

OCTOBER 2024

*“Put on the new self,
created after the
likeness of God in true
righteousness and
holiness.”*

(Ephesians 4:24)

PRAYERPOINTS

SOUTH ASIAN PEOPLES

South Asia is the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism and home to one-third of the world’s Muslims. For centuries they have been in bondage to the idols they worship. Even though South Asians were created to worship God, they have turned aside and worshiped the created rather than the Creator. Yet even in the greatest concentration of lostness on the planet, God is at work. Pray with us in October, a month of many South Asian festivals. Join us in asking God to break down barriers and draw people to hunger for the one true God and worship Him alone.

NAVARATRI FESTIVAL CELEBRATES THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF A HINDU GODDESS

By Katherine McCormick, team member

Navaratri is a Hindu festival celebrating the goddess, Durga. Hindus celebrate this festival over nine days. Each day has its own name and significance. This celebration varies by region, encouraging creativity and preference of the Hindus in that region.

In Nepal, the first day of this festival begins with Hindus filling a pot with “holy” water, cow dung, and barley seeds. These seeds grow into the jamara plant that they use later in the week. The pot represents the goddess Durga, who is said to have conquered evil. A Hindu priest then performs a ritual, asking the goddess to bless the vessel with her presence. The goddess is believed to reside in the vessel during all nine days of the festival. The pot is kept in darkness. The ritual of adding holy water is done twice a day until the seventh day, when the pot and plant are



A Hindu priest in Nepal. IMB Photo.

taken with banana leaves in a procession to a holy place.

As Hindus observe this festival season, please pray for them to hear and understand the Word of God. Pray that God would send out His Word among Hindus.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION STORY

Last year you prayed for Muslims who rely on blood sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. Praise God that across South Asia, many believers have been trained to share the gospel through Bible stories about sacrifice, including Jesus as the one true sacrifice who has covered all our sin. God is using His children to proclaim truth boldly, and Muslims across South Asia are choosing to follow Him.

NAR SEEK PURITY THROUGH DANGEROUS RITUAL, NEED THE TRUE SAVIOR

In the remote mountain villages of Kullu Valley in northern India, Hindu villagers celebrate the Kahika Mela festival by trying to be cleansed of their sins. The Kahika is viewed as the most potent purification rite, culminating with the symbolic sacrifice and resurrection of a Nar person conducting the ceremony.

The Nar are an unengaged, unreached group of 200-400 people in these Hindu villages. They are known for conducting the famous Kahika Mela ritual. They believe themselves to be special descendants of heavenly beings, even above some gods. They only marry within their caste in order to preserve the purity of their heritage. Near-culture Hindus view the Nar as expendable and



Short-term volunteers talk with a monk while distributing invitations to an English club at a nearby cafe in a Tibetan Buddhist area of Kathmandu, Nepal. IMB Photo.



A woman holds onto a colorful scarf as she walks in northern India during a Hindu festival. IMB Photo.

only valued for their authority and expertise to conduct the dangerous Kahika ritual. Nar are not even allowed in the temples other than during the Kahika Mela festival.

The timing of the festival appears to be random, sometimes only every few years, whenever the false gods inform the Nar when the ritual must be conducted. During this dangerous ritual, the chosen Nar is put into an unconscious state as a "sacrifice" for the people to then be awakened as a symbolic resurrection. But sometimes, the person does not wake up.

In a recent survey of the Nar, workers found that none of the Nar from multiple villages had ever heard the gospel before. Please pray for a local Christian who plans to keep visiting this people to share the gospel. Ask for a breakthrough so that many will turn to Jesus, the only one who can truly purify them of their sins by His final, atoning sacrifice.

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE SOUTH ASIAN PEOPLES



On average, each IMB South Asia missionary has the task of engaging almost 5 million lost people in South Asia.



South Asia has over 900 UUPGs, which is approximately 1/3 of the world's remaining UUPGs.



42,881 people in South Asia die daily without Christ, many who have never heard the true gospel.

Subscribe!

For a free email subscription, go to imb.org/prayer-points
For a free print subscription, call (800) 999-3113.

Find more prayer resources on imb.org/pray and in the IMB Pray app!

Some names may have been changed for security reasons. BI 14M 8/24 P7701-10

**REACHING
THE NATIONS,
TOGETHER.**

1 PARDHI OF INDIA. The Pardhi are known as thieves and robbers, but some have chosen to follow Christ and changed their ways. They tell their testimonies honestly as they share the gospel with others. Ask God to move and bring people to salvation through the witness of Pardhi believers.

2 SOUTH ASIA. Gayla meets with believers for Bible study and worship in a Muslim country with strict laws prohibiting gospel witness. Pray that Gayla and others like her will reject Islam and worldly desires in exchange for the truth and eternal life in Jesus.

3 DASHAIN FESTIVAL. Dashain is the largest Hindu festival in Nepal. Mainly from October 3-16 this year, Nepalis will celebrate a Hindu god conquering demons. Pray for Nepalis to be drawn to the only God who is truly good and has already won the victory over death and hell.

4 KARACHI, PAKISTAN. The largest city in Pakistan, Karachi is a melting pot of peoples from all over the country. In this city of 16 million, Christians make up less than 0.05% of the population. Pray for God to encourage these believers and to help them be bold in their witness.

5 ASHWINA NAVAPADA OLI. Navapada Oli is a nine-day Jain festival celebrated by reading, meditating, and reciting holy songs. Pray for Jains to turn to God, meditate on His Word, and sing to Him with grateful hearts (Colossians 3:16 ESV).

6 REFRESHMENT. Attacking lostness is a difficult task. During the summer, many believers

met together for refreshment and encouragement. Ask God to continue to remind them of His refreshing Spirit, so that "[they] can do all things through Him who strengthens [them]." (Phil. 4:13 ESV)

7 KAMPO OF INDIA. The Kampo of India are a Hindu group of 1.6 million people. They have been held in the grip of the enemy for thousands of years. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into this field (Luke 10:2) so that the Kampo would experience the freedom only found in Jesus.

8 BHUTAN. Followers of Jesus in Bhutan can sense the spiritual warfare and oppression in the Buddhist country. Pray that believers in Bhutan will put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-17) daily so that they can stand firm in Him.

9 PUNE, INDIA. Believers in Pune are prayerwalking in all 58 areas of the city this year. As they pray and engage people in gospel conversations, pray that God would guide their steps and words, and give them many opportunities to make Him known. Pray for Him to transform lives in Pune!

10 ROHINGYA. Jamar is a Rohingya believer in a refugee community and is involved in a weekly Bible study. Pray for his growth as a disciple and for new opportunities to share Christ among the Rohingya. Pray that many Rohingya will find salvation in Christ and citizenship in heaven.

11 ARASU OF INDIA. The Arasu are a wealthier community connected to the traditional royal family of India. They are devout Hindus and unreached with the

gospel. Pray that the Spirit will lead many Arasu to see the depth of their need for Jesus and bow to Him as the King of kings.

12 VIJAYA DASHAMI FESTIVAL. On this festival day in Nepal, elders of the family give money and blessings to the younger family members. Please pray for believers to share the blessing of knowing Christ with their family, understanding that He is the source of all joy.

13 CROSSING CULTURES. Christians in an isolated South Asian tribe have sound biblical doctrine. Praise the Lord that these Christians are expressing willingness to leave their villages and go to other parts of South Asia to share the gospel cross-culturally among unreached peoples.

14 INDIA. Praise God for a women's Bible study in northeastern India that has been meeting for over three years! Many in this diverse group have believed. Pray that every woman in this group will continue growing in joy, faith, and boldness in sharing the gospel.

15 GOSPEL PURITY. In the last two years, scores of South Asian churches have been trained to combat false gospels and share the true gospel. Pray that God will continue to protect the purity of His gospel in South Asian churches and to deepen believers' commitment to His Word.

16 PRAISE. Please pray that God is using Asif in a mighty way to embolden other believers who used to be Muslims to share the gospel. Asif boldly shares his testimony with Muslims and trains South Asian believers to share the

gospel. Pray for protection and favor for Asif and those he has trained.

17 CROSS CULTURAL TEAMS. Pray for these multi-cultural teams in South Asia as they overcome cultural barriers to share the gospel together. Pray also for the churches who send them, that they will grow in praying for and sending more workers to the harvest fields in South Asia.

18 SHIA MUSLIMS. Shia Muslims are 25% of the total Muslim population of India. Pray for gospel laborers to gain a heart for this people group and share the gospel with them. Pray for believers with a Shia background to boldly share their newfound faith with their friends and neighbors.

19 GANGAI OF NEPAL. Praise God for the Gangai fellowship in Nepal that started gathering a year ago and recently self-identified as a church. Pray that they will continue to grow deeply in the Lord and to share the gospel with those around them. Ask God for wisdom as they appoint leaders.

20 GURU GRANTH SAHIB. Today, Sikhs celebrate and honor their sacred text, the Guru Granth Sahib. Pray that Sikhs would honor the Bible instead and understand the truths in God's Word. Ask that they will see Christ as the final authority and give Him the honor He is due.

21 CHENNAI, INDIA. Pray for believers in each district of Chennai to grow and multiply as they disciple others, despite the challenges in getting around the densely populated city. Ask God to raise up local ministry leaders in each district.

22 DOGRA OF INDIA. The Dogra are an unreached people group in India with a strong history of military service. Most Dogra are Hindus. Pray for the Lord to raise up workers to focus on reaching this people group and that the Dogra would one day be good soldiers of Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

23 KHULNA, BANGLADESH. With 17 million people, Khulna is the third largest city in Bangladesh. Nicknamed "gateway to the Sundarbans" for the forests where the Bengal tigers lived, pray that the Khulna will also become the "gateway to the gospel" as God calls believers to reach the Khulna.

24 BHUTAN. As Bhutanese leaders travel abroad for biblical training, ask God to help them use their training in outreach to their home communities. Pray for these to "Become an example to all the believers... [that their] faith in God has gone forth everywhere" (1Thess 1:8).

25 CASTE SYSTEM. The Indian caste system can cause barriers to the gospel spreading. Pray the Holy Spirit will break down cultural barriers and compel Indian Christians with the love of Jesus to proclaim assurance of salvation in Christ to people of other castes.

26 CROSSING CULTURES. Local leaders in South Asia are catching a vision to share the gospel beyond their own communities. Though surrounded by lostness, they grasp the Great Commission call to all nations. Pray for them as they lead groups of believers to share the gospel in other places.

27 TONDMAN OF INDIA. The Tondman are a Hindu unengaged, unreached people group. Newborns receive their names from an elderly woman 16 days after they are born. Pray that, one day, these women will give Christian names to babies because they have seen God's salvation.

28 SRI LANKA. God is moving among Sri Lankans! The gospel has spread broadly among the people, and believers have been trained in sharing the gospel. Pray that their faith will deepen and the fruit of the gospel will spread and mature as they share in their communities.

29 CARING FOR THE NEEDY. As many South Asian churches care for people in slum communities through education, healthcare, and addiction recovery programs, pray that more will join the work, sharing the gospel and love of Christ in word and deed.

30 TIHAR FESTIVAL. When they die, Hindus believe they will begin a fateful journey alone and will be judged by the god Yama. During Tihar, Nepalese Hindus reflect on death. Pray God will soften their hearts to receive the gospel and Christians will share the good news of eternal life.

31 DIWALI FESTIVAL. During Diwali, the "Festival of Lights," Hindus celebrate two Hindu gods and the victory of good over evil. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world..." (John 8:12). During Diwali, pray many Hindus will receive new life from Jesus, the Light of Life.