



## Monthly Mission Focus: India



Location: Southern Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and Pakistan  
Area: 3,166,000 sq. km.; slightly more than one-third the size of the U.S.

Population: 1,080,264,388 (July 2005 est.)

Peoples: The racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity together with the caste system complicates any analysis of the population. Castes: Forward castes (FC) 15.4%; Backward castes (OBC) 56.6%; Scheduled castes or Dalit (SC) 18.1%; Tribal or Adivasi (ST) (580) 9.5%; Other 0.4%; Races and Languages: Indo-Aryan 75.3%; Dravidian 22.5%; Austro-Asiatic 1.13%; Sino-Tibetan 0.97%; Other 0.1%.

Literacy: total population: 59.5% male: 70.2% female: 48.3%

Languages: English enjoys associate status but is the most important language for national, political, and commercial communication; Hindi is the national language and primary tongue of 30% of the people; there are 14 other official languages.

Religion: India's constitution provides for full religious freedom of worship and witness for all religions. Religions: Hindu 81.3%, Muslim 12%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%, other groups including Buddhist, Jain, Parsi 2.5%

### Answers to Prayer

- ☉ Praise for continued freedom for Indian Christians to proclaim the gospel despite efforts to limit this through intimidation and persecution.
- ☉ The dynamic growth surge of Indian mission agencies and church-based mission initiatives from south and northeast India and elsewhere.

### Challenges for Prayer

- ☉ India has more (and larger) people groups with no Christians, churches or workers than any other part of the world. Pray that the Church world-wide might rise to complete this task.
- ☉ Hinduism is the world's third largest religious system. It absorbs elements of any religion it encounters, and is widely perceived as a Religion of tolerance and peace.
- ☉ The training of Christian workers is fundamental for the health and growth of the Church.
- ☉ Minority religious communities: Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhist Tibetans, Jains, and Parsees
- ☉ Help Ministries play a vital part in the evangelization of millions who have no meaningful contacts with Christian churches.
- ☉ Pray that expatriate Indian Christians may be called as witnesses to their land of origin. Visas are easier for them to obtain.

Statistics are compiled from *Operation World* and *CIA – The World Factbook*

## Requests grow for audio Scripture throughout India

In an answer to prayer, Audio Scripture Ministries just got a donation to cover the cost of equipment for the World Cassette Outreach (WCOI) studios in India. ASM says they have a growing number of requests for audio Scripture, and new equipment will help them meet these requests. Teams have set a goal of reaching 5000 families through the Word for the Family project 2005. Each family receives a cassette player, and a portion of Scripture on cassette to play. (*Mission News Network – May 13, 2005*)

### Hari People

The Hari man swept the streets of Kolkata with a broom the same way his father and grandfather had done before him. Caste discrimination prevented his family from getting any other job. But street filth wasn't the only darkness with which he struggled. He couldn't stop hating the higher caste people he saw on the street who made snide remarks about his humble state. The man knew he was a sinner but didn't know how to change. He worshipped many gods at various Hindu temples, but none empowered him to overcome the sin in his heart.

The Hari people are one of the lower, despised castes living in West Bengal and Bihar states. They have been the garbage collectors and street sweepers of India for as long as anyone can remember. The Haris pride themselves on the way they clean the streets of India. But many don't realize the need for a cleansing of the heart. Even the Haris who realize they are sinners don't know where to turn for help. There are less than 200 Christians among this people group that has over 500,000 people, and they're too scattered to form even one church. (*Global Prayer Digest – March 30, 2005*)

### Dom Caste

Hasari had to make a choice. Which of his two options was worse? Poor and terminally ill, he could not earn enough to provide a dowry for his daughter. As an Indian father, he knew she would face a bleak future without an arranged marriage, which demanded that the bride's father pay a dowry. Disgrace would follow his family. The only way Hasari could get the money was to sell the rights to his remains. Medical schools in the US, Europe, Japan, and Australia bought skeletons. Yet his Hindu faith required purification through cremation. Selling his skeleton would offend the gods. A fit of coughing hit him. His time was short. He signed the papers.

Someone of the lowly Dom Hindu caste would collect his dead body and prepare the skeleton for shipment. From birth, the Doms are destined to tend corpses, a job that reduces their status to the lowest of the low in the Hindu social order.

More than 300,000 Dom people live in West Bengal. Rejected, ostracized and uneducated, this Hindu caste has little hope in this world. Without Jesus, they have no eternal hope. (*Global Prayer Digest – March 27, 2005*)