

Monday 3rd December

Prayer for India

As minorities in a Hindu-dominated country, many of India's Muslims live in urban slums.



Despite the fact that India is home to one third of the world's poorest people, many parts of the nation are also developing fast in the areas of information technology and access to global markets. Many describe this as a new dawn full of opportunity for innovation and business.

Communities of Frontiers workers are already established in several major Indian cities, yet hundreds more field workers are needed to reach the country's 190 million Muslims.

Frontiers teams are poised to welcome new workers, offering them intensive language courses, coaching for healthy field life, and community-based apprenticeships. These communities serve as landing pads from which newcomers can launch into fourteen identified strategic cities where there remains no gospel witness.

You might like to watch a Prayercast video of India, one of the largest and most diverse countries in the world: <https://vimeo.com/23640682>

It shows a hymn written by Daniel W Whittle in 1883. It reads:
"There will be showers of blessing; this is the promise of love,
There shall be seasons of refreshing sent from the saviour above.
There shall be showers of blessing, precious reviving again,
over the hills and valleys sound of abundant rain.
There shall be showers of blessing, oh that they might fall,
Now as to God we're confessing, now as on Jesus we call.
Showers of blessing, showers of blessing we need,
Mercy drops round us are falling but for the showers we plead."

Let's pray:

- For showers of blessing to fall on this nation, bringing new life in Jesus.
- For God to send more cross-cultural workers with business backgrounds, willing to live with the various challenges of a densely-populated, culturally diverse urban setting
- For a unified, national church in India, empowered by a fresh love for Muslims and new thinking on how to reach them with the gospel.
- That Muslim background believers would courageously serve Muslims in their own country.

Tuesday 4th December

Pashtun – an unreached people group

This people group is one of the world's 30 largest unreached people groups, as recorded by the Joshua Project.

The Pashtun live primarily in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but India once had a large Pashtun population roughly equal to that of Afghanistan. Most of this population was allotted, along with its respective provinces, to Pakistan after India gained independence from Britain in 1947 and the two countries of India and Pakistan were created. Today the Pashtun tend to live in the Punjab region of India in the north in the rugged mountain area.



Distinctive tribal customs and traditions form an integral part of Pashtun society. The true essence of their culture can be seen in the 'code of ethics' that they live by. This unwritten code is called Pushtunwali, the way of the Pashtun, and is close to the heart of every Pashtun.

The Pashtun tribes range from the highly educated who live in cities to tent-dwelling nomads. At the core of Pashtun society is the extended family. Each family group owns its land and lives in a fortified residence called a qala. Every qala is divided into two areas: a general living area and the private living quarters. A high wall in the middle separates the two areas.

The majority of Pashtun are Sunni Muslims. Islam came to them as a great liberating and unifying force, freeing them from the cult of Brahminism and the harshness of Buddhism. For this reason, their underlying faith and steadfast devotion to Islam are very strong.

- Pray that God will reveal Himself to these precious people through dreams and visions.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the gospel.
- Ask God to grant wisdom and favour to workers who are focussing on the Pashtun people

Sources: <https://joshuaproject.net/frontier/5>
<https://joshuaproject.net/assets/media/handouts/50-largest-unreached-profiles.pdf>
https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/21537/IN

Wednesday 5th December

Ansari – an unreached people group

“Exquisite!” the shopper exclaimed, holding up a beautifully designed silk fabric. Having bargained the price down for this original Ansari weaved material, the shopper left the store pleased with his purchase.

The weaving of silk is a common skill practiced among the Muslim Ansaris of India. Though they traditionally have been weavers, the Ansaris now involve themselves in other small businesses

throughout India. They number over nine million in population, with the largest number being in India's huge northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

They can trace their ancestors back to a community in Saudi Arabia called 'Ansari.' When the prophet Mohammed and his men were trying to escape from his enemies in Mecca, he was welcomed into the homes of the Ansari people in Medina. These people later became his emissaries and soldiers.

Today the Ansaris try to remain in their own group and keep marriage within the community too. Ansari women are noted for wearing bangles and beads, and in some communities they wear glass bangles, which signify that they are married. Ansaris are a supportive and friendly people, which is reflected in their name which means 'friend indeed' or 'one who helps.'

Ansaris practice Islamic law regarding daily living, but folk Islam is also a common practice which incorporates many folk beliefs into their observance of religion. There are almost no known followers of Christ among them.

- The Ansari are mostly poor and illiterate. Pray that the Muslim Ansaris will hear about Jesus and receive Him.
- The friendliness of the Ansaris can open doors for believers to develop closeness and opportunities to share the gospel. Let's pray that workers in north India will win many Ansaris to Christ.

"Surely you remember brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." 1 Thessalonians 2:9

Source: <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/issue/day/Ansari-People-of-India2/>

Thursday 6th December

The following account is from a couple in India who form part of the community of Frontiers workers:

Our city has a large Shia population. They celebrate Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar and also the Day of Ashura, which falls on the tenth day of Muharram. Ashura is part of the Mourning of Muharram for Shia Muslims. This day commemorates the death of Imam Hussain and his family, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala.

During Muharram we were invited to a friend's house when they hold a majlis (gathering). These are sad occasions when they mark the mourning of Muharram. The meetings are usually male or female only and held in people's homes or at Imabaras (meeting halls used for the majlis).

A Majlis will have someone who delivers a sermon, usually a story about one member of the family highlighting the aspects of their character that should be emulated but growing to a crescendo as they outline how they and other members of the family died. By the end of their sermon everyone is crying, some wailing, then all of a sudden one person begins the mattam (beating of the chest) in time with the lamenting songs and the crying stops. The laments are led by one person who sings a line and everyone echoes that line back while the mattam continues. As the weeks of Muharram

pass by the marks on people's chests get darker and redder. Seeing this happen to the children, who are always present, is heart breaking. There are lots of rituals that take place during a majlis, all of them symbolic of the events from the battle of Karbala.

Our hearts break as we watch friends we love dearly place their hope in the dead who can do nothing to bring them peace with God through the forgiveness of sins and faith in the resurrected King Jesus. We would love to see groups of believers meeting in these homes, praising God for their newfound salvation in Him.

So this is our prayer that we would love you to pray with us:

"Dear Father, we know it is only your power at work in our Muslim friends' hearts and minds that will bring them to an understanding of all that you have done for them. Please show them and their families your son Jesus in his risen splendour. We long for them to know the joy and peace found in knowing you in all your fullness as we gaze upon the cross. Change their hearts of sadness into hearts of joy we pray. In the name of your risen Son, Jesus. Amen."

Friday 7th December

The following account for today (and tomorrow) is from another Frontiers couple in India:

Last week we moved into a new apartment, only two streets away from where we had been living. We had to move our fans, the fridge and the oven, fit the air conditioning units, change a few pipes and fit our water filter and move all our belongings. Saleh and his friend came and helped us with the monumental task. He and his friend did all the electrical work and some other useful jobs. He is a local bijalee wala (electrician) and all round handyman whom we have used on numerous occasions over the past year.

It was on the third day of our move last week that I noticed he was struggling to bend down to pick up a screw he had dropped on the floor. As he was leaving for the day I said to him "I noticed you're in pain, can I pray for your back?" He agreed, so I asked him, "Can I pray for you now? Right now?"

"Yes, you can pray now" he replied. So I prayed a simple prayer, in the local language "Dear Jesus, I pray for my brother here, please heal him. Amen".

He was very grateful but wasn't healed instantly. The next day they had some work left to finish. Saleh's friend arrived before him. As we were sitting waiting for him he said "I want to ask you a question, can I ask you a question?"

"Yes of course, what do you want to ask me?" I replied.

"Well, well, I want to ask you, who is your God? What do you call him? Who is he?"

This led into a conversation where I attempted to explain about the one whom we put our faith and hope in. He must have been keen to understand me and for me to understand him, as a few times we hit a language barrier (he doesn't speak any English) yet he persisted in making himself understood and in understanding what I was saying. In the end I started showing him a short video, translated into the local language, which tells the story and theme of our great book.

About halfway through the video Saleh arrived. I could see instantly upon answering the door that he was in good spirits. I asked him about his back. He said: "Today it is fine, because of your prayers. Thank you".

Although nothing else happened that day, I'm sure we will see Saleh again soon (things are always breaking here!)

- Workers continue to learn and experience what it means to be salt and light. Pray that the Lord would shine through them and that His glory would be seen by all people there.
- Knowing that he was healed, let's pray for Saleh and for his friend to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour and to eagerly share their faith with others in their families and community.
- Ask God to strengthen and encourage workers, that their work will bear fruit even if they do not always see this, trusting that God is working in the spiritual realm.

Saturday 8th December

We have two ladies who are sisters, who help us out in our home with things such as childcare and keeping on top of the relentless dust that you get in a country where it doesn't rain for ten months of the year! We are grateful to God for them as without their work it wouldn't be possible for us to do much language learning, work or ministry. We have had a few opportunities to share with them; at Christmas we watched the Jesus film together, but language barriers have meant it has been difficult to get into much depth. However, we have a great God, who works through the circumstances of our lives to make his love known to others.

While we were away recently, our teammate (another foreign lady who has good local language skills) was letting our helper into our home once a week to stay on top of the dust. One day she found the older sister in some distress, as the previous night her daughter had tried to take her own life. They talked and our helper said to our friend that for her life must be so easy, coming from the West she didn't experience many of the problems that people here experience (which is true in many ways). However, that day happened to be the tenth anniversary of the death of our friend's nephew. So she was able to share with our helper that we also experience grief and loss, but also about Jesus in whom we find our comfort. This led to an opportunity for her to pray for our helper and her family circumstances.

- Pray for the two ladies who work for us as the circumstances of their lives are not easy. Pray particularly for more opportunities to share with them and their families and that they would be increasingly open to the hope that can be found in Jesus Christ.
- Pray for wisdom for us as we seek to share Christ with our neighbours. Pray that God will lead us to spend time with the people who are open to receiving His word.
- Let's ask God to bless, protect and prosper our field workers in their own lives and for all they do to advance His Kingdom.
- Let's cry out to God to raise up many more labourers to bring the light of Christ and the gospel message to this needy nation.