

# INDIA

The Indian subcontinent is the birthplace of Eastern religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism, each with its own rich history and shared traditions like reincarnation and karma. And India, with its 1.4 billion inhabitants, of which 80% are Hindu, is home to 94% of the world’s Hindu population—and growing. India’s most famous citizen, Mahatma Gandhi, is still celebrated today as a key figure of nonviolent resistance. His Hindu values led him to respect other religions, including Christianity, and foster Hindu-Muslim unity.



However, though India once prided itself on interfaith tolerance and pluralism, it no longer holds Gandhi’s approach to religions. Instead, under its current leadership of Narendra Modi, religious persecution is increasingly widespread, with discriminatory laws and communal violence targeting minority faith groups common.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India since 2014, has rooted his polarizing governance in Hindu Nationalism, an ideology elevating Hindu traditions over others and espousing hate towards minority religions, particularly Muslims. Individuals supporting this vision have used inflammatory language in political speeches and via social media. For instance, during one recent rally, Modi referred to Indian Muslims as “infiltrators.” Other examples include speakers inciting mob violence online through misinformation campaigns (e.g., viral WhatsApp messages), and failing to condemn targeted attacks on Muslims—even lynchings. Reports also highlight looting and destruction of Christian homes and churches.

India is the world’s largest democracy, with elections currently underway. Modi’s party, the BJP, has passed a slew of “anti-conversion laws” in 13 of India’s 28 states that are often violently enforced. Should his BJP party win an absolute majority in the Indian parliament, observers fear the few remaining minority protections will be removed. One project of Hindu nationalists is to create apostasy laws that limit, or prohibit, conversion from Hinduism to other faiths, particularly Christianity and Islam, requiring individuals wishing to convert to submit “formal notification” to the state government for approval.

Notably, India’s anti-conversion laws also target interfaith marriages, where derogatory provisions aim to prevent interfaith unions, particularly Hindu women with Muslim men, and carry punishments of up to ten years imprisonment, hefty fines, or both. Simran Sagar, for example, a 22-year-old Hindu woman, has been forced to cross state lines to marry her fiancé, a Muslim man, after the couple were harassed for their interfaith relationship since India’s government labels such unions forced conversions, or “love jihad.”

Actual forced conversions occur but usually carried out by Hindu nationalists against Christians or Muslims. These events are labeled ghar wapsi or “homecoming” to signify reconvert back to Hinduism (believing all were once Hindu before colonialism). Indeed, some Hindu activists have even organized mass “reconversion camps” where allegations of violence and threats forcing individuals to change faith are common.



One of the greatest concerns in India is the recent religious and ethnic violence in the state of Manipur in northeast India. In Manipur, an estimated 70,000 people have fled in the last year due to systematic attacks reported against Christian and ethnic minority communities, specifically the Kuki-Zo and Meitei people. Allegations of torture, rape, and the burning of complete villages are common.

Alarming levels of religious harassment and persecution are occurring across India—through discriminatory laws, hateful rhetoric against non-Hindus, and organized attacks generated online—which may accelerate if the BJP wins an outright majority in the Indian parliament.

## JUNE SCRIPTURES

### John 16:33

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. **But take heart! I have overcome the world.**”

### Isaiah 30:18

“Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. **For the Lord is a God of justice.** Blessed are all who wait for him!”

## PRAYER

Lord, in your steadfast love, hear our prayers today for the nation of India. Hear our prayers for assistance for the men, women, and children persecuted for their faith. We pray specifically against the power of political ideologies that incite hate and that you would empower and protect Indian activists bravely pushing back against the hateful laws that have been created. We pray against the spirit of Hindu nationalism that has clouded hearts and minds and created an environment of religious intolerance, especially towards Christians, Muslims and ethnic minorities.

Lord Jesus, be with those persecuted for converting to Christianity, that your Holy Spirit would strengthen them today and give them the faith and hope needed to withstand the harassment or abuse. Physically keep them safe, Lord. And spiritually renew their minds and hearts with your perfect peace. We pray also for others persecuted for exploring new faiths through the freedom of conscience you have bestowed on humanity. **You, Lord, care for all of your creation, both their well-being and their freedom to believe.**

And Lord, we pray for your mighty hand to be on the state of Manipur, that you would stir us to remain diligent in prayer and supplication for the individuals and families left stateless, for those who have lost loved ones due to the violent attacks against their communities, and for the women who are left feeling hopeless from assaults. Give them hope. Give them physical and spiritual strength. For the Christian communities whose churches have been burned and leaders attacked, we pray your Holy Spirit would fill their hearts today with the assurance of eternity and what your Word promises: that in this world, though we face trouble and persecution, even unto death, **you have overcome the world.** Amen.

