Dear Praying Friends,

Every year we devote August, September, and October to praying for the unreached peoples in South Asian countries such as India and those nations surrounding it except for Pakistan. There is a good reason for this: one-third of the world’s unreached peoples live in this area!

But there are things we need to remember. One is that the high, and so-called “forward” castes in this area are among the most unreached peoples in the world. Lower castes, often because of their lack of status or privilege, are much more likely to respond to the One who seeks those who recognize that they are spiritually poor and in need of a loving shepherd.

We last prayed for Odisha in 2009, when it was still called Orissa. This Indian state that borders West Bengal and Bihar is experiencing rapid church growth, thanks to efforts by Indian believers. You will want to read about that in the background article and in days four and five. We can thank God for His abundant mercy on the people of Odisha. Our Bible verses this month will help you to meditate on His mercy as you pray.

God is on the move in India, and it’s affecting what was previously hard soil against the seeds of the gospel in the northern states. Will you pray for the soil to soften, so that there will be a great harvest among the forward castes we intercede for this month?

Keith Carey, editor-in-chief, GPD

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Pray for a Disciple-Making Movement Among Every People in Odisha, India
Living Water and Indian Bowl
An Analysis of Christian Failings in Communicating Christ to Hindus, with Suggestions Towards Improvements

This is an insightful analysis based on personal experience of Christian work among Hindus and the error and inadequacy of Western Christianity in the Hindu world. Numerous anecdotes are the greatest strength of this important book. “He presents the transcultural Good News in culturally understandable ways for the India of the 21st century.” –H. Stanley Wood, Center for New Church Development, Columbia Theological Seminary

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**Devotional Ideas**  
How can you make the most of this prayer digest:

- Some people use it as a supplement to their regular devotional time.

- Others enjoy reading and praying around the dinner table with the entire family.

- We encourage you to gather monthly with other Christian friends who are involved in this movement.

Every day at the top of the page you’ll find the name of an unreached people group for which to pray. The small maps will help you locate the day’s feature.
The Unique Peoples of Odisha

Odisha in eastern India is in some ways typical of India. Yet in other ways it is different. In this article we will explore how this came about.

The early history of human settlements in Odisha is shrouded in mystery. Archeologists have found stone-age tools in this Indian state by the Bay of Bengal. Hindu literature says much about the coming of the first people to Odisha. These stories mention clashes between those who were already there and newly arrived settlers. The accuracy of those stories is in question. Many of these myths involve the actions of Hindu gods such as Krishna.
A History Marked by Division and Conquest

Historians don’t know when the first Oriya speaking people groups settled in Odisha. What they do know is that there were many petty states in the region, and that these states clashed in frequent wars. The ruins of many Hindu temples dot the landscape of Odisha. Hinduism was the dominant religion of this region prior to 261 B.C.

By 261 B.C. Kalinga was the largest of the petty states that dotted the political landscape. That year Emperor Ashoka of the Mauran Empire conquered Kalinga. That war was very bloody, and the horror of the fighting sent Ashoka on a quest for spiritual truth. That quest led to his conversion to Buddhism.

Subsequently conversions became common in Odisha. But this changed after 150 A.D., when a northern army, led by Emperor Kharavela, conquered the Mauran Empire. The new rulers were Hindus, and the people of Odisha gradually converted back to Hinduism. Kharavela’s empire didn’t last long. It
quickly fragmented into numerous petty states. Odisha would remain divided for many centuries after that.

During the 1500s the Sultanate of Bengal began conquering Odisha. In 1568 Kalinga became the last of these states to be conquered by neighboring Bengal to its north. Bengal was controlled by the Mughal Empire. The Mughal emperor divided the Oriya speaking regions among his various vassals.

During the 1800s the British took control of India. In 1912 the British redrew the state boundaries, and the states of Bihar and Orissa were formed that year. In 1936 the state of Orissa was split off from Bihar, giving the Oriya speaking people groups a state of their own.

In 1947 India became independent, and the new national government changed the boundaries of Orissa when several local princes agreed to merge their states into Orissa. In 2011 the national government would rename Orissa “Odisha.”
Odisha Today

In recent years Odisha has suffered from droughts and heat waves. In the summer of 2014, 2000 people died of heat stroke in Odisha.

Today Odisha has the highest percentage of Hindus in any Indian state. Odisha's population is 92 percent Hindu. Christians make up less than two percent of that state’s population; this is common in India’s northern states. Christians are also the fastest growing minority in Odisha. Between 2001 and 2011 the Christian population grew by 478 percent, far faster than the other states of the north. What happens if the Christian population continues to grow in Odisha? Will religious tolerance continue to be the rule?

Despite the overwhelming Hindu majority, Odisha is known for religious tolerance. Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims often live in the same villages. Also, the caste system isn’t fully enforced in Odisha. People from different castes mingle more freely here than in most of the other Indian states.

This tolerance even extends to tourists. Each year thousands of Buddhists make pilgrimages to Odisha which has several Buddhist shrines dating back to the days when this state had a significant Buddhist population. The Hindu residents of Odisha have left these pilgrims alone.

Pray for Odisha!

• Pray for the gospel to continue to spread in Odisha without interference from militant adversaries.

• Pray for a disciple-making movement among every forward caste group in Odisha. The forward castes (or higher-status castes) are almost always the least likely to embrace the gospel for numerous reasons.

• Ask God to lead a mission agency to target every unreached people group in Odisha for outreach. Pray for faithful workers to take the message of salvation to these people groups.

• Ask God to break the hold that Hinduism has on this state. May the people of Odisha come to see Jesus Christ as being better than any Hindu god.
“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”... And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.

Pray that just as John learned love from Jesus, missionaries will learn to love the lost, and show such love even to those who are hard to love.

RAC Paul, a Tamil Indian born in 1941, had the unusual combination of bad health and arrogance. He came from a God-fearing Christian family in Tamil Nadu, India, and their prayers saved him from the jaws of death when he was a youth. After God healed him, he began to get into mischief. It wasn’t until he was in veterinary school that he finally surrendered his life to Christ after facing another crisis with his frequent kidney problems.

Because he was so sickly, he spent much of his time reading, and he had no problem graduating with high grades in 1963. But he also read missionary biographies, and was inspired to work with the tribal peoples in India.

While working at his first job as a veterinarian, Paul came in contact with the Indian Missionary Society (IMS), a group that made it their policy to use only Indian national workers and accept only domestic funds. One of the ways they funded their work was through the “handful of rice movement” where their women would set aside a handful of their rice each day, sell it, and use the money to fund mission work. The IMS was starting a new mission effort in southern Orissa (now called Odisha) among people from the Koya and Bondo tribes. Paul talked with his church leaders and those of the IMS, and they agreed to send him.

Pray for God to use people from Christian backgrounds for His glory.—KC

Day 1
Jn 13:34, 2 Jn 1:5 NKJV

Missionary Biography, RAC Paul

RAC Paul, a Tamil Indian born in 1941, had the unusual combination of bad health and arrogance. He came from a God-fearing Christian family in Tamil Nadu, India, and their prayers saved him from the jaws of death when he was a youth. After God healed him, he began to get into mischief. It wasn’t until he was in veterinary school that he finally surrendered his life to Christ after facing another crisis with his frequent kidney problems.

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Pray for God to use people from Christian backgrounds for His glory.—KC
“T
he educated people probably won’t like you.
The uneducated will be afraid of you. …
You’ll need the Holy Spirit to guide you at every
turn.” Thus warned IMS workers when RAC Paul
first went to a tribal group.

Paul used his veterinary skills to help tribal
people with their livestock. Though there was a
huge cultural gap between him and his audience,
Paul managed to make the lessons of Christ
understandable to people in the tribal setting. For
example he preached to people who were collecting
water about the Water of Life.

As he gathered a small number of tribal believers, a
local teacher who belonged to the Hindu militant
RSS derisively told RAC Paul that if he could
“change that useless fellow Babulal, this whole
village will be transformed.” Paul proceeded to
win Babulal, who was a hopeless drunk, and the
transformation that came about won Babulal’s wife
to Christ. This former drunk became an evangelist
to his Santali people!

There were many tribes to reach in Orissa, including
the Bondo and Koya people. The Koya people were
so used to being taken advantage of by outsiders
that it was very hard to make contact with them.
Merchants cheated these people who never learned
to count beyond 20, and government employees
fined them for offenses they never committed. RAC
Paul began to go to the markets with Koya people to
protect them from being cheated.

Pray that Christ’s ambassadors in India will boldly
stand up for justice.—KC
Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

*Thank the Lord for the work that Reaching Hand Society is doing to help those that the world despises.*

**“If I could get a confident girl like her for my wife, she would be a great help to my work,”** mused RAC Paul, as he watched Iris Walter leave a church service on her motor scooter. This strong-willed woman convinced her parents that RAC was her man. They married in 1972, and began their ministry in Odisha.

The couple labored among the Koya people. Eventually, they both felt the call to go to the Bondo tribe, but IMS had no work among them. So they began work with the India Evangelical Mission (IEM) in 1973. RAC’s health deteriorated, and he spent his final years doing Bible translation work for the Bondos.

After her husband died, Iris decided to buck the cultural norms of India that limited widows. She now inspires widows to make the most of their lives. She came to the realization that it is even better to prevent disease than to merely treat it. The people needed clean water projects and vaccinations. In order to protect themselves from being cheated in the marketplace, they needed to learn math and reading skills. Dr. Iris is directing Reaching Hand Society to help tribal people to help themselves in these areas. ([https://indiapartners.org/mission-vision/](https://indiapartners.org/mission-vision/))

*Pray for more laborers for Reaching Hand Society in Odisha. Pray they will be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.—KC*

*(Taken from Pioneering on the Pinda, by Beulah Wood and Lalitha Chellappa, 1998).*
Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.
Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever. Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever:
To Him who alone does great wonders, for His mercy endures forever; to Him who by wisdom made the heavens, for His mercy endures forever…

Training to Reach Unreached People Groups

Have you ever wondered why we devote three months out of the year to pray for South Asia? The reason is that fully one-third of the unreached people groups in the world live in this region, and this does not include Pakistan’s unreached people groups which we often cover in November! Most of India’s northern states are unengaged, unreached people groups, meaning that not only do they not have a viable church of their own, but there are no missionaries among them. Thus the term “UUPG,” meaning unengaged, unreached people groups. It’s a daunting task and without God, it would be humanly impossible.

The Indian believers are hard at work trying to make sure that their Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh neighbors have the chance to join God’s eternal family. One group trained over 5,000 potential evangelists and church planters last year, and they are in the process of training another 3,000 this year.

Since 2010, they have started evangelistic work among 181 unreached people groups in India’s northern states! Over 5,000 people from non-Christian backgrounds have dedicated their lives to the loving Savior.

Thank the Lord for His abundant mercy to the people of India!

Pray for the Holy Spirit to move among every people group being reached by these Indian believers. Pray for the protection of the new believers from any satanic backlash that may threaten to undo the Lord’s work. Pray that these efforts will result in spiritual transformation of India’s highly unreached northern states.—KC
I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father’s God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war; The LORD is His name.

Pray God’s mercy to lead the peoples of northern India to their redeemer!

Are you good at multiplying numbers? Church planters in India are! There is a network called “Bless Ganges Connection” (BGC) which is reaching out with the gospel to five of India’s unreached northern states which contain 450 million people. Last year those associated with this network planted 2,107 churches and baptized over 12,300 people. Since that time most of these fellowships have multiplied several times over, some as many as 16 times! Potentially new churches can do the same with a massive cascading effect that will certainly change India.

There are now 300 indigenous leaders working with the BGC network as teachers and Bible trainers. It’s very possible that more indigenous leaders will join their ranks in the years to come so that millions will be able to hear that Jesus saves sinners.

But the effort will require much prayer. We know that the faster churches grow, the easier it is for people to stray from biblical truth and for false teachers to scatter the flock.

Thank the Lord for the rapid church growth that is happening in northern India! Pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to every pastor and church planter so that they will understand and teach His ways to new believers. Pray for the Lord to continue this church planting movement in such a way that it cannot be stopped. Pray for the Holy Spirit to move powerfully in a conference BGC is having this coming November.—KC
The Chinese couple was enjoying their visit to Puri located on the Bay of Bengal in India's eastern state of Odisha. Added to their excitement was the fact that the Hindu festival of ratha (chariot) yatra (journey) was about to start.

Amar, an Utkala Brahmin priest, had told them that the festival centered around the Hindu god Jagannatha and his siblings. Amar mentioned that he would join the other Utkala priests to perform the rituals honoring Jagannatha. The deities are cleansed, dressed, and moved a distance of about one and a half miles within the city of Puri from the Jagannatha temple (one of the holiest Hindu shrines in India) to their original “home” which is the Gunidcha Temple. The gods are placed on decorated, wheeled chariots which are pulled through the streets by hundreds of Hindu priests and devotees. Nine days later they are paraded back to Jagannatha temple, adorned with new, beautiful gold ornaments. Here they will stay for another year. During this time the people celebrate Jagannatha, pray, and enjoy the festival with food, dances, and singing.

Utkala Brahmins make up about nine percent of the Oriya speaking population of Odisha.

Pray that the Utkala Brahmins will seek and find the God who carries us rather than needing to be carried by devotees. Pray that they will come to know that only the God of the Bible should be praised for His great mercy and love.—PD
And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands were broken off on the threshold; only Dagon’s torso was left of it.

Pray that the Sadangi Brahmins will understand that all other gods are powerless before the God of Abraham.

There was a strong smell of incense in the room as Ultam, a Sadangi Brahmin, began to place various offerings of food before his favorite Hindu deities. These deities included: Brahma the creator; Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, music and the arts; Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity; Shiva, the transformer of mankind; and Ganesh, the remover of obstacles. He then sat down on the floor and began chanting and reciting ritual teachings from the Vedas, the sacred Hindu texts. “O Brahma, lead us from the unreal to the real. O Brahma, lead us from darkness to light. O Brahma, lead us from death to immortality.” Then staring at Lakshmi he bowed to her, rang a small bell and prayed, “Give me good weather so I will have good crops.” He then lit the oil in a lamp, and the soaring flames made him think the collection of gods heard his prayers.

Sadangi Brahmins primarily live and work as farmers along the coastal and delta areas of India’s state of Odisha. They are classified as a subgroup of the Utkala Brahmins we prayed for yesterday. Like the Utkala, most of them faithfully pray to their Hindu gods. Some are priests recognizing the Hindu festivals and are devotees to the Hindu writings of the Vedas.

Pray that their eyes will be open so they will know the glorious truth of God and His great gift of forgiveness, salvation, and light.—PD
There was a shocking article written on May 19, 2008 in *An Oriya Voice*. It pointed out that two communities in Odisha hold almost all the power. It’s easy to guess the first one: The Brahmins. The second one was the ancient, scholarly Karan community.

Who are the Karan people? We know that they have held economic and political power for centuries in Odisha just as they do today. According to *Wikipedia*, the Karan caste has historically had knowledge in the field of accounting and management of land revenue. Such abilities will help any caste to rise, no matter what century it may be. India has always needed people who can manage a land revenue system.

This caste is often hated in India because they have so much power over so many people’s wealth. Many Indians view them the same way the Jewish people during the time of Christ, viewed tax collectors. Karans can easily force people to pay them extra revenue which they can take for themselves. For this reason it is no shock when a Karan member is killed in rural India.

Pray that these people will learn from Matthew, the tax collector in the Bible, about the Savior who took him from a life of legal theft to a life filled with meaning. Pray that their hearts will open wide to Jesus. Pray for communities of Karan believers to form throughout Odisha.—KC
When Santosh was reading his high school history book, he found something puzzling. Thinking that his grandfather had been around since the days when India first became a civilization, he asked him questions about their people, the Routray Brahmins.

“Grandpa, we are Brahmins, so that should make us part of the priestly caste. Traditionally we were military officers, so that should make us Kshatriya.” Grandpa told Santosh, “Our history is long, and the caste system has changed. It used to be that Brahmins were all priests, but now all of us know Brahmins who are software engineers. Today almost anyone can join the military; it’s not limited to one caste anymore.”

Santosh then showed his grandfather a Wikipedia site on his iPad about two people with the surname Routray; this indicates that they are from their community. “Grandpa, here are two people with the same name we have, so they must also be Routray Brahmins. One was a poet, and the other was a politician. What gives?”

The Routray have a lot of options concerning what they can do; but there is one thing which Brahmins do not allow. That is the option to follow Christ. Almost all evangelistic efforts have been aimed at low caste communities, so most Christians are now from those groups. It is a stigma for any Brahmin, Routray or otherwise, to embrace the Savior.

Pray for Christ’s ambassadors to go to the Routray Brahmins and share the knowledge of God in a way they can understand.—KC

Pray that the Routray Brahmins will love God and others in this way.
And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. . . . The LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers.

Pray that the Jogi communities will warm the heart of God by loving Him in return for all His love He is pouring through them to their neighbors.

Shahina worked with her brothers to pose her father in the correct position, sitting cross-legged with his head turned north. “There, I think that’s it,” she exclaimed. “Hand me the gourd of milk, the bread, and the earthen vessels.” Placing them carefully around the body they left the tomb satisfied that their father’s soul would be sustained in the afterlife.

Shahina’s family are Jogis, which means they practice yoga, believing that if they gain control over their fleshly desires, mind, and their will, they will have power to control nature and potentially become divine.

Shahina’s father was a master of yoga and wore large pierced earrings proclaiming his position. Her brothers must study for 12 years to obtain this honor. The Jogis believe they will obtain unity with a supreme being through their physical exercises and disciplines. The Jogis speak several languages as they are drawn from many tribes and joined by their common devotion to yoga. Shiva is their god. The “work” of the Jogis often consists of begging, telling fortunes, divination, and swindling people by selling cheap jewelry as gold.

Pray that there will be enough Christian workers called by God to take the gospel to the Jogis. There are no known followers of Christ among them.—PE
Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Pray that as members of India’s snake charming communities embrace the Savior, they will allow His words to penetrate their hearts and souls.

Denra, the flute player, played a mesmerizing song which coaxed the cobra from the woven basket. His entire income depended on the hooded snake, swaying to the movement of the flute. His wife, Sarla, arrived to bring him lunch just as two young Christian workers they met weeks earlier stopped to invite them to a lunch-time Bible study under a nearby mangrove tree.

One young man opened his Bible to read of one ordinary person after another who was used by God in His kingdom. Sarla was startled to learn that some of the people he mentioned were women. She leaned forward, tears streaming from her eyes, hearing of one woman after another who became a servant of God.

After the Bible study Denra accompanied Sarla to speak to the young men. She stuttered through her tears how she never felt that a woman could do anything—yet this God used them in His kingdom as equals to men. Sarla and Denra gave their lives to Jesus Christ that day, renouncing their god of the cobra, recognizing that Almighty God through Jesus was the lover of their souls. They are not alone: In the last year 68 families from snake charming communities have turned to Jesus, while 19 families from other castes have joined them in worshiping Christ in new fellowships.

Pray for spiritual growth and protection for these precious believers. Pray that they will remain faithful to the Lord no matter what comes their way.—PE
Marlu weakly opened the door with her small eleven-year-old frame. A census worker stood before her with his official badge. “Where is your husband?” he demanded. “He is dead. I am a widow,” she muttered, looking at the floor. The census worker recorded her answer. “What god do you follow?” he said gruffly. “I am a Christian,” she said, with her eyes locked onto his. The census worker asked, “Are there other children in this house?” “I am too young to have a child. No, there is no child,” the girl responded.

The Kalingi caste lives mostly in Odisha. The quarter-million Kalingi are primarily temple priests and farmers. They are known for the practice of taking child brides and for the severe persecution of Christians. They have had the entire Bible in their language for generations, yet most Kalingi people reject Jesus. According to the official Indian census there are a few Kalingi who claim to follow Christ despite the suffering.

Pray that this caste may see and receive the light of the loving Savior. Pray that God will draw them to the Word, that they may repent, and their girls may be protected from childhood marriage. Pray that the principalities and powers over the Kalingi will be defeated in the name of Jesus Christ. Pray that the handful of believers will stand firm in their faith.—PE
The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments…. 

Pray that God’s mighty outpouring of His love through Jesus Christ will flow through the Rajputs to all the peoples of Odisha.

The maharajas (meaning “Great King” in Hindi) date to long before Great Britain entered India. They were once the kings of this ancient land. They are a proud autonomous people, treated royally even during colonial days. Bravery and honor are their highest values. Though most are Hindu, some practice other religions, but almost none call Jesus their Lord. It has been this way for centuries.

Reaching the Rajputs would be enhanced by knowledge of India’s history and experience with the caste system. Long-standing traditions as well as spiritual forces keep the Rajputs away from the Savior no matter where they live. The road to reaching the Rajputs not only involves the intellect and the will, but also the spirit.

In God’s economy there are no overlooked peoples. No one born escapes His notice. He is Lord over all creation, and He will find some from each people, including every Rajput community.

Claim the Rajputs of Odisha for the kingdom. “Not-yet-Christ followers” rather than “non-believers” is a place to begin the faith journey toward reconciliation with the Creator.

Pray against spiritual unrest in Odisha State, home of many Rajputs. Ask the savior for a living, identifiable church among Rajputs to flourish in this restless state. Pray for a disciple-making movement among every Rajput community in India.—ED
Khandayat Brahmins

Have you heard of any Brahmin group that is noted for their military skills? Today you will—they are the “Khandayats,” which means “master of the sword.” These 1,200,000 people were adept at keeping foreigners out of their land, at least until the British occupied India in the 19th century.

Traditionally they proudly served their Hindu gods such as Kali and Vishnu while protecting their sacred land. Today they are known to proselytize their Hindu religion to non-Hindus. Embracing any other religious belief system is extremely rare among this exclusive community that will not marry anyone below their caste.

The Khandayat today occupy much of Odisha State. Many of them shun contact with Christ-followers. Militant individuals among the Khandayat have reportedly destroyed church buildings and severely persecuted known believers. This makes the Khandayat not only resistant to Christian influence, but also capable of bringing harm to those who may convert them to Christ.

Pray for the penetration of Khandayat hearts so that they can receive the gospel. Uphold the believers who seek to actively share God’s love with this people group. Claim His protection and ask for wisdom as believers make contacts. Pray that any antagonistic atmosphere will disappear over time. Pray that the Khandayat children will have an opportunity to know Christ. Pray that contact with the outside world will result in many Christ-centered fellowships among the Khandayat Brahmins.—ED

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, “For Thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Pray that the Khandayat Brahmins will receive God’s mercy, and share it with others.

Rom. 8:28, 35-39, RSV
Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.”

Pray that the Agarias and other agrarian peoples of Odisha will soon understand that they must depend on God to provide essential rain for their crops.

Nestled away in northeastern India is a small region occupied by nine tribes that are very closely related despite their differences. Today we will pray for the Agarias, one of these tribes.

Although official origins are hard to discern, according to their traditions the Agaria people are descended from Rajputs living near Delhi. Most of the population is agricultural in nature, though for an unknown reason they refuse to grow turmeric, onions, garlic, san-hemp, or tomatoes. Today governmental efforts to preserve the forests limit cultivation, giving them cause to find other sources of income. These can include working on tea plantations, in the steel industry, or as day laborers.

Hinduism is the official religion of the Agarias, and Dulha Deo is the family god. On special days they will worship the tools of cultivation as well as the sword. Cows also are held in great reverence. Agarias have a spiritual guide who whispers to them a sacred verse and is available for consultation. There are very few followers of Christ among the Agaria. Some audio and visual Bible stories and teaching materials are available in their language.

Pray that the Agaria people will be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that believers will provide them resources in their own language. Pray that they will soon find a personal relationship with Christ. Pray that their eyes will be opened to see God’s love.—BK
Kapu People

Long ago a mighty tribe living on the Gangetic River Plains in what is now northern India migrated south to settle on the banks of the Godavari River. They cleared forests and built settlements. This tribe is known as the Kaampus, and their descendants, the Kapus, are still living in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

Primarily a military and agrarian people, the Kapu community evolved based upon these occupations. However, a significant number of Kapus today have diversified into industry, arts, and academia. In an attempt to gain political rights within the caste system, many Kapus have banded together to fight for change.

Though they live among many Muslims, the Kapu are primarily Hindu. There is a history of evangelical success in their home region. Nearly 300 people came to faith in Christ through a missionary in the 1700s. Today there are 30 major denominations represented in the area. However, most are nominal, Christians in name only. About one in 1,000 Kapu people are truly following Christ. Sixteen of the 33 local tribal groups are as yet unreached.

Pray that the believers will be sent out to reach the Kapus, and that soon there will be Kapu believers raised up to reach their own people. Pray that nominalism would be broken in the local church, and that the people will be awakened to the reality of extending the kingdom of God to the remaining peoples in India.—BK
Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

Pray for the Lord to provide both abundant water and the water of life for the peoples of Odisha during times of drought.

Kuilta People in Odisha

“Y ou visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.” Psalm 65:9, NIV

The Kuilta people of Odisha are water-smart! This is very important for people living in a drought-stricken place like Odisha. They know how to store it. They know how to move it. In their history they once innovatively dug 13 water “tanks” around a settlement. These tanks were intended for conservation, and during times of insufficient rain, they provided the water needed for agriculture.

In the early 1900s British Political Agent L.E.B. Cobden-Ramsay documented the Kuilta as excellent cultivators, very industrious and very skillful in irrigation. Of late, they have refrained from using pesticides and fertilizers, and returned to organic farming.

Sadly, the Kuilta do not know the one true God, the one who brings the rain and causes their rice to grow. The Kuilta number around one million and are Hindu. Bible translations, the JESUS Film, gospel recordings, and radio broadcasts are available to them; yet there are no known believers.

Pray for God to burden people to regularly pray for and go to this people group. Pray that Bible verses about water will resonate with them, and that they will know the God who brings rain and “grows” their grain. Pray for the Kuilta people to form Christ-centered fellowships where they can be refreshed by the Savior.—CMW
Paik People in Odisha

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

Pray for the Paik people to soon understand the essence of this verse.

Double-edged swords, shields, matchlocks for firearms, bows and arrows; do you know a little boy who would be intrigued by these?

If that little boy time-travelled 200 years back, he might find himself surrounded by these weapons. He would be among the Paik people in Odisha.

Paik means “foot soldier.” The Paik are a small caste formed from military service. Traditionally, they were the landed militia. During peacetime they were warriors in charge of maintaining order. Paiks were divided into three ranks distinguished by occupation and weapons. One division consisted of shield- and sword-bearers. The group who led distant expeditions carried matchlocks for firearms. Finally came the archers. When the British East India Company conquered the Raja (i.e., leaders) of Khurda in Odisha, however, the Paik lost their power and prestige.

Hebrews 4:12, ESV says “For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” The Paik no longer live by any physical two-edged swords. Neither do they live by a spiritual two-edged sword, but they could! They number 200,000, and they can obtain the complete Bible in their language as well as hear it online.

Pray for God to stir up the Paiks’ hearts to seek His Word. Pray for them to find a place in God’s army for the Prince of Peace.—CMW
The delicious fragrance of fresh baked treats filled Neha’s nose. She had just come home from a year of studying at a prestigious business school in America, and her Brahmin friend had come by to give her a plate of sweets. Inspired by her friend’s generosity, she prepared a plate of food to give to local low caste members. As a Bania, she can accept food from higher castes, but will not offer food in return. She can only give food to a lower caste member.

Caste status determines many behaviors in India. The Bania community is part of the Hindu caste hierarchy and they are considered part of an upper caste. The Banias are a wealthy and influential people, known to control the economy of India. Banias are a community of shrewd businessmen, traders, bankers, moneylenders, and industrialists. They number approximately 25 million in India, and the greatest concentration live in the northern states like Odisha.

Most Banias worship Hindu gods, and 11 percent are Jain. They are vegetarian, and set aside food to offer to their gods in their puja room. This is a room in every house dedicated to worshipping the gods with food sacrifice, incense, and prayer. Some do know Jesus, but tremendous pressure remains to stick with caste tradition.

Pray that Banias educated overseas will meet Jesus there, be discipled, and return to India with Kingdom influence.—LR
(This is a fictitious story about what could happen.)

Nariksha surfed the web looking for men on matrimonial websites, but finding none who impressed her, she surfed for webpages in her heart language, Telugu. She stumbled upon a website about Jesus. She was fascinated when she read His words in John 3, “No one will see the kingdom of God unless they are born again….”

The Komati people already regard themselves as “twice-born,” although to them it means they are allowed to wear a sacred thread following a Hindu initiation ceremony. Being “twice-born” brings much status to a Hindu.

The Komati is a trading community organized as a sub-caste of the Banias. The Komatis number 187,000. Most live in Maharashtra, though some have migrated to Odisha and other states. Many Komatis choose banking or money lending, as is the tradition of their people.

None of them are known to follow Jesus. The entire caste comes from a long Hindu tradition, and they do not dare stray from it. They speak Telugu, and have had the entire Scripture in their language since 2002. It is even available online.

Pray that as their hearts search for a living God, the Holy Spirit will guide them through His Word, and they will find many resources available to them on the Internet. Pray that a gathering of believers will form, and they will follow Jesus in Komati style.—LR
The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Pray that the Marwari people will pile up their treasures in heaven by loving their poor neighbors.

(Matthis fictitious story is intended to explain the beliefs of this people group).

Jose, a church member, looked at the prayer warrior with one eyebrow raised. “The Mar-war-whats?” The intercessor replied, “Marwaris.” Jose shook his head and said, “I have never heard of them.” “Most people haven’t. There are about three million of them in the world. Several thousand live in Odisha, a state in eastern India on the Bay of Bengal.” “India? So are they Hindu?” “Yes. They worship Shiva and Parvati.” Jose’s eyebrow went up again as he asked, “Why should I be concerned about some small, obscure, Hindu people group on the other side of the planet?”

The intercessor replied, “For starters, they aren’t all that obscure. According to Forbes Magazine, about two percent of the world’s billionaires are Marwaris. The main reason to be concerned is that God wants them to be part of His family. They still haven’t been reached with the gospel, and they will continue to worship Shiva until they are convinced that they should worship the One True God.”

Bible portions and the New Testament have been available in Marwari since the 1800s. There are audio Bible teachings along with the JESUS Film. Yet few, if any, Marwari have put their faith in Christ.

Pray for God to soften the hearts of the Marwari to the Lord. Pray that mission agencies will prayerfully develop strategies for reaching this unreached people group. Pray that missionaries will be sent who will be diligent until there is a disciple-making movement among them.—CL
You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

Pray that the Bhulia people will love, bless, do good to, and pray for their enemies and persecutors.

Pray for God to fashion a community of believers among the Bhulia people whose holy lives will draw many others to Jesus Christ.—CL
How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Pray that the Halwai people, as familiar as they are with sweetness, will find the Lord much sweeter than anything they can fathom.

Today we are praying for the sweetest people in India. Halwai is a caste of 1,386,000 sweet makers and confectioners. Their name, Halwai aka, Halwa, means “sweet.”

Some believe they descended from a man named Bahalandaau, who came into being by the will of the Hindu God, Brahma. His descendant, Modan, took to making sweetmeats. The Halwai are respected because of the importance of sweets in religion and social life. They have a special position in festivals, childbirths, and marriages. Sweet shops of the Halwai are in towns and bazaars throughout north India. Halwai people immigrated from Rajasthan and Gujarat long ago. Most now live in Uttar Pradesh, but some live further east in Odisha. Some Halwai do government and private work. Some work in agriculture, and a few are doctors or engineers.

They are mainly vegetarians, eating wheat, rice, fruits, and vegetables. They like milk and dairy products, but not alcohol. They educate both boys and girls. Most Halwai are secure financially, and some are wealthy, particularly in the cities and towns.

They are Hindu and worship all Hindu gods. A Brahmin priest does birth, marriage, and death ceremonies for members of the Halwai community.

Pray that leaders of the Halwai community will see their desperate need for the only true God and Savior. Pray for a disciple-making movement to spring up among them until all Halwai people have a chance to respond to Jesus.—KH
Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain, your new wine, and your oil, the increase of your cattle, and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples. . . .

Pray that the Teli people will so walk in the love and blessings of God that all their neighboring tribes will be drawn to the crucified Jesus they are lifting up.

Yesterday we prayed for a sweet people. Today we will pray for an oily one. The Teli people in Odisha extract cooking oil from sesame or mustard. Their name is derived from the ancient Sanskrit word “taila.” According to ancient myths, the Hindu god Shiva created the Teli people to destroy five demons.

Even though the Teli are a vital part of India’s business community, they have little economic power. Some of these oil-selling merchants must also sell other products to earn a decent living. Teli women often sew or do metal work to help the family make ends meet. Child labor is common, and poverty among them is widespread.

Adult marriage is the norm in their communities. They find their mates through family negotiations. Only men can initiate divorce, usually upon the woman’s failure to meet his demands.

The Teli community is divided about religion. Some mix ancestral worship into their Hindu religious practices. There are many Muslims among the Teli people called Teli Malik. There are even a few Teli believers. This large, diverse community speaks many languages, although most speak Hindi. Gospel resources are available in both audio and written format in the major languages of India, including Oriya, the language of Odisha.

Pray for openness and understanding of the ways of Christ within this people that lives with much spiritual confusion and have no defense against the lies of the enemy of their souls.—KH
These Hindus actually eat beef! Many people associate Hindus with vegetarianism, but not all of India’s people groups fit this mold. The Gauda people of Odisha are not vegetarians. In fact, one of their main means of support is cattle-herding. Since they are landowners, they are able to do agricultural work as well. Of course, just as with many other people groups, there are some individuals who have professional careers and even participate in politics.

There have been some church planting efforts among the Gaudas in the last two years; but statistics reflect a very low percent of them are evangelical Christians. Their main language is Oriya, and there are many ministry tools available in their language: The JESUS Film, God’s Story Video, and the Story of Jesus for Children. Particularly exciting are online resources: Online New Testament and Online Scripture (Talking Bibles). Hearing the gospel message in one’s heart language makes it real. Today, one can listen in privacy to Christian messages with smart phones, reducing the threat of exposure that many new believers face.

Pray that the Gauda people will abide in God’s protective love.

Pray for God to bless the efforts of church planters to reach into all areas where the Gaudas live and work to introduce them to the Savior. Pray for the Gaudas today to reap the benefit of seeds planted and prayers offered up by early missionary efforts in India.—JS
Golla People of Odisha

The large crowd cheered and shouted as they watched the man in the center of the group hold red-hot iron balls in his mouth without getting burned. Next he swallowed a sword! Children who had accompanied him to this village were performing various magic tricks for those in the enthralled audience.

These street performers were members of a very small group of people called Golla. They are spread out in different states of India, but most are located in Odisha. The Golla perform magic in villages and receive grain and money in return.

Besides performing magic, the Golla are also involved in agriculture and animal husbandry. Unfortunately they do employ child labor in both areas of their livelihood: agriculture and magic. The Golla love both drama and music. The women are very good at tattooing and singing folk songs, while the men participate in folk-drama. Very little is known about any evangelistic efforts among the Golla people; but that is where we readers come in. We pray!

Pray for God to send Christ’s disciples to the Golla to meet both their physical and spiritual needs. Pray that they will be freed from any spiritual bondage that is associated with these magical tricks they perform. Pray that the Holy Spirit will make such a dramatic impact on the Golla people that many of them will use their skills to share Christ in India.—JS
For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

Pray that Christian workers in Odisha will be so noted for their sacrificial love that members of every Hindu and Muslim community will take notice.

Asia Harvest Work in Odisha

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life.” The woman who read these words looked up at her teacher and smiled. The very first words she learned to read were from the Bible. She had many questions for her teacher, a Christian worker of Asia Harvest. Her teacher began patiently to answer her many questions, and before long, she became a believer along with other women in her village learning to read. Asia Harvest is seeing remarkable evangelistic growth among entire villages and tribes of people in rural India.

The project, proving so effective, is teaching women to read. Nine out of ten women are illiterate in some areas. This project is using the Gospels as their textbooks, so the first words they learn to read are literally life-saving! It is the patience and companionship of their women teachers that makes a huge difference. They develop real relationships that affect every area of the women’s lives. Workers report that about 70 percent of the women in the literacy program commit their lives to Jesus.

Asia Harvest recently began supporting more than 200 Christian literacy teachers/evangelists taking the gospel to more than 200 villages. People from more than 60 different unreached ethnic groups are hearing about Jesus.

Ask God to bless and multiply these literacy efforts so that these new believers can share Christ with all of their family members.—JS
have you ever heard of a mobile school? T4 Global Mobile School is not a brick and mortar facility, but an audio device. Instead of people coming to a building, this “school” goes to them. Where are they? They may be gathered by a well or in a hut. In the center is the audio device. T4 Global does not create small groups, but rather it finds where people are already gathered and commissions them as a mobile school. What they are hearing is the gospel message in their own language.

The school is the “mobile teacher” led by a reliable community member, and the classroom is where people already gather. The teachers are trained mentors. The learning process is collective listening to a gospel message, then discussing it, repeating it, and applying it. The learners discuss what they learned and replicate it with others and become trainers of trainers. The result is a cascading effect to others in the community and beyond. T4 Global partners with other ministries to transform lives with the 4T’s: truth, translation, trust, and appropriate technology. Gospel materials are now available for three more unreached people groups in India, the Didayi people, the Dom, and the Ho people.

Pray that the T4 Mobile school will transform the lives of these unreached people so that they will learn to live like Jesus.—JS
When I first arrived in India, I naively asked, “What caste do I belong to?” I soon learned that one is born into a caste. What if you do not like your caste? You simply rename your caste. In 1897, today’s people group, the Mahishyas, did just that. Much more has changed since 1897 as they moved from the countryside to towns and cities.

The Mahishyas are also known today as Sadgop or “milkmen,” even though they grow rice and wheat. Others work in skilled labor or business in cities. Some are computer operators, while others are college-educated and seek spouses over the Internet. They are still stigmatized for their agrarian roots and willingness to work with their hands, even though they are part of a forward caste.

As a people, they are found in several Indian states such as West Bengal, Odisha, and surrounding areas, speaking Bengali, Hindi, Oriya, or English as second languages. They claim descent from the Hindu god Krishna; yet most worship Lakshmi, Dharmanaj, or Shiva as household gods. They also go on pilgrimages to Hindu holy sites. The JESUS film, the Bible, and Christian literature are available in their languages. Only about one in 500 of these nearly 10 million people follow Christ.

Pray that these people will become true children of God. Pray that Indian missionaries will succeed in using existing networks of the few believers to evangelize the Mahishya people. May they be drawn to the Scriptures and begin to study His word in their communities.—TP
Mali People in Odisha

What happens when you offend God? Does He strike you dead? Does He change your status? The Mali people, a group of some eight to nine million people in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, and surrounding states of India, claim that as Brahmins (highest caste) they were demoted to Shudras (low castes) when one of them used his Brahmin “twice born” cotton wrist band to make a garland for Krishna.

Despite this, some serve in Krishna temples making devotional artifacts and clay idols for pilgrims. Others claim Rajput warrior descent. Some of their reformers were influenced by Christian teaching. They live primarily in nuclear families, marrying their cousins outside their community. Many work in agriculture, day labor, or as urban gardeners or florists. Some make large metal marriage crowns. Although most are Hindus, some are Muslims. Those who are Hindus worship a manifestation of the goddess Kali to whom they offer animal sacrifices. They also practice ancestor worship. Astrology is important to them, as is true with most Hindus.

Pray that the Mali people will come to know what it is to be truly born a second time by faith in Jesus. Pray that they will forego astrology for the true God’s guidance; and that the worship of Christ who rose from the dead will replace the worship of Kali, goddess of death. May they recognize Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross as the only sacrifice God accepts for reconciliation with Him—TP

Exodus 20:4-6 NKJV

You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments.

Pray for the Mali people to seek and find God’s mercy. Pray for them to put aside all other Gods.
Seeking the Unseen
Spiritual Realities in the Buddhist World

Buddhism claims no god, yet spiritual realities abound in popular practice. What are these realities? What do they mean to the practitioners? How can understanding these realities inform Christ-followers seeking to communicate the good news of Jesus in ways that all can understand and relate to? In answer to these and other questions, SEANET proudly presents its twelfth volume, Seeking the Unseen: Spiritual Realities in the Buddhist World. Christian practitioners from thirteen different Buddhist cultures share insights gained from their wideranging experiences and perspectives. From Sri Lanka to Japan, from China to the Philippines, these women and men, Asian and Western, present on a topic that is often missing in mission literature today. And for readers seeking personal insight into the growing spiritual complexities of their own place in the postmodern world, lessons from these authors will guide you with practical principles from engaging, firsthand cultural encounters.

Paul H. de Neui holds a PhD in intercultural studies. He has spent over twenty years enabling indigenous organizations in holistic ministry to Buddhists in Asia. He serves as professor of missiology at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois.

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