

Global Prayer Digest

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India's Shudras and Dalits: Low Status, High Potential!

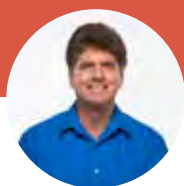
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Dear Praying Friends,

This month we are praying for Shudras and Dalits, two blocs of people groups in South Asia who are looked down upon by polite Hindu society. Heaven only knows how many of them could have been major contributors to India through the centuries if they were given the chance. Mahatma Gandhi called them, “harijins,” meaning “children of God” in an attempt to make them more accepted by other communities.

Ironically, millions of them are now true children of God, followers of Jesus Christ! Many of them view Christianity as a way out of their hopeless state. Are they looking to a religious system, or to the person, Jesus Christ, to give them hope? No doubt there are some of each among Shudras and Dalits. But some of their communities are not represented before the Throne of Grace, including the large groups of frontier peoples we will pray for this month.

In Christ,

Keith Carey, editor-in-chief, *GPD*

February 2020

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PRAY FOR

*A Disciple-Making Movement Among Every
Shudra and Dalit People in the 2020s*



The Deep Roots of Caste in Hindu India

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BY **WES KAWATO**,
GPD WRITER

How would you feel if you were born into a family that had low status, and there was no way to rise above it? Perhaps you have to work 14-hour days as a manual laborer, or worse, as a toilet cleaner. Your family has been in this situation for hundreds or even thousands of years, and you are told that your only way out is to do what you are told, and you will be reincarnated into a better situation in your next life.

This is the lot of the Shudras and Dalits, the two main groups we will pray for this month. The caste system is at the root of this situation. Indian society is defined by the Hindu caste system. Efforts to abolish it have largely failed. There are thousands of sub-castes in India, but they can all be placed in four groups.

At the highest, most prestigious level are the Brahmins. They are the only ones eligible to be Hindu priests, though most today prefer to work in the tech industry or something that will pay well. Right below the Brahmins in status are the Kshatriyas. These are the warriors and rulers of India. You can still find many of them in the military and the police force. The third highest are the Vaishyas. They are land owning farmers, traders, and merchants. The traders among them are among the richest people in India, though they are often the ones who push for reforms, since they have lower status than they deserve.

The Shudras are lowest of the four caste groups. They are the common laborers and landless farmers. Shudras are considered by the Hindu establishment to be spiritually contaminated. They aren't allowed to study the Vedas, the sacred literature of the Hindus. Shudras are often also barred from public facilities used by the upper castes. Today the Shudras make up 50 percent of India's population.

Dalits are completely below these four Hindu castes. Not only are they considered spiritually contaminated, but they often aren't allowed to enter Hindu temples or live in certain villages. Dalits are often from a tribal background. These people perform jobs that are considered unclean. Ironically, many of these jobs involve cleaning up after others as sweepers and toilet cleaners. Dalits make up 16 percent of India's population today.

The caste system probably dates back to the Aryan invasion of India in 1500 B.C. The invaders reserved the best jobs for themselves. The new social order the Aryan created was based on racial purity. Brahmins tended to be pure Aryans, not "tainted" by the Dravidian ethnicity of the conquered peoples from South Asia. Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras were descended from Dravidian South Asians who intermarried with the Aryans. The Dalits were conquered peoples who refused to intermarry with the Aryans.

Hindu writings detailing the workings of the caste system date back to 7 A.D. According to these writings, caste distinctions were based on good deeds done during a previous life. If you did what you were supposed to do in a previous life, you would be reincarnated into a higher caste. Likewise, those who did not do as they should would be

reincarnated as a Shudra, a Dalit, or worse. Such beliefs fostered a lack of compassion for those at the bottom.

With the passage of time caste distinctions became hereditary. That's because the Aryans introduced a system where sons inherited the professions of their fathers. By the 1500s A.D., the Muslim Mughal Empire took control of India. Social mobility had ceased to exist by that time. The Mughals made only one change to the caste system. They made it legal for the Shudras to own land. The British took control of India during the 1700s and made no changes to the caste system.

Caste in Today's India

In 1947 Great Britain granted independence to India. The new constitution of India banned caste-based discrimination. The new government also adopted a policy of affirmative action called the reservation system. They used quotas to ensure that some of the Shudras and Dalits got into college and were hired for government jobs. They also reserved homelands for the Dalits. These measures did little to uplift the status of India's Shudras and Dalits, especially since communities with some wealth and status were able to claim these privileges over those at the very bottom. Caste based discrimination still runs rampant in India today. Violence against Dalits is still a problem in many parts of India.

Ironically, knowledge of the English language helps the upper castes to maintain political and economic power. A knowledge of English is required for most good jobs in India. The upper castes embraced the English language during British colonial times. They sent their children to schools that taught the English language. The Shudras and Dalits didn't learn English and they had little or no education during that time. Today English is the national trade language and the international language of commerce; Shudras and Dalits that don't speak it are left out. The inability to speak English has also limited them politically. A working knowledge of English is required to run for parliament in India. Shudras are limited to local and state offices. Such offices don't require a working knowledge of English.



VSanandhakrishna

Often the Shudras and the Dalits find that converting to another religion is the only way to escape discrimination. That's why many Shudras and Dalits have been attracted to Christianity and Buddhism, two religions that support the idea of equality and upward mobility. The threat of leaving Hinduism can cause upper castes to believe that they might lose their power over Shudras and Dalits. Most of India's low caste Christians today came from a Hindu background; they had nothing to gain by remaining Hindu. For this reason, Brahman-led Hindu militant groups like the RSS hope to "re-convert" Christians to their previous Hindu religion to get them back under control.

Let's Pray!

- Ask God to end caste-based discrimination in India.
- Pray that there will be an end to the violence against Dalits.
- Ask God to raise up Christian teachers who would teach English to the Shudras and Dalits, and bring the message of salvation to all in India.
- Pray for a movement to Christ among every unreached Shudra and Dalit people group in the 2020s.

DHANGAR BHARWAD PEOPLE

PS 34:4, NLT

I prayed to the Lord, and He answered me. He freed me from all my fears.

Pray that the Dhangar begin to seek the true God and that He delivers them from their fears.

iStock/Riccardo Cirillo



A woman from a nomadic tribe

many of the Dhangar are illiterate. Due to their low caste status, their occupation and lack of education, the Dhangar are looked down upon.

Recently the Dhangar have begun to live in settled villages. They have asked for land from the government to graze their animals. Negotiations are still in process. Traditionally, the Dhangar have raised goats, sheep, cattle, and buffalo. Since they are Hindus, they would not eat the meat of the cattle or buffalo because these animals are sacred. The Dhangar do sell the dairy products from their cows and buffalo. They slaughter goats and sheep and sell the meat. Only a tiny number of the Dhangar are believers in Christ.

Pray that the Dhangar would receive the land their animals need and that their children may be able to attend school. Pray the Lord will start a movement of Dhangar families experiencing God's blessings. Pray for workers to start a disciple-making movement among them.—DK

How are the children of a nomadic people able to attend school? The Dhangar people have roamed the hills and forests of western India for hundreds of years searching for greenery and water for their animals. Most of the Dhangar children have been unable to attend school on a regular basis. As a result,

AD DHARMI PEOPLE

Here is some wonderful news!

According to People Groups.org, the

Ad Dharmi people of north India have recently become over two percent evangelical. That does not mean that we should stop praying for them.



iStock/Dmitry Belyaev

The primary occupation of the Ad Dharmi has been tanning hides of animals; such a job gives them very low status. The four castes of Hinduism consider the Ad Dharmi to be outside of the Hindu caste system, and therefore Dalits or untouchables. It was not until the 1920s that the Ad Dharmi became recognized as an official group of people. Many have taken advantage of government help for those with low status and have attended secondary schools and universities. Many are moving from the villages and attaining middle class status in the cities. Still, most Ad Dharmi live in villages without access to modern medicine, electricity or indoor plumbing. Most are still illiterate or functionally illiterate.

Pray that Ad Dharmi believers would be established in the faith by good Bible teaching. Pray the Lord raises up pastors and missionaries who can lead the Dharmi to a solid relationship with Christ. Pray that Dharmi believers would disciple others until there is a spiritual movement among this people group.—DK

1 PT 1:16, NLT

For the Scriptures says, "You must be holy because I am holy."

Pray that the Lord awakes the Dharmi people to the holiness and majesty of true God.

BAGDI PEOPLE

PS 34:18, NLT

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

Pray that the Lord uses the economic poverty of the Bagdi to drive them to the spiritual riches found in Jesus Christ.

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Fishing is a popular hobby for many people who live in western society. For the Bagdi

people of northeast India, it is their main way of making money. If the Bagdi don't catch enough fish, their families can starve. The Bagdi were traditionally a tribal people of hunter-gatherers. In modern times they have settled down to live in villages near the Bay of Bengal. Now their main source of income is fishing and working as landless agricultural laborers. Due to the Bagdi's profession and tribal origin, Hindus consider the Bagdi to be Dalits. Some Bagdi are becoming educated and leaving their fishing villages for cities.

The Bagdi practice a mixture of Hinduism and folk religion. They worship the Hindu gods but believe that spirits inhabit nature in the sea, rivers, animals, and sky. If the Bagdi do not appease these spirits with rituals, prayers, and offerings, the evil spirits will bring disaster upon their people.

Pray that the Lord would deliver the Bagdi from their fear of evil spirits and bring them into the family of the true God. Pray that the Bagdi would learn to read so they can improve their economic situation and understand the Bible for themselves. Pray that Indian believers would reach out and share the good news with the Bagdi people.—DK

AHAR PEOPLE

What would

it be like
to milk
a sacred
animal
every day?

The Ahar
people of



iStock/Madkruben

north India are Hindus who believe the cow is a holy animal. A large group of the Ahar still practice their ancient trade of milking cows and providing dairy products to their community. The Ahar consider themselves Brahmans but real Brahmans do not associate with them; they believe the Ahar are Shudras, part of the low status working caste. Taking care of the “holy” cows gives Ahars a higher standing in Indian society, but not the high status of Brahmans! Many Ahar are landowners and have others work their land. Some Ahar have received university educations and become engineers, scientists, administrators, and politicians.

The primary language of the Ahar is Hindi. Many resources exist in Hindi including a whole Bible and JESUS Film.

Pray the Ahar caste will deeply experience their need for forgiveness of sin, and for power in the Holy Spirit to live holy lives. Pray for the Lord to thrust out workers to them who will help Ahar families to begin a disciple-making movement that will affect many communities.—DK

MATT 7:13-14, NLT

You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

Pray the Ahar may enter the narrow gate of God and gain eternal life.

LUNIA PEOPLE

COL 2:9-10, NLT

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

Pray that the Lunia might find their completeness in a union with Christ.

iStock/Elena Odareeva



Lunia people at work

The human body cannot live without a small amount of salt. But today most people in western societies get

too much salt in their food and this can lead to health problems like high blood pressure.

The Lunia were traditionally salt producers from a salt lake region in Rajasthan, India. When the British took over India, the colonial government had a monopoly on salt production. The Lunia had to find other ways to make a living. The Lunia migrated to north India and became construction workers. They build houses, roads, and railroads. Others dig wells or do agricultural work. A privileged few with education work as medical doctors, attorneys, administrators or politicians. However, most Lunia still have a low educational level. They need for their children to go beyond a basic level of schooling so that they can compete in the modern Indian economy.

Pray for a major mobilization of prayer worldwide for Lunia people. Pray that God will overthrow spiritual forces of darkness opposing the spread of His gospel among the Lunia. Pray for entire clans and extended Lunia families to embrace the Savior and begin house churches. Pray the Lord will open the hearts of the Lunia people to accept God's blessings through a movement of family-based discovery Bible studies.—DK

ARUNTHATHIYAR PEOPLE

What were the circumstances of your birth, or your family? You had no control of these things. You might have been born a king or a pauper.



Tamil Nadu

iStock/LewisPulung

If you had been born into an Arunthathiyar community you would be considered a Dalit also known as a Scheduled Caste, an officially designated people group with disadvantaged circumstances in India. As a child, you would be expected to work on farms, sweep streets, or scavenge. Your father and mother would be doing manual work as well for a pittance. In the past you would not be permitted to use public water wells or burial grounds. You would be treated as an outcast everywhere, and in every situation. You would be looked down upon by all other people groups in India.

Nevertheless, you would be Hindu, worshipping multitudes of gods whom you fear. All kinds of Bible resources exist in the Tamil language of Arunthathiyar people. Tamil speaking missionaries can reach them!

Pray for long term relationship building and ministry that will lead to a disciple-making movement among these dear people for whom the Lord Jesus gave His life. Pray that Arunthathiyar people will have a hunger for truth, and that they will exchange the burdens of Hinduism for Jesus Christ who IS the truth and the burden bearer.—KH

2 COR 4:6, NLT

For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

Pray for spiritual light from Christ to shine brightly in the Araunthathiyar community.

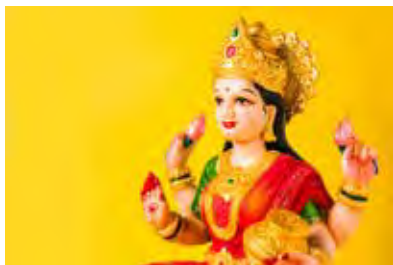
DOSADH PEOPLE

2 COR 4:4, NLT

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the good news. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Pray for leaders of the Dosadh community to have their spiritual eyes opened, so they will not be blinded by the adversary.

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Lakshmi, a favorite goddess of the Hindus

Knowledge is power, and the Dosadh people have neither! They also have no skills that can raise them or their

families out of the lowest poverty known even in India. Their livelihood consists of searching for insects on the backs of cattle, seeking alms while singing, or collecting and selling cow dung. Beggars among them carry two idols. One idol is of the Hindu goddess Sitala and the other is of Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity. This people group is anything but prosperous, and one must ask why they haven't given up on this popular goddess who obviously isn't helping them.

Dosadh people worship the most sinister of the Hindu gods. One of them is a snake goddess, another is a four-armed demon that swallows the sun and the moon during eclipses. They make offerings of pigs and alcohol to one of their other gods. The Dosadh people live in constant bondage and fear of these gods whom they dare not serve. The God of all hope, Jesus Christ, is the only one who can cut through all the hopelessness of the Dosadh people.

Pray that Dosadh people will have the opportunity to encounter the love of God and experience His peace. Pray for God's Holy Spirit to move among Dosadh families, softening their hearts and drawing them into a relationship with Christ.—KH

DHANUK PEOPLE

(This story illustrates truths about this people group).

The midwife had been alerted to join Abiradhi; her baby would be born soon. Abiradhi had arranged for branches of jujube and unwanted shoes to be placed at the main house gatehouse to drive away ghosts and disease. Abiradhi had arranged for worship of the gods and festivities. She had done all that she knew to do to insure safety for her baby. Perhaps the many gods would favor her. One never knows.



A prenatal health clinic

iStock/brunoat

DAY

08

2 COR 10:3-4, NLT

We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.

Pray that the Dhanuk people will turn from man's way of thinking and seek God's way of thinking.

Although Dhanuk people are of a low caste, they are considered clean, so higher castes can accept water and services from them. This gives them opportunity to work as household servants. Dhanuk people are influenced by Hinduism, but they rely heavily on their traditional beliefs in magic, witchcraft, and ghosts. They have no believing neighbors to tell them the good news. Child labor, poverty, illiteracy, and alcoholism among the men are all part of their hopeless state.

Pray Dhanuk families will be exposed to the gospel through radio, television, and believers. Pray they will have a craving for truth and righteousness that will drive them into the loving arms of Jesus.—KH

2 COR 10:5, NLT

We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to speak to the hearts and minds of the Mushahar people in India.

MUSHAHAR PEOPLE

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Notice the rat in the background

Scriptures tell us that “Jesus wept.” Some things are simply too hard to bear or hear. Such is the plight of the Mushahar people. We must hear,

we must weep and then we must fall to our knees in prayer!

Mushahar people are considered one of the lowest of the Dalit groups, and they suffer tremendously from their status. Their name is derived from two words meaning “rat catcher” and is likely attributed to them for their tendency to eat rodents in times of dire need. They are powerless and voiceless, unable to change their situation. Many Mushahar women are kidnapped or sold into prostitution in major metropolitan cities. Without recourse this becomes their new life; oppressed, abused and forced to suffer in silence.

They have large families and live with several generations in the same household. Due to their extreme poverty they live far from towns and cities having no proper health care. Child and maternal mortality are high, and their life span is short, exacerbated by high rates of alcoholism among the male population. They follow tribal religion and worship their family deity, the village deity, and the gods of Hinduism.

Ask Almighty God to raise up entire Mushahar families and communities until their culture is transformed to glorify God and represent His kingdom on earth. Pray for a movement to Christ.—KH

KHATIK PEOPLE

(This story illustrates truths about this people group.)



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The Indian government official handed a certificate with a warning to the Khatik butcher in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. He said, “Pakot, we know you have been killing more cows than you are allowed. This new certificate is reducing the number you can slaughter. If you break the law again your shop will be closed, and you will pay a fee.” Singh replied, “What am I to do? The government has already reduced my number to half of the cows I can slaughter, and you have already closed the largest slaughterhouse in Kanpur! People are angry because the prices of meat are high! The official replied, “Look man, you have been warned!”

Numbering close to 2.3 million, Khatiks are recognized as being the only low Hindu caste that has the right to kill cows for food. This is significant as over 70 percent of Hindus eat meat but will not kill animals. Some Khatiks work as farmers, cattle herders, and traders. There are only a few followers of Christ among them, but Christian media resources are easily available.

Pray that God will touch the hearts of believers to help the Khatik families begin a movement to Christ. May the Holy Spirit give their leaders the willingness to accept God's guidance and the sacrifice that paid for all sin.—PD

2 COR 10:15, NLT

Nor do we boast and claim credit for the work someone else has done. Instead, we hope that your faith will grow so that the boundaries of our work among you will be extended.

Pray that soon the Khatik people will have a growing faith that will affect all people groups in Uttar Pradesh.

PULAYAN PEOPLE IN INDIA

2 COR 10:16-17, NLT

Then we will be able to go and preach the good news in other places far beyond you, where no one else is working. Then there will be no question of our boasting about work done in someone else's territory. As the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD."

Pray for Lord to raise up evangelists in Uttar Pradesh who will have the spiritual maturity to boast only in what the Lord does, and not take credit for themselves.

iStock/mirinalnag



What can be more tragic than a person not reaching their potential? Perhaps an entire

people group not meeting their potential! Let me introduce you to the Pulayan people, a Shudra group in Kerala and Tamil Nadu whose name comes from a word for pollution. Most of them are landless farm workers, but they have potential to do much more! Despite the obstacles, the Pulayan people have excelled in craftsmanship, dance, and the arts in general. One of the art forms which they are noted for is chimmanakali, a humorous speech form which sometimes involves music. Mangalamkali is a dance ritual used for weddings and for entertainment.

Other art forms have a darker side. There is kolam-thullal, a dance which is intended to expel unclean spirits. They are almost 100 percent Hindu, which means that they are free to worship any number of gods and seek spiritual guidance from those who do not believe that Jesus Christ is who He said He is. There are millions of Christian believers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Which of them will go to the Pulayan to free them from the spirits?

Pray for the Lord to thrust out workers to the Pulayan people. Pray for this decade to be a time when the Pulayan people make many disciples. Pray for their families to become objects of blessing in the Lord's family.—KC

DUSADH BAHELIA PEOPLE

DAY

12

If you are a serious follower of Christ, a good question is, in whom do you put your identity?

The caste system, which has been in South Asia for thousands of years, gives each community an identity. Those at the top, whom we will pray for in two months, identify with their high standing.

The Dusadh Bahelia people claim they were once part of the high-ranking Rajput community. They were the warriors of old who defended India from Muslim invaders. When they had the chance to put their swords away, they didn't pick up a hoe, because they were the landowners who hired others to do that kind of dirty work.

Somehow this community lost their status. Today, some of them have stooped so low that they must pick fleas off the backs of cattle. Yet the Dusadh Bahelia are noted for their hard work and resilience. They are on their way "up" and some have become doctors, engineers or politicians.

As their status changes, ask the question, who do they put their identity in? Will it be in their ancestors who fought epic battles, or will it be in the King of kings who fought sin and death and won?

Pray that the Dusadh Bahalia people will put their identity in Christ alone. Pray for a movement to Him within this community.—KC



iStock/nevskyphoto

2 COR 1:3, NLT

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort.

Pray for the Dusadh Bahelia people to find comfort in the Lord and no other.

MUNNUR PEOPLE

2 COR 1:4, NLT

He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

Pray that soon there will be Munnur believers who will be comforted by the Holy Spirit, and share that comfort with others in their homeland.

iStock/Radiokukka



How much defense can an army of 300 provide? Hundreds of years ago, a king in the southern Indian city

of Hyderabad called for 300 soldiers from the Munnur people. Apparently that was all he needed!

The Munnur people are now almost all farmers. Whether they are land owners or farm laborers, they are known for their abilities in raising livestock and growing crops. Because of their status as Shudras, the fourth and lowest caste grouping in the Hindu pecking order, they have reservations, meaning guaranteed spots in universities and public jobs. This situation is helping them to find their way upward; their educational level is rising, and we will hear of more Munnur people in prominent positions in the future. Already some of them hold jobs in public service and private businesses in urban settings.

A higher literacy rate has the potential to help the Munnur people read and respond to the various materials in their language, Telugu. Those who can't read in Telugu can hear various audio recordings or view the JESUS Film.

Pray that believers will make the effort to take the JESUS Film and other materials to the Munnur people. Pray for this people group to be blessed with a disciple-making movement that will affect their community and others throughout southern India.—KC

KUNBI LEWA PEOPLE

How would you like someone to call you “backward”? In Indian English, this word



iStock/losuOzkaritz

does not have the negative connotations it does in North America. Today and tomorrow you will be praying for Kunbi peoples; they are called “Other Backward Classes”, or OBCs for short.

OBCs have somewhat low status, so they are given “reservations” for a certain number of government jobs. Typically, reservations are more likely to go to the more politically connected communities rather than those that need them the most. This situation puts them at odds with communities that have lower status, namely the Dalits. Dalits are so low on the caste hierarchy that they are outside of it. In 2006, Kunbi people slaughtered Dalits in a massacre known as the Khairlanji killings.

The Kunbis have several subgroups, most of which live in India’s western states. Tomorrow you will be praying for those who speak Konkani, a language spoken in this region.

Pray for the light of the gospel to reach all Kunbi subgroups, specifically the Lewa. Pray for them to hear and respond to the gospel by teaching others to obey all that Christ commands. Pray for an unstoppable movement to Christ among the Kunbi Lewa people that will transform their communities.—KC

2 COR 1:9, NLT

In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead.

Pray for the Lord to raise up Kunbi Lewa believers who will rely on God alone and forsake all gods.

2 COR 1:21A, NLT

It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ.

Pray that the 2020s will be the decade when the Lord raises up Kunbi Konkani believers who will stand firm for Christ, no matter what comes their way.

KUNBI KONKANI PEOPLE

iStock/DogoraSun



In 1964, the U.S. Surgeon General announced that smoking causes cancer. The Kunbi

Konkani people act like they have never heard that warning. Both men and women smoke homemade cigarettes, and many suffer from mouth and throat cancer. Unfortunately, they have also not heard the scriptural warning from God that sin leads to spiritual death. Neither have they heard that Jesus Christ offers the remedy: Eternal life.

The Kunbi Konkani are all bound by the Hindu religious system that has placed them in the Shudra caste division giving them a low status, and forcing them to remain as poor farmers, herdsman or day laborers. Despite all these disadvantages, they cling to Hinduism—a religion of many gods. It's difficult for them to accept Christ's claim to be the only way to God.

Many Kunbi speak the Konkani language but others speak several other major Indian languages. There is an abundance of Christian resources available, both in print and on media. However, few can read or have access to the internet.

Pray for Kunbi Konkani family leaders to embrace salvation in Christ, and disciple others to do the same. Ask God to send loving believers to work with them and meet their spiritual and physical needs.—AHS

TAMBOLI PEOPLE

Do you drink coffee or tea to help you wake up? In India, many chew the betel nut for a



Betel nut

iStock/achaks

quick jolt. There are dangerous side effects associated with chewing it. Long term chewing of the betel nut and leaf can lead to different cancers, including cancers of the mouth, esophagus, liver, kidney, and heart disease. It can even lead to psychiatric disorders.

The Tamboli people, who live all over India, make their living by raising the betel leaf. This is not good for their health or the health of their customers. They need training for other trades and occupations that will help, not hinder, the people of India.

As Hindus, they eat some meat, such as fish, chicken, and mutton, but they abstain from beef and pork. Unlike some Indian castes, they are monogamous, meaning one husband marries only one wife. They only marry those from their own community or caste.

Pray for Indian believers to reach out to this community. Pray that God will soften their hearts so that they will hunger for the truth and eagerly accept it when they hear it. Pray for a church planting movement among the Tamboli people that will show other castes in India what Jesus Christ can do to transform people for the better.—JS

2 COR 1:21B-22, NLT

He has commissioned us, and He has identified us as His own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything He has promised us.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to move in the hearts of Tamboli people so they can have fellowship with Christ.

BOYA PEOPLE

2 COR 2:14, NLT

But thank God! He has made us His captives and continues to lead us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now He uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume.

Pray for many from the Boya people to eagerly seek being "captives" of the Lord, so they can not only join in His triumphal procession, but also to spread the knowledge of Him to others through discipleship.

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One of the oldest lower castes in the traditional Indian caste system is the Boya

caste. Boyars, as they are sometimes called, live mainly in the southern region of India especially Andhra Pradesh. Their main language is Telugu. They probably originally migrated from what is now Iran around the 5th century. Their main occupation is agriculture. Child labor is prevalent among the Boyas. They practice arranged marriages. They are permitted to have cross-cousin marriages as well as uncle-niece unions. A divorced man can remarry, but a divorced woman cannot.

They integrate ancestor worship with their form of Hinduism. The Boyas have the New Testament available to them in their Telugu language, but their literacy rate is very low. India has so many different castes and so many of them are basically unreached. India is a rich field for evangelism!

Pray for God to create a hunger for the truth in the Boyas that can only be satisfied when they hear the truth about God and the sacrifice that Jesus made for them. Pray for various developmental programs to help the Boyas have more occupational opportunities. Pray for Bible studies within Boya families that will spread far and wide.—JS

KOSHTI CASTE

The Koshti caste of India numbers only 1,084,000 people, but they are precious in the eyes of God! They live mainly



Koshtis might be at this Ganesh festival

iStock/SJ/Palkar

in southern India, and their primary language is Marathi. These Hindus worship Ganesh in hopes that he will help them overcome obstacles and misfortune. Their main industry is the weaving of silk and cotton cloth goods worn by the very wealthy. The primary way that the Koshti can be reached is through contact with believers who purchase their woven goods.

They desperately need church-planting teams to befriend them and tell them about their Savior who loves them and wants them to be with Him for eternity. They have the complete Bible translated into Marathi as well as audio recordings. Much prayer is necessary to soften their hearts so that they can embrace the one true God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Pray for those around the world who are reading this Global Prayer Digest to consider adopting the Kashti people for regular prayer. Pray for teams to go to Kashti towns and share audio recordings of the Scripture in their tongue. Pray that the prayers of God's people will soften their hearts when they hear the gospel message and result in a disciple-making movement.—JS

2 COR 2:15, NLT

Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing.

Pray for the Christ-like fragrance to reach the nostrils and hearts of the Koshti people, so they can decide whether or not to follow Him.

TARKHAN PEOPLE

MARK 6:3, NLT

Then they scoffed, “He’s just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” They were deeply offended and refused to believe in Him.

Pray for the peoples of India to not look down on the Tarkhan people, and even respect them all the more when some of them embrace the carpenter from Nazareth.

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Caste is usually related to trade, but it’s not that simple! Take the Tarkhan people for example. Traditionally they were carpenters, but today they have also adopted many other trades.

They even allow, and in some cases encourage, marriage with individuals from outside their caste. Despite what looks to outsiders as progress, they have been labeled as a “backward” people, at least as far as education and economics.

Tarkhans are amongst the peoples commonly found in the Punjab region, which reaches into both India and Pakistan. The majority are located in India’s state of Haryana, which is among India’s least evangelized. Less than a decade ago, the Haryana church was described as weak, small, and under routine threat from Hindu nationalists who take objection to its very existence. Nevertheless, there are a number of Tarkhans who have been bold enough to report themselves as Christian believers to the national census – an encouraging development in this hostile environment.

Pray that the Tarkhan people would experience rising literacy rates and an increase in marketable skills. Pray for the north Indian church to begin a church planting movement among the Tarkhan people. Pray for the Tarkhan community to be transformed into the likeness of Christ.—BK

TANTI PEOPLE

Spread across the northeast of India, the Tanti people are mostly concentrated in the state of Bihar, though significant groups are reported in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, and even Bangladesh. The Tanti tend to live outside metropolitan areas in small villages, mixed in with other groups. The Tanti are considered backwards both socially and economically.



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MATT 11:5, NLT

...the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the good news is being preached to the poor.

Pray for the Lord to do these miracles throughout northern India, leading thousands to look to Jesus Christ as the bread of life.

Once a caste of weavers known for their great skill, the Tanti have been supplanted by factory production and imports leaving them with subsistence work. Manual labor is the primary option when weaving isn't available. Clean water is not always available to the majority of Tanti, nor is a steady food supply. Despite their position, some Tanti have moved into cities, obtained an education, and achieved greater roles in society, though these instances are rare.

Pray that the Tanti people would have increased access to clean water, sanitation, and medical facilities. Pray for a cultural and spiritual awakening amongst the Tanti that would spread to their neighbors and throughout India, leading thousands to giving God praise. Pray for a movement to Christ among the Tanti people in the 2020s that will spread to nearby peoples.—BK

VADDAR PEOPLE

2 COR 3:5-6, NLT

It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. He has enabled us to be ministers of His new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.

Pray for the Lord to raise up His ministers of the new covenant to go to all unreached people groups throughout Uttar Pradesh.

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(The following fictional account is meant to illustrate the spiritual situation of the Vaddar people.)

The young man sat in the field reading a book. Or rather, trying to read it. He hadn't been to school and like most of the Vaddars, he could not read. The challenge of teaching himself to read was not going well.

He heard someone coming; his father was entering the field. "And why are you not at work?" his father asked. "Did you run out of stones to cut?" Before the young man could answer, his father spotted the book. Frowning, he picked it up. "What is this?" Looking at the ground, the young man answered, "A stranger gave it to me." "Don't you know that we are a stone-cutting caste? Your grandfather was a stone cutter, I am a stone cutter, and you are destined to be one too. Do the best you can as a stone cutter; don't waste your time on books."

While the Bible is available in their heart language of Telugu, the Vaddar people have been unresponsive to the gospel message. Part of this may be because most are illiterate and cannot read Scripture.

Pray for the Lord to soften the hearts of Vaddar family leaders, and send His ambassadors to help them begin a spiritual journey that will lead to a Vaddar movement to Christ.—CL

MEGH PEOPLE

(This fictional account is meant to illustrate the beliefs of the Megh people.)



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The children ran down the dirt road to a modest shack and began beating on the door. An old man stuck his head out the window. “Who is it? What do you want?” “We want a story!” the children shouted. “Of course you do,” the old man muttered with a smile. He came out the front door and slowly lowered himself onto a chair. The children quickly gathered around him in a semi-circle. “His name was Rishi Megh,” the old man began rather cryptically. “And he was a saint.” The old man continued. “He was a very powerful saint who had power to bring rain. All he had to do was lift his hand and pray, and rain poured from the sky.” He paused, then leaned toward the children, pointing at them with a bony finger. “You are descended from Rishi Megh. In fact, Megh means rain. Perhaps you too have the power to bring rain.” The children’s eyes grew wide.

The Megh are an untouchable caste without hope of social or economic advancement. They look to the gods of Hinduism for hope.

Pray for the Lord to reveal the hope of His Son to Megh families and clans. Pray for an unstoppable movement to Christ this decade.—CL

2 COR 2:17, NLT

You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit. We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ’s authority, knowing that God is watching us.

Pray for the Lord to raise up sincere, Holy Spirit driven workers to go to the Megh people.

GEN 15:5, NLT

Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!"

Pray for the Lord to have many "descendants" among the Mal people of India!

MAL PEOPLE

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(This story illustrates truths about this people group.)

Only the stars illuminated the night's penetrating darkness.

The village watchman shifted his weight and stroked his weapon, listening for suspicious sounds. He, like his ancestors, was glad for the stars and the light they shine. His people group, the Mal, were always defenders, for Mal means soldier.

More than 1,800,000 Mal people live in India, the majority being in the northeastern part of the country. They are a scheduled caste and do not own land. They cultivate, and sometimes defend, the land of wealthier castes.

Every Mal is a Hindu and this people group celebrates its own festivals. Their form of Hinduism has become tied to the Mal identity. An ample supply of Christian resources has been available to them, but the Mal have a low literacy level, so the gospel must be presented orally. Piercing intercessory prayer is needed to break through the spiritual barriers that keep the Mal people from the blessings of Jesus Christ.

Ask the Lord to send people, angels or dreams with the gospel. Pray that entire Mal families will look upon the warrior King Jesus as their Lord. Pray that Christ will be the light that shines in their hearts, and that they will allow that light to shine brightly for others.—LR

RABARI PEOPLE

When I was in Sunday school, we sang, “One door and only one, yet its sides are two. I’m on the inside; on which side are you?” There are always insiders and outsiders; but inside or outside what? For today’s Rabari people, whose name means “outsiders,” that is the question. As a semi-nomadic pastoral people for whom raising livestock is sacred, they often reside outside of towns. As low caste, they are often outsiders in other contexts. Although most live in India, some live in Pakistan. They marry outside their clan. The 2001 Rajasthan earthquake shattered their society, making change possible, mostly economic change.



A Rabari tribesman

iStock/paulprescott7

2 COR 3:8, NLT

Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life?

Pray for the Rabari people to understand the value of the glory Christ offers, if they will do things His way.

They believe they were created by Shiva's consort to tend livestock, hence the sacredness of livestock raising. But Shiva's consort and Shiva are not their only gods. They also worship or honor three clan deities and village deities. Thus they are polytheists like most Hindus. There are no known followers of Christ among them, despite evangelistic materials in their languages.

Pray they will take advantage of the opportunity to read and listen to Christian materials, and that mission agencies will reach them so they are no longer outside the Good Shepherd's fold. Pray they will soon have family based efforts to disciple them.—TP

2 COR 3:14, NLT

But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ.

Pray for the Thori people to have soft hearts and minds when they hear spiritual truth.

THORI PEOPLE

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We prayed yesterday that outsiders would become

insiders to God's grace and Jesus' sheepfold. Today pray for another low caste people, the Thori of Rajasthan's desert, who speak one or more of three languages, of which Marwari is most important. Numbering some 820,000, they live mainly in the western state of Rajasthan. The Thori are a low status Scheduled Caste, agricultural laborers, and sometimes small businessmen. Women weave baskets and sell furniture, cricket bats, and wickets to buy bread and maize, their staple foods. They love to sing and tell stories about their patron warrior saint, whom they also worship. Because they are a migrant caste, they are often viewed with suspicion. Sociologically, they only marry within their 16 clans. They have a caste community council, which acts something like a court to keep the peace.

Of the 820,000 Thori, nearly 100 percent are Hindu; we know of no followers of Christ among them. These people appear to be an unengaged, and certainly are, an unreached people loved of God. Like yesterday's group they are outside the door of heaven.

Pray that mission agencies and churches will pray for and support outreach to the Thori people so they may feed on the Bread of Life as Jesus' disciples, thereby entering heaven's door. Pray this will be the decade where there is a disciple making movement among them.—TP

KOLI PEOPLE

Should we be calling them the Koli people in 2020? During British colonial times, the term came to mean “savage,”



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and was the label for people of low status, people who performed menial jobs. Additionally, the term was applied to the militant and the aggressive. The term “Koli” is actually a generic term for several tribal groups. In some regions, the Koli traditionally earned their living by collecting and selling the fuel of wood and leaves; this occupation continues to the present day. The Koli people are predominantly Hindu.

The Koli people are spread out over central India, but their greatest concentration is between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. They number just under two million. Not much else is known about the Koli people, but God knows every man, woman, and child, and loves them! Only a tiny number of believers live among the Koli.

Pray for them to grow in their faith and to draw their Hindu neighbors into the joy and peace that comes from knowing Christ. May Christ bless them with such peace that their neighbors see a difference in their lives. Pray for a disciple-making movement. Pray for spiritually prepared workers who will take the good news of Jesus Christ to them.—CMW

2 COR 3:16A, NLT

But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Pray for the Koli people to find spiritual freedom in embracing Jesus Christ.

SAHARIA PEOPLE

2 COR 3:18, NLT

So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image.

Pray for Indian believers to become more like Christ!

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Slash and burn! The term itself sounds frightful. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, it is “a method of cultivation in which forests are burned and

cleared for planting. ... After several years of cultivation, fertility declines. Cultivation would then shift to a new plot. ... Modern slash-and-burn techniques are a significant source of carbon dioxide emissions, especially when used to initiate permanent deforestation.”

Saharia farmers plant gourds, millet, sorghum, and wild rice using slash-and-burn agriculture. Unsurprisingly, this has created serious conflict between the Saharia and India’s Forestry Department. The people are also weavers, iron workers, basket makers, and potters. The Saharia number just under a million and mostly live in Madhya Pradesh. They are a tribal hill people, most of whom are illiterate, and who formerly had little contact with the outside world but are now becoming aware of national politics. They practice traditional religions as well as Hinduism.

Pray for loving disciples who are willing to take gospel materials to the Saharia. May the few believers among the Saharia stand firm in their faith and be convicted to disciple friends and family in the ways of Christ. Pray that the Holy Spirit will soften the hearts of Saharia listeners.—CMW

TILI PEOPLE

The Tili people are named after a Sanskrit word that describes their traditional



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occupation: extracting oil from mustard and sesame. An agricultural people who cultivate plants, over one million Tili live in states throughout India, especially in the east. The greatest number reside in West Bengal.

Even though the Tili are among the low-status Hindu communities, they do not accept food from castes lower than themselves. At the same time, they marry outside their own clans. They also display customs similar to neighboring Hindu communities.

The Tili worship Hindu deities as well as family, village, and regional gods. They use sacred specialists to perform life-cycle rituals and to treat diseases. As a people, the Tili are considered 100 percent Hindu, with few if any believers.

Pray for widespread availability of Bengali scriptures, gospel recordings, and the JESUS Film for Tili communities. Ask for effective witnesses and disciples to help Tili leaders to begin a disciple-making movement. Ask God to stir up a prayer movement for the Tili people. Pray for Tili family and spiritual leaders to be drawn to Jesus. Pray for lasting spiritual breakthroughs this decade.—CR

GEN 9:20A, NLT

After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground. . .

Pray that the Holy Spirit prepares the soil of Tili hearts in their communities throughout India. Ask for a bountiful crop of Tili believers and disciples, leading to disciple-making movements.

DAY

29

SRI LANKAN MOORS

PS 33:1, NLT

Let the godly sing for joy to the Lord; it is fitting for the pure to praise Him.

Pray that thousands from the Sri Lankan Moors will join the chorus of the pure and praise the King of kings for eternity!

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Have you noticed that the Great Commission is a moving target? People groups change through the centuries.

Take the Moors for example. Originally, they were a Berber people from North Africa, some of whom later became worldwide traders as far away as Sri Lanka. Some were among the conquerors of Spain and Portugal starting in 711. For that reason, in the 1500s and 1600s, the Spaniards and Portuguese called all Muslims “Moors.”

Portuguese traders encountered Arab-background Muslim traders in Sri Lanka whom they also called Moors. These “Moors” are divided into three main groups, each with their own history and traditions. Today, many are successful businessmen. A few are teachers or doctors.

No matter what their confusing background may be, the Sri Lankan Moors have made Sunni Islam part of their identity. It would be unthinkable for any of them to make Christ their Lord, since their community would view that as straying from the faith of their fathers.

Pray that many Sri Lankan Moors will allow Christ to bless and transform their community through a disciple-making movement in the 2020s.—KC

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EthnoLA

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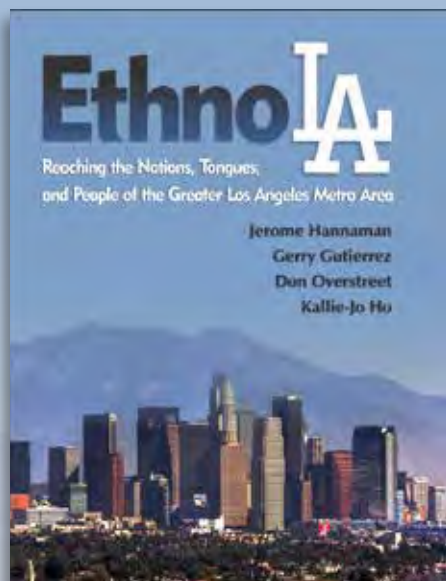
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