes have very negative views of Christians – that they are Dalits, simple and cowardly, and they reject Hindu culture for Western colonial ideas. There remains little effective ministry among the Forward Castes. These people groups will need a different and a sensitive, loving approach and adequate preparation of workers if the barriers to faith in Christ are to be breached.

c) *Backward Caste peoples* represent anywhere from 27% to 52% of India's population, depending on definition and source. The most numerous include the Yadava (59.0m), Kurmi (17.9m), Teli (17.9m), Kunbi (16.6m), Kapu (15.9m), Nai (11.5m), Pashtun (11.3m), Mappila (9.6m), Lingayat (9.5m), Kairi (7.7m), Sonar (7.4m), Gujar (6.6m), Vakkaliga (6.3m) and literally thousands more. Of the groups listed above, all are less than 0.1% Christian, most less than 0.01% Christian.

d) *Scheduled Castes/Dalits* have responded more to the gospel, some in large numbers. But the Dhobi (12.6m), Mahar (9.1m), Pasi (7.5m), Namasudra (5.1m), Rajbansi (5.0m), Bagdi (3.6m) and Pod (3.2m) are all less than 0.1% Christian.

e) Numerous Scheduled Tribes are still unevangelized or underevangelized. After years of ministry, the Bhil (14.5m) and Gond (14.1m) have numerous churches among them, yet both are only around 1% Christian. The Koli (12.1m) are only 0.3% Christian.

f) There are 485 people groups with populations of over 10,000 that are unreached and unengaged, almost three quarters of the world's 639 people groups that come under this category.

Specific communities requiring specialized ministry include:

a) The increasingly affluent 350 million of the middle classes have little meaningful contact with Christianity. They are key sectors of society in the 21st Century.

b) Students number over 11.5 million in 320 universities and 23,000 colleges. The large majority of these will graduate but be considered unemployable due to the competitiveness of industry and inadequate quality of education. Pray for the ministries of **YFC**, **ICCC**, **Inter Collegiate Prayer Fellowship (ICPF)** and **Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI/IFES)**. UESI alone has 15,000 student members and 7,000 graduates. Pray for their clear, vibrant witness to the thousands of non-Christian students. Pray for their growth and integration into local churches.

c) Young people – the statistics present a staggering need for this population of 400 million under 15 years old. Only 15% reach high school, and functional literacy is around 30%. Around 40% live below the poverty line. Many live in a moral and spiritual vacuum. Most churches lack the resources and know-how to minister to them. **YFC**, **OM**, **Blessing Youth Ministry**, **CEF**, **SU**, **CCCI** and others reach out to some.

d) Leprosy sufferers, of which there are 150,000 new cases every year. Leprosy originated in India. It still possesses the majority of the world's cases, and there are over 1,000 leper colonies in India. Christian agencies work with them, in particular **TLM** (18 leprosy hospitals and around 100 projects).

e) The blind. As many as 15 million people in India are blind (and another 50 million visually impaired) – this is nearly 40% of the world's total. Of these cases, 70% would be preventable were there sufficient doctors and optometrists. Braille is an under-utilized tool. Agencies with ministry to blind people are **Mission to the Blind**, **India Fellowship for Visually Handicapped** and **Torch Trust for the Blind**. **Compass Braille** is an agency specializing in producing Braille Scriptures in Indian languages by means of computer. Christian audio resources such as **Megavoice**, **Proclaimer** and others are vital for reaching and discipling India's blind people.

Minority religious communities. India has the world's largest populations of Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Jains and Baha'is. Pray for these groups:

a) Muslims officially number 160 million (14.2% of India's population), making India the third-largest Muslim country in the world. Most likely, they number significantly higher than 14.2%. Muslims ruled much of India for over 600 years but are now a pressured minority. Seventy million speak Urdu/Dekkani, and 90 million speak other languages. Muslims in India are concentrated in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar, and are among the least evangelized peoples in the world, despite being some of the most populous and accessible.

Among Indian and global Christians, interest and concern are rising for India's Muslims, and growing numbers of agencies are committing to ministry among them.

b) The Sikh community worldwide numbers around 23 million. But there is little understanding of Sikhism among Christians to enable dialogue and bring them to knowledge of Christ. Today, a significant and growing number of Sikhs follow Jesus, both secretly and openly, in India and in Canada.

c) Buddhist Tibetans number about 100,000, the large majority of whom are refugees from Tibet. Only a few dozen believers are known. **Dharamsala** in Himachal Pradesh is the present headquarters of the Dalai Lama. Pray for him and his followers.

d) The 6 million Jains and 70,000 Parsees, with their wealth, isolation and unique religions, are extremely hard to reach, yet they are very influential in society, industry and business.

Christian media and help ministries play key roles in reaching hundreds of millions who have negligible interaction with Christians or churches. For prayer:

a) The Bible Society has had a long and remarkable ministry in India – its 200-year anniversary is in 2011. It has played a key role in distributing over 30 million portions of Scripture or Bibles annually. Other organizations also supply and distribute Scriptures, such as World Home Bible League, Bibles for the World, Biblica and Bharatiya Bible League. India Bible League does excellent work in effective Bible distribution and simple discipleship via their Project Philip.

b) Bible translation is a major challenge.

i India has 456 languages; 429 of those are spoken by more than 1,000 people. At present, the full Bible is available in only 70 languages and the NT in 120. Translation is underway in another 136 languages. A new effort as great as that of William Carey's 200 years ago must occur. At the current rate of project completion, it will take until the end of this century to see all of India's languages covered. But a partnership of agencies is establishing a translation-training centre that will drastically increase the projected rate of completion.

ii Indian missions have identified 154 languages that still need Bible translation. Of these, seven have more than 1 million speakers and 21 have more than 100,000.

iii United Bible Society has 86 projects in hand.

iv Various Indian agencies are involved in Scripture translation projects – Indian Bible Translators, **IEM, IET, FMPB, NIEA, GFA, ORBIT, NLCI** and Wycliffe India.

v Wycliffe India provides training in linguistics for many agencies and helps to monitor progress in dozens of projects.

vi Modern, culturally appropriate translations are needed in Urdu and many other languages.

c) Literature distribution. Writing, publishing and distributing Christian literature are major factors in evangelism, especially by groups such as **OM, EHC, GFA, Operation Agape** and **SGM**. **EHC** alone has produced 500 million pieces of Christian literature for India.

d) Christian publishing and bookstores. Encouragingly, books written by indigenous authors and published locally are increasing. But publishers must still contend with a relative lack of titles by Indians for Indians and with prohibitive costs in making books available for the poor. **OM Books/Biblica** is now the largest literature-distribution agency in Asia, with more than 30 branches within India. Pray for Gospel Literature Service in Mumbai (publishing books, tracts and such) and Evangelical Literature Service (**CLC**) with headquarters in Chennai (17 stores and 350 book titles in print). **GFA Bible Society** is one of the largest producers of literature in India, annually distributing 50 million pieces. Christian Booksellers Association was formed in 2000.

e) Bible Correspondence Courses, sent out from over 70 centers, have proved fruitful.

f) Audio resources, such as Talking Bibles, are strategically vital, since over half the population are functionally illiterate. **GRN**, as part of Project India, has recordings in over 400 languages and dialects and seeks to record into another 800. Faith Comes By Hearing, World Cassette Outreach, Hosanna and The Bible Society have large programs for making audio-Scriptures available in all possible languages.

g) Christian medical work remains crucial to Christian witness, but is declining as the government increases its capacity for healthcare. Christian Medical Association and Catholic Health Association share oversight of over 700 hospitals. Emmanuel Hospitals Association has responsibility for 23 hospitals and 30 community-health programs in North India. The high proportion of Christians in healthcare and nursing in particular is a positive testimony; pray that physical healing and spiritual new life might be found through these workers and the many Christian health care facilities they serve.

h) Christian films and videos are important:

i Dayasagar (also known as *Karunamaiyudu* and other names), an Indian feature-length film on Jesus, is available in 21 main languages of India; tens of millions have seen this film. Over 300 film teams from several different organizations show this film all over the country, to powerful effect. Showings number up to 2,000 a month and viewers of these up to 3 million a year.

ii The JESUS film is available in 110 languages. Pray that the hundreds of partners using this film will have success as they plant new churches across India.

i) Radio and TV are increasingly important media as millions more Indians tune in each year. Christian broadcasting has won an enormous following among Christians and non-Christians alike. Pray for:

i Program producers – there is great need to generate quality programs and to find talented, committed, native speakers. Some agencies involved: India Gospel Outreach, HBI, **GFA, WEC-Radio Worldwide, BBI**.

ii Broadcasters. The major agencies – **TWR**, FEBA and **FEBC** – broadcast between them 770 hours per week in over 100 languages on both shortwave and medium wave frequencies, and increasingly on national and local radio.

iii The massive growth in satellite and cable TV use means that TV is replacing radio. Foreign based TV ministries are beamed into the country, and others have operations in India (such as CBN). Praise God also for the several Indian indigenous 24-hour Christian TV channels initiated in the last 5-10 years. Most of them are still regional. Pray that more Christian ministries may adapt and make use of the possibilities of this medium.

iv Internet evangelism is poised to become possibly the most significant media ministry in the country as India continues to accelerate in its technological revolution and maintain its place as one of the world's leaders in IT. The number of active Internet users was 1.4 million in 1999, 45 million in 2009. Engaging and effective Christian content and sites for both evangelism and discipleship, in many languages, are needed now and even more for the future.

The Indian Diaspora now numbers nearly 30 million and is spread across 130 countries. Large numbers have immigrated to the Americas: USA (2.2m, where they have built over 500 Hindu temples), Canada (1.0m), Trinidad (500,000), Suriname (150,000); others to Europe: UK (1.5m), France (290,000); many to Africa: South Africa (920,000), Mauritius (870,000); to the Pacific: Fiji (310,000), Australia (225,000); to Asia: Nepal (5.5m), Malaysia (2.1m), Myanmar (2.5m), Sri Lanka (1.5m), Singapore (400,000); and to the Middle East: Saudi Arabia (1.4m), UAE (1.4m), Kuwait (560,000), Oman (385,000). They are influential in their adopted lands, especially in business, technology and culture. They are likewise a great influence on their relations and communities back in India. Many are open to the gospel – especially first-generation immigrants – and in some countries, there has been significant outreach and response (South Africa, USA, Canada, Mauritius, Middle East). Outreach by Indian missions to Diaspora communities is overdue, as is the envisioning of Diaspora Christians to reach out to India.