

**Monday 21st June**

**Peter and Ruth's story**

Ever since I spent my gap year working amongst Muslims in North Africa, I dreamed of one day returning as a full-time worker. After university I followed a standard path – career, marriage and family, and involvement in leadership at our local church. However, the dream lived on, and together we nurtured it until, eventually, in the late 1990s, we came across Frontiers, and in 2000, with 3 small children in tow, we set off for a new life in West Africa.

The Holy Spirit had prompted me to choose accountancy as a career, saying that it would be my passport to the Muslim world, and so it proved. The team we joined lived and ministered in the urban slums of the capital city, running a development agency which served some of the poorest people in the country, and I started life there as the Finance Director, later taking on the team leadership role. As a couple, we were very aware that God had been preparing us for the task he had for us in that country. Bringing up a family in a slum, surrounded by people with deep spiritual and material needs that we could never hope to meet in our own strength, was certainly challenging, and many times we felt stretched way beyond our limit. However, as time went on, we learned more and more to rely on his provision, and to see people through his eyes. Through his grace we were able to touch many thousands of lives in our neighbourhood and beyond, and the small, underground, church we were working with grew, and became established. Those years were among the richest we have known and have deeply and positively impacted both us and our children in countless ways.

After 12 years in the country, we sensed it was time to hand over responsibility for the church to local leaders, and to return to the UK. However, we were sure that our calling to Muslims was a life commitment, and so we didn't hesitate when we were invited to join the teams at our International Office (Peter) and British Office (Ruth). Although we greatly miss being on the 'frontline' ourselves, we have been able to support many others in our current roles. And one day we trust that God will lead us back to Africa to continue serving him there.

- Pray for those at the International and British offices who give their time to mobilise and serve our teams engaged in frontline work.
- Pray for those who have returned from overseas as, like us, they seek to develop relationships with UK Muslims.
- Pray for us, that we would be open to God's call to return overseas, and content to wait until he releases us to go.

Tuesday 22nd June

India Pop: 1.3 billion

*"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."* Heb 4:16

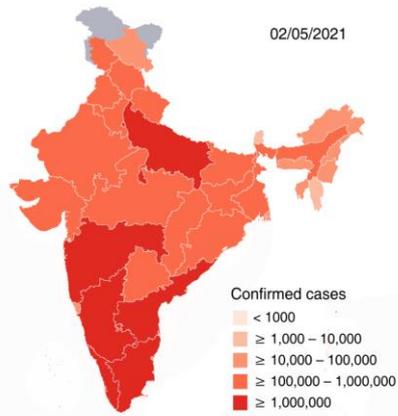


Image by Wikimedia Commons of confirmed Covid cases at the start of May

At the time of writing, the second wave of Covid had hit India, as well documented in many international news reports. On 1st May, India had the highest number of cases ever recorded globally. The actual number of deaths and reported cases of the virus were thought to be even higher. Hospitals were overwhelmed and had run out of beds and oxygen supplies. Many states were struggling to cope with the rising numbers of cases.

Uttar Pradesh in the north east, India's most populous state, was among the worst affected in the country. Of its 240 million people, about 40 million (20%) are Muslims.

India has a Hindu majority that live alongside a minority Muslim population. In many places, there are undercurrents of cultural tension between Muslims and Hindus. In spite of their large numbers, Hindus dominate both the population and the politics in India, with

Hindus dominate both the population and the politics in India, with the result that Muslims often feel that they are at a disadvantage. Hindu extremists believe that all Indians should be Hindu, and that the country should be rid of Christianity and Islam.

Listen to this song written by well-known worship leaders in India. Some of the lyrics are below:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvoq7SL\\_BXg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvoq7SL_BXg)

"This wall of hatred, why does it separate us from each other? A brother against his own brother.

Why does my nation cry? You are the desire of my country. This nation depends on You. You are the God of this nation, You are the Father to these children. You are beyond caste, creed and religion. Now you're not far away from anyone, but close to every single heart. You will never forsake us. Our identity is that we are one family. We embrace unity in diversity and that is the greatness of our nation India. Your mercy and compassion has kept us going. Your faithfulness lifted us up when we fell.....

Come, let us join together and sing a new song. Awake, my nation! Your time has come! We are one, my nation! Lift up the banner of love. Together with one heart we sing."

- Let's declare that God is the God of India, beyond caste, creed or religion and that this nation will awake to this truth and be united in love. Pray that everyone will know that God has not forsaken them at this time, but He is a God of compassion and mercy.
- Before the second wave of Covid hit, India was an important centre for production of the vaccination for export to other countries. Let's pray it is blessed with much needed vaccinations and other medical supplies from the rest of the world.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment for leaders to know what restrictions should be put in place. They have been slow to introduce lockdowns for religious celebrations and election campaigns, blamed for this latest surge in cases.

Source of some content: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-56799303>

**Wednesday 23rd June**

## **Challenges facing India**

*"I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.""* Ps 91:2

Before the second wave of the Coronavirus hit, India was already facing its worst job crisis in over forty years, despite being one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Now with lockdowns being put in place because of the coronavirus crisis, economic hardship has struck many Indian families. As day labourers, many will not get paid, and families now face the prospect of starvation.

The ripple effect of the job crisis has been the decline in the purchasing power of working Indians. The car industry has borne the brunt of this decline with the loss of over 300,000 jobs in the last few months. More job cuts are expected with car and associated manufacturers suspending production temporarily. Economists doubt the recent huge government borrowing can resurrect the ailing economy.

In addition to the havoc wreaked by the government, the country experiences extreme weather with cyclones, floods, and droughts. The majority of India's water table has been depleted. The rest is poisoned by industrial waste. Large sections of forest land continue to be taken for industrial use.

Although poverty has been on the decline, a significant percentage of its population still live in poverty with 73 million people living in extreme poverty. Women and children are most vulnerable. They face the challenges of child marriages, a high infant mortality rate (11,000 children die each day as the result of poverty and other avoidable medical issues), female infanticide and the threat of rape and attack every day.

- Children and women are constantly targeted by criminals and even government leaders for sexual assault, human trafficking, and sex trafficking. Pray for protection for the population of women and children in India.
- Pray for fresh investment and innovation that will bring a turnaround for the Indian economy.
- Pray for churches and aid agencies that are trying to bring hope to suffering families. May they be emboldened to share about the ultimate hope that can be found in Jesus.

Source of some content: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/indias-healthcare-overwhelmed-by-second-covid-19-wave/>

**Thursday 24th June**

### **Prayagraj in eastern Uttar Pradesh – a strategic city**

*“For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking ahead.”* Heb. 13:14

India has the highest number of unreached Muslim people groups in the world; 32% of the world’s unreached people groups live there. According to the Joshua project there are 2,718 people groups, of which 2,445 are unreached. This means a staggering 90% of all the people of India have not met a follower of Jesus.

Although the proportion of Muslims living there may seem small, India is the third largest Muslim nation in the world, its population estimated to be between 190-200 million. Frontiers has a number of priority peoples and places listed for particular prayer and outreach in India. We have prayed for a number of these over the past couple of years. Today we will pray for a city in eastern Uttar Pradesh called Prayagara, where Shaikhs, Ansari, Pashtun and Sayyid (all unreached Priority people groups) live. Uttar Pradesh is India’s most populous state and home to the country’s largest Muslim population.



Prayagraj used to be known as Allahabad, ‘the city of Allah.’ It is the seventh largest city in Uttar Pradesh and one of the world’s fastest growing cities. It is also one of the state’s wealthiest cities. Its economy was built on tourism, but today property and financial services account for most of its revenue. Tourism, fishing and agriculture are the city’s main industries. In addition to more than 3,000 small industries, there are believed to be more than 10,000 unregistered small industry units in the city.

It is known for its literary and artistic heritage and has been called the ‘literary capital of Uttar Pradesh.’

Prayagraj is home to around 1.3 million Hindus, the largest religious group. Some 200,000 Muslims make up the largest minority group, followed by about 1,300 Christians. Other minority religions include Buddhists and Sikhs.

Christians make up a tiny proportion of the population. There are no known followers of Christ actively focused on bringing the good news to Muslims in Prayagraj. People who desperately need to hear the good news of Jesus are dying without it.

You can read about a team of intrepid short-termers in South Asia, who follow a barefoot religious scholar through the streets of one of the Muslim world’s least-reached cities:

<https://storytrade.org/story-articles/sow-what-you-know-part-1-the-soil-of-unengaged-cities/>

- Pray for more workers to go to this ‘city of God.’ Is God speaking to your heart about the Muslim people in India?
- Let’s ask that this city will be renowned not just for its literary and artistic heritage, but as the city of the true and living God.
- Pray for boldness for the small number of believers living in this city, that they will find the courage to engage with their Muslim neighbours and speak about the hope they have in Christ Jesus.

**Friday 25th June**

### **Sahanara's testimony**

*"Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."* Matt 17:20

As we read on Wednesday, millions of Muslims in India live in poverty. But even in the most destitute places, God is there, touching hearts. One of these many people is Sahanara. You can listen to her full testimony here: <https://prayercast.com/sahanara.html>

Sahanara grew up in poverty. Her family lived in a dilapidated house that she was ashamed of. She often went to bed without food. Even though she wanted to study and go to school, her family did not have the money to send her. "Why are my people not helping us?" she wondered.

She saw her mum crying and praying to Allah for help. Sahanara prayed and fasted too, crying to Allah to help them. But no help came.

Sahanara then heard of a mission agency that provided free schooling. She was able to go to the school and was made welcome there. One day at Sunday school she heard a story about a girl who prayed and asked God to move a mountain she had had to pass in order to get to school. God answered that prayer. The teacher said if you had faith as small as a mustard seed and asked God to move a mountain in your life, then He would. Sahanara hadn't heard of Jesus before, but she prayed about her mountain of difficulties at home and asked God for help.

She heard that her grandfather had given her family a plot of land to build a house. They built a two storey house and life was better.

Sahanara decided to follow Jesus because of His blessing to her and her family. But then the problems began. The local villagers shunned her and told her whole family, including her grandfather not to enter the mosque. Her grandfather then threatened to kill her if she came to the village and told her not to come home. Children would spit at her and curse her.

She returned to the mission school for shelter. She had been there for a year when her grandmother called and asked her to come home. Sahanara returned, and a few months later her mother was diagnosed with brain cancer. Sahanara prayed for her healing and asked her church family to pray too.

When her mum went back to the doctors for a scan, the doctor was shocked and told her she didn't have a brain tumour after all. She was merely suffering from a skin disorder that was easily treated.

Both her sister and her mum believed that Jesus had healed her and made the decision to follow Jesus. Sahanara now reaches out to others telling them about Jesus and bringing His light into their lives.

- Let's thank God for changing Sahanara's life and, through her faith, bringing the light of Jesus to her family and others.
- Pray for the millions of Muslims in India who have never heard of Jesus, to have that opportunity.
- Praise God for mission agencies that reach out with love and hope to the lost and suffering around them. Pray for provision for everything they need, so they can continue to be a beacon of hope in their communities.

**Saturday 26th June**

### **Persecution of believers**

The Church is at a critical juncture in India and going through a very challenging time. Persecution has increased drastically in the last 5 years and over 500 churches were targeted for various levels of violence during 2018-19. Many were martyred for their faith last year. The local police turn the other way most of the time or they detain the persecuted and harassed instead.

There are plans to introduce new laws under the existing Constitution to prevent converting from Hinduism. Open Doors persecution Index lists India as tenth among the most persecuting nations in the world. It was previously in the 40's. Though there are around the same number of Christians in India as there are people in the UK, with 67.4 million Christians, it's still less than 5% of the population of India.

In the latest wave of coronavirus to hit India, Mission Network News recently reported that over a hundred church leaders had died. That number increases daily. It will take years to replace them. You can read the full article here: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/indias-latest-covid-19-wave-wipes-out-christian-leaders/>

As in so many countries today, social media, TV and radio present great opportunities in India for reaching Muslims who may never meet a follower of Jesus. Scriptures and other evangelistic ministries are increasingly available via satellite TV and the internet. There are over 210 million households that have access to a television, according to the latest figures from the Broadcast Audience Rating Council. FM radio stations are plentiful. India has the second largest number of internet users in the world, after China.

- Pray for a government and leadership that cares about the rights of minorities and in particular for the poor, uneducated and marginalised.
- Pray for persecuted believers to know the love of God and the hope God gives and be greatly encouraged by the Lord. May they have the courage to stay in their homeland.
- Let's pray that social media, TV and radio are good routes to reaching Muslims with Christian material that is available in their language and that is relevant for the situations and issues they face and for the questions they have about faith.

Sources: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/heated-debate-surrounds-indias-religious-freedom-status/>  
<https://www.mnnonline.org/news/indias-latest-covid-19-wave-wipes-out-christian-leaders/> and  
[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/tv-owning-households-in-india-grew-6-9-to-210-mln-in-two-years-barc-121041500923\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/tv-owning-households-in-india-grew-6-9-to-210-mln-in-two-years-barc-121041500923_1.html)