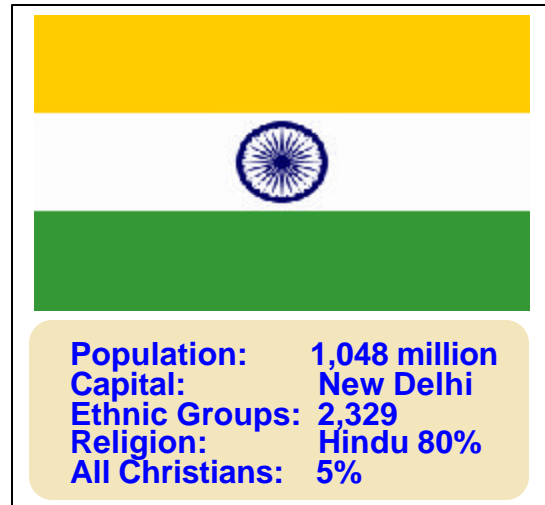


Country Spotlight:

India - Land of Millions of gods

by Brother Peter



Earlier this year I had the opportunity to visit a large Christian conference in the Netherlands, where approximately 30,000 people had spent Pentecost weekend together for worship, teaching and fellowship. Brother Yun spoke at the final meeting, which always has a focus on mission, and 10,000 people heard him giving glory to God for the things Jesus had done in his life. He also shared about Back to Jerusalem, God's calling to the Chinese church for evangelizing China and beyond. He challenged the Dutch people to take an active part in the vision as BTJ is not only for the Chinese church, but as a part of the Great Commission, it's for everybody to be involved to reach out to the unreached, whether they live in China, India or Amsterdam.

During the last weeks, I've received a number of emails with prayer requests and as I read through them, one country seem to appear more often than others. That nation is India

Although China is still the most populated country in the world, it is estimated that India will outstrip China by the year 2030. An official

census found India's population was 1.028 billion in 2001. Indians will number

1.449 billion in 2030 against 1.446 billion Chinese. By 2050, the world population is

projected to be nine billion, with India and China accounting for 1.59 billion and 1.39 billion respectively, according to a report by United News of India.

Together, the two Asian giants would account for 33 percent of the world population.

India shares borders with Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh and is therefore a very strategic country within the BTJ vision. The land size of India is one third that of the United States, but with almost four times as many people. It is currently the world's largest democracy. The capital, Delhi, has over 11 million people and 30 more cities have a population of more than one million.

There are more than 2,300 people groups in India, most based on culture and caste rather than language, although there are at least 400 languages spoken in India today. The official language is Hindi. Approximately 66% speak it, and literacy is 62%. 19% of the people speak English, which is the legislative and judicial language.

India's economy is



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predominately agricultural but a rapid industrialization and urbanization is taking place and they are now one of the world's largest producers of computers and software. 250 million Indians who belong to the middle class benefit from this development, but at least 600 million people continue to live in deep poverty.

India's constitution provides for full religious freedom, but many are concerned at the practical erosion of this guaranteed freedom. The Hindus are in the majority (80%) with Muslims in second place (13%) and Christianity following with approximately 5%. The following three examples of persecution in India are from newsletters from The Voice of the Martyrs:

- While walking to the funeral of a church member, eight students from the Beersheba Bible College of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God at Maramon in Kerala State were attacked by approximately fifteen members of the militant Hindu group, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). According to a May 16 report from Compass Direct, all eight were treated for injuries from knives and other sharp weapons. Three of those students required hospitalization. Police confirm that this was an unprovoked attack and have pressed charges against those responsible.

- On May 1, sixty members of the King Jesus Church were gathered for worship at the home of Pastor Paulraj Raju in Mangalwarapete village in Karnataka state, when a crowd of nearly 500 people converged on the home. According to a May 4

report from Compass Direct, they violently attacked Pastor Raju, his wife and others. Some of the women were sexually assaulted when they attempted to intervene. Bibles and Christian literature were publicly burned and the furnishings of the church were destroyed. Raju, his wife, and an elder of the church, Mr Nagraj, were seriously injured. At last report, Raju remained in hospital.

- Armed with sickles, pickets and torches, approximately two hundred Hindus converged on the Believers' Church in Lamding village on April 19. Lamding is located 21 km (13 miles) from Imphal, the capital of the Indian state of Manipur. Opposed to a church being built in the predominantly Hindu area, the mob overpowered a police patrol assigned to protect the building, which was still under construction, and set it ablaze. The police guard was due to previous threats made against the church. Reports vary, but at least four Christians were injured in the attack.

Please pray for:

All Christians suffering from persecution in India. May they be strong in their hardships and see fruit of their faith.

Continued freedom to spread the gospel in India.

For all the unreached people groups in India. India has more than any nation in the world.

Unity between the churches in India.

For all Indians overseas who are Christians, that they might reach out to their fellow countrymen.

