



**15** DAYS  
OF PRAYER  
FOR THE HINDU WORLD

NOV 8-22, 2020



[www.pray15days.org](http://www.pray15days.org)

# Welcome to the 2020 edition of the 15 Days of Prayer for the Hindu World prayer guide!

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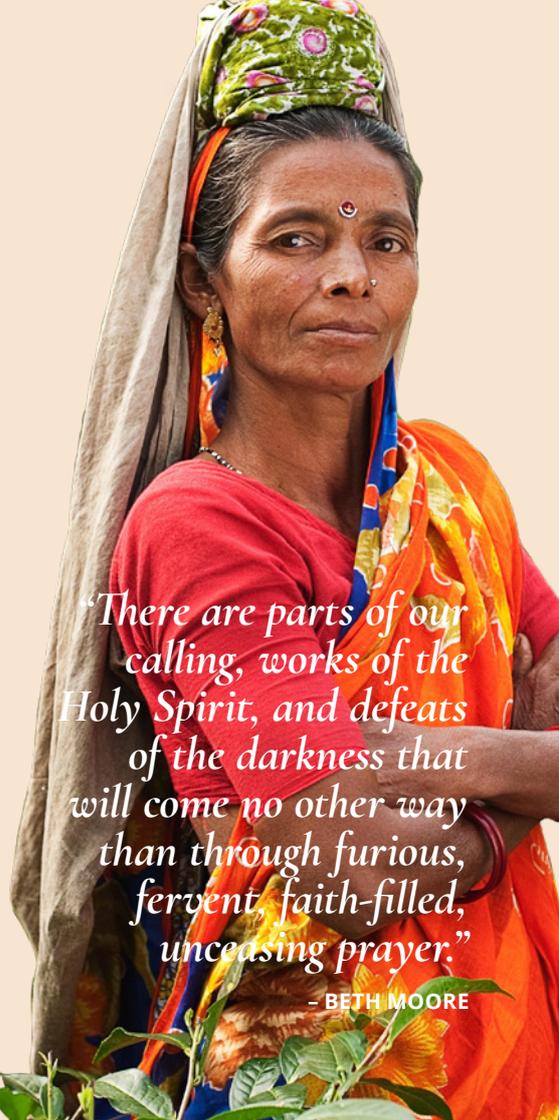
This year, more than others in our recent past, has been connected by a shared experience. Covid-19 has impacted people all over the globe, from nearly all walks of life. One way this affected our team and contributors was by forcing us to slow down in our preparation of the prayer guide.

The shared human experiences of a global pandemic remind us of the need we all have for connection and hope. As you use this guide, we want you to feel connected through prayer to Hindu people and the workers who serve among them. We also desire that you will grow in hope for Hindu

people to come to faith in Christ and see transformation in their communities. This year, we have focused much of our prayer on women in Hinduism. In all nations and religions women have been overlooked or treated as less valuable than men. This is not at all in keeping with the design of God for His beloved creation. In these pages, we hope to acknowledge and lift up the needs of women who live in Hindu communities, pray for them to be blessed, and seek to understand their role in the Kingdom through God's eyes.

Thank you for partnering with us in intercession for Hindu women worldwide.

**The Editors**  
*15 Days of Prayer International*



*“There are parts of our calling, works of the Holy Spirit, and defeats of the darkness that will come no other way than through furious, fervent, faith-filled, unceasing prayer.”*

- BETH MOORE

# Is Hinduism a religion?

Hinduism is too complex to describe as a single religion, and we will not attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of it in this guide. Within Hinduism, there is no central orthodoxy, creed or set of beliefs that can be used to determine who is a Hindu. The word “Hinduism” actually describes a diverse group of many religions, traditions, or belief systems. Each of these sects might have their own separate set of creeds, beliefs, etc. It might be better to speak of many Hinduisms rather than one Hinduism. However, it is useful to recognize that the word “Hinduism” is in such extensive use today, even by Hindus themselves, that we will find its use almost unavoidable.

## ***Who is a Hindu?***

About 15 percent of the world’s population identifies as Hindu. Being Hindu is primarily based on being born into a Hindu family, not on any set of beliefs, worship of any specific god, or act of conversion.

## ***What are the origins of Hinduism?***

Many saints, gurus, authors and famous personalities have contributed to the development of Hinduism. However, Hindus give no single founding person or event exclusive credit for starting Hinduism. While most Hindus will agree that certain sacred Hindu texts are valuable, no holy scripture is held to be fully and equally authoritative by all Hindus. Complex and diverse Hindu traditions have existed in South Asia since before recorded history. Additionally, the Hindu community’s perception of itself has changed and evolved over the centuries and continues to develop.



# How did 15 Days start?

**In the late 1990's and 2000's several editions of a longer prayer guide for Hindu peoples helped Christians understand and pray for Hindu communities around the world.**

In 2016, a network of Christians working to share the love of Christ with Hindu people were inspired to work towards reviving that prayer movement by developing this prayer guide to call the global Body of Christ to unite in prayer for Hindu peoples.

This 2020 edition is an expression of the love that followers of Christ have for Hindu peoples; love that includes a desire for them to prosper and discover

eternal salvation in Jesus.

**Who writes the articles and produces the guide?**

Content for the prayer guide is contributed by a diverse group of Christ-followers spread all over the world, many of whom live with, work with, and love Hindu people.

**How do you decide what to pray for?**

We accept submissions from all over the world, usually following a theme each year. If you are interested in mobilizing prayer for a particular need in the Hindu world, please contact us using the contact form on our website:

[www.pray15days.org](http://www.pray15days.org) or send an e-mail to [info@pray15days.org](mailto:info@pray15days.org)



*“After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:*

*“Father, the hour has come.*

*Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

**JOHN 17:1-3**



## INTRODUCTION

# Praying for Hindus

*“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)*

Hindus are the second-largest, least-reached religious group in the world, with only about 2 percent of cross-cultural ministers focused on sharing the gospel with them. This means that the majority of Hindus still live without any meaningful access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In **LUKE 4:17-19**, Jesus declared, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

In this prayer guide, we encourage you to pray for all the needs of Hindu people who number among some of the poorest in the world and are in need of freedom, favor and good news. Pray for them to be blessed, to be healed and to have the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray that you are inspired by the provided scriptures and allow the Holy Spirit to direct your prayers and your heart towards the Hindu people God loves.

# Women in Hinduism



Alka, was mugged in broad daylight on the road near her house while walking her children to school. The attacker approached on a motorcycle, looked her straight in the eye, and ripped some gold jewelry off her body. The theft has left her filled with fear.

For many women, walking the streets of India is a dangerous and terrifying necessity. The Hindu view of women is complicated. Hindus worship many goddesses, with particular respect for the Mother Goddess. Hindu women are usually the primary caretakers of family idols, and they remain at the center of most household religious practices. Hindu teaching directs men to care for and protect the women in their household.

While women in Hindu-dominated regions have, at times in history, enjoyed some social freedom and influence, this is usually a privilege reserved for higher-caste or wealthy women. For the most part, a woman's value is dependent on her relationship to men, as a wife, mother, or daughter.

Today, Hindu women in India are organizing more to demand equality under the law and freedom from harassment. But there is still much that needs to change if they are to be able to walk down the street without fear. Alka has been attending a Satsang, or spiritual gathering, organized by local followers of Christ. She requested prayer at the Satsang after her attack and felt relief from her fear.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray for Hindu women who are seeking justice and protection in their nations, that they will have the support of the authorities, as described in **LUKE 18:1-8**.

Pray for Hindu men, to treat women with respect and care, and for Christian men to be an example of this in their communities. **(TITUS 2:6-8)**

Pray for Hindu women who are seeking spiritual comfort, that they will find the peace that passes understanding through faith in Christ. **(JOHN 14:27)**

# Supernatural Encounters

If you ask a Hindu-background believer how they came to faith in Jesus, they will often tell you that Jesus is the only one who was able to heal them from sickness or deliver them from spiritual torment. A miraculous display of Jesus' power may seem remarkable to Western Christians but is quite unsurprising to Christians from the Indian sub-continent.

In a humble farming village, there is a young woman who leads a Sunday school class for the children in her community. Not long ago, her life was very different. She had been deeply involved in witchcraft. Her skin had turned black and her eyes were red. She was tormented by demons. Her family took her to several witchdoctors, but this only made her condition worse. No one - not the gods in the temples nor the medical doctors - could help her.

Finally, a believer in her village invited this woman's family to come to their fellowship for prayer. She was set free through prayer in Jesus' name from the demons, and totally healed. Her entire family put their faith in Jesus that day.

Stories of supernatural healing are common among Hindu peoples. They are deeply spiritual and Jesus meets them in a spiritual way. They are like the man healed in Acts 3 of whom Peter said, "By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has completely healed him, as you can all see."

**(ACTS 3:16)**

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray for Indian believers to grow in the knowledge of God that they may be mature and strong in their faith.

**(EPHESIANS 1:17-21)**

Pray for Hindu people to acknowledge Jesus as the one, true God and not just another powerful guru or teacher.

**(1 TIMOTHY 2:3-5)**

Pray for freedom and deliverance from spiritual strongholds where idol worship, black magic, and blood sacrifice is practiced.

**(EPHESIANS 6:10-12)**

# Indian Classical Musicians

Indian classical music is deeply connected to the sacred texts and practices of Hinduism. It is intended to be very emotional, as if it were a reflection of the voice of the gods, inspiring worshipers to greater spiritual growth.

Asha is a classical musician who moved to the city with her husband, Anand, hoping to find a job performing or teaching music. Her marriage was difficult, with frequent fights and separations. Asha found support from a couple of Christian

friends who encouraged and supported her and prayed with her when things were really hard. Through their friendship, Asha came to understand the love of Christ, and found comfort and peace by believing in Him. Asha continues to pray for her husband, but her music has changed.

Where she used to sing songs that told the stories of ancient Hindu gods, she now sings songs that praise Jesus and tell His story, adapting Christian songs to the Indian classical style.



## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

In Hindu tradition, the first musicians were divine and so to use their instruments to worship them is a deeply spiritual practice. Pray for musicians today to encounter Christ as they play, and to sing a new song. Be inspired from **PSALM 96:1-3**

Pray that Christians in India will use music to reflect the voice of Christ, to encourage other believers to greater spiritual growth and to attract Hindus who seek a new song to sing. (**PSALM 33**)

**REVELATION 5:9** prophesizes that a new song will be sung by people from every tribe and language and nation at the throne of God. Pray for those from Hindu tribes to join this future choir.



# Chhaupadi and the Myths about Menstruation

It is a cold night in the mountains. A small dark “hut” lies at the edge of the village. You have been here before. You know the stories of women dying from snake bites or attacks by violent men. You have felt the shame of being “unclean” and the discomfort of lying on the hard ground. You’ve been here before, forced to sleep in this dark, cold place every month since you started menstruation.

Desperate for warmth and overcome with fear for the well-being of your two young sons, you decide to light a small fire. The hut has no ventilation, only a small door that you have to crawl through. You and your sons drift off to sleep to the smell of smoke, never to wake up again...

This account of a real event describes the Nepali Hindu practice of Chhaupadi. This particular practice is mostly seen in remote areas of Nepal. However, negative beliefs

about menstruation have had an influence across the Hindu world, impacting many Hindu women’s sense of worth, their ability to worship, and their health.

During menstruation, women are often considered unclean. They must sleep separately from their husbands. Believing that things they touch will spoil, they may be forbidden to enter the kitchen or go near plants and livestock. They are often kept from school or the temple and are not even allowed to defile the gods by praying. This attitude prevents proper education about menstrual health and hygiene products are often unavailable or too costly to use, putting lives at risk from infection.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

80% of women in these remote areas do not have access to sanitary pads. Many will die from preventable infections related to lack of menstrual hygiene. Pray for continued education about menstrual health and hygiene as well as increased access to sanitary pads.

Please pray that women throughout the Hindu world would have the opportunity to hear the gospel message and come to saving faith; finding life, hope and value in Him.

Please pray that the value Jesus places on women, as shown in **MATTHEW 9:20-22**, will overcome cultural shame. Pray for the success of policies and programs that will bring change to these women’s lives.

# Diwali Feature: Dhanteras



Over the next five days, we are going to focus our prayers on the five-day Hindu festival of Diwali. The word Diwali is a shortened form of the word Deepavali, which means, “a row of lamps.” During Diwali, Hindus celebrate the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. Diwali stands out amongst the almost constant festivals and rituals that make up living Hinduism and is easily the most recognized Hindu celebration of the year.

There are many variations of the celebration of Diwali, but Hindu women will usually organize a thorough cleaning of their homes before it begins. Most will mark November 12th as the start of the festival, a day known as Dhanteras: Dhan means wealth, and Teras means 13, as this festival takes place on the 13th day of a common Hindu calendar.

On Dhanteras, Hindu women will go out with their friends and families, specifically to shop for things made from different metals, including gold and silver, kitchen utensils, automobiles, and other precious property. They believe that doing so will bring blessings, wealth and security in the year ahead. Some families will also perform special ceremonies in the hope of keeping death away from their loved ones in the following year.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray for Hindus beginning to celebrate Diwali, that they will discover the Light of the World. **(JOHN 8:12)**

Diwali rituals that focus on securing wealth show the need to “store up treasures in heaven” as described in **MATTHEW 6:19-21**. Pray for this revelation among Hindu women.

Pray for believers in Hindu communities to be a visible witness of Christ during Diwali. **(MARK 4:21-22)**

# Diwali Feature: Naraka Chaturdashi

As with most festivals, schools will be closed before, during and after Diwali. Migrant laborers will return home, families will be reunited, mothers will cook feasts for their children and their grandchildren.

Today, many Hindus from South India will celebrate Naraka Chaturdashi, also called Choti Diwali (literally, “Small Diwali”). This is a commemoration of when the god Krishna defeated the demon Narakasura who had taken control of all the kingdoms on earth. Women will often be the first to rise in the morning, to prepare food and perform the ritual worship (puja) on behalf of their family.

After lavish meals families will light clay lamps called diyas, and explode firecrackers. Hindu women will often busy themselves sitting together on the floors

of their homes creating rangoli, which are intricate patterns made with colored ground rice that looks like sand. Some designs are passed down in families. These designs are thought to bring luck, and are specially placed to greet the many visitors who will make their way from household to household during the Diwali celebrations



## HOW CAN WE PRAY

Matthew 4:1-17 tells the story of when Jesus shows authority over the devil and his offer of the kingdoms of the world. Pray for Hindus celebrating Naraka Chaturdashi, that they will learn of the One who came to bring light into the darkness.

Pray for Hindu women, up early with festival preparations, that as they seek God and His blessings in these unusual mornings they would encounter the living God and His great love for them.

Gathering with family on holidays is a time for those who have heard the good news of Jesus to share it with others. Pray that those who return to their homes with the knowledge of the gospel would share it boldly.

**(1 PETER 3:15)**

# Diwali Feature: The Festival of Lights

A typical Diwali morning in India sees running kids out flying kites, loud music from street corner DJ's, lines of devotees in front of temples whose bells ring almost endlessly and the smell of special foods. There will be countless guests to greet, gifts to be given and lots of food to be cooked. Women will dress in their finest saris and best jewelry for the evening puja (worship). Lucky children will set off firecrackers all day and night, to the scolding of grandmothers and mothers.

The third day of Diwali is the most important day of the festival. Hindus all over the world joyfully celebrate the victory of good over evil, light over darkness. At sunset, fancy new strings of lights will be lit alongside the more traditional lighting of many small, clay oil-lamps (called diyas) around the house.

Some make a path of lights inviting Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, to enter

and bless their home. Others light the lamps in remembrance of when the people of Ayodhya lit up their city with small lamps to welcome the return of king Ram who rescued his wife, Sita, and defeated the demon king Ravan.

Sita is considered a role model for Hindu women. She is known for her integrity, self-sacrifice, courage and purity. In some versions of her story, she is asked to undergo a trial by fire, through which she proves her purity before being accepted back by king Ram after he rescues her.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Hindu women are often the ones who maintain the worship and rituals within a family. Pray they will become part of the royal priesthood of Christ-followers.

**(1 PETER 2:9)**

Pray that today, Hindu peoples will have a revelation of Jesus, the Light of the world and Savior of all humanity.

**(JOHN 8:12)**

Pray that the truth of Christ's great love for Hindu people will be lifted up, like on a lampstand, for all Hindus to encounter.

**(MATTHEW 5:15)**

# Diwali Feature: God as Deliverer - Govardhan Puja

On the fourth day of Diwali, Hindu devotees of the god Krishna, will recall the story of how Krishna held up Mount Govardhan for eight days to protect the holy city of Vrindavan from deadly rains sent by the god Indra. An image of the mountain will be created out of cow dung. Women cook fifty-six different vegetarian food items (known as chappan bhog) which are prepared and offered to lord Krishna in the evening. This celebration recognizes Krishna as the deliverer.

Many Hindu women will feel they need a deliverer. In traditional Hindu culture, a woman will move in with her husband's family after marriage. It is not uncommon to have a mother and father, along with all of their sons and son's wives living under the same roof. This joint-family system is so common in Hindu families in India, that

it has its own tax code designation: a Hindu Undivided Family.

Joint-families are highly valued in Hindu society. While this arrangement can be a beautiful example of God's design for individuals and family, it can also be difficult for women whose place in the hierarchy within their new family is often determined by the age of the brother they have married. The value of a bride's dowry also impacts their position in the family. Officially outlawed in India since at least 1961, but still widely practiced, dowry is the system in which a bride's family gives a gift to the bridegroom's family as a condition of marriage. This expectation can put a great financial burden on the bride's family and contributes heavily towards the preference for having male children.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray for Hindu women who need a deliverer, to encounter Jesus, who promised living water to the woman at the well in **JOHN 4:4-26**.

Pray for Hindu men, equally in need of a deliverer, to lead their families to the Deliverer described by **DAVID IN PSALM 40**.

Pray that women will be equally valued in Hindu society, as created by God and beloved by Him. **GALATIANS 3:27-29**

# Diwali Feature: Brothers & Sisters and Bhai Dooj

The last day of the five-day festival of Diwali is called Bhai Dooj. “Bhai” means brother and “Dooj” refers to the second day after the new moon, when it is celebrated.

The majority of Hindu festivals and ceremonies emphasize the importance of family and Bhai Dooj especially focuses on the relationship between a brother and sister. This tradition likely originates out of several stories depicting the love and support given to Hindu gods by their sisters.

On Bhai Dooj, Hindu women will pray for the long and happy lives of their brothers.

They will often show their love for each other with a meal and gifts. Brothers may be sent out to bring their sisters home if they live elsewhere. Sometimes newly married couples are both invited to the wife’s family home for a celebration. Sisters will pray for the long life of their brothers and for protection in the coming year. In return, brothers often give their sisters gifts.

Often, if a Hindu woman struggles with her in-laws, after her parent’s death her brother will become her only advocate and remain essential to providing a sense of security in case she needs help.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray for siblings of Hindus who know Christ, that this would be a chance for them to share their love for Christ and to pray in His name for the salvation and protection of their brothers and sisters.

Pray for Hindu families, that they will turn to Christ as whole family units, which strengthens the faith of each member and provides a strong witness of God’s heart for family. **(HEBREWS 2:10-12)**

Pray for Hindu women, that they will see and recognize the love that Christ displayed as a brother towards the many sisters in his life and be drawn to the only source of eternal security and love that exists. **(1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5)**

# In debt to the gods

Standing over her young daughter's hospital bed, Jaya cried. She did not know how or why her only child had become so ill, so suddenly. Would the doctor's efforts be enough to save her daughter? Although Jaya did not usually think much about religious matters, she now turned in desperation to her family gods. She pleaded, "If you heal my daughter, if you save her life, I will visit your temple 70 times for 70 pujas (special prayer ceremonies)."

Jaya's daughter recovered quickly. A few years later, Jaya remembered her vow at the hospital and she realized that she had not yet come close to fulfilling it. Fear crept into Jaya's heart. Perhaps the gods would

punish her and her daughter! Jaya quickly phoned a priest to arrange for a puja on the next weekend.

Like many in the Hindu tradition, Jaya's understanding of her gods is that you don't get something from them for nothing. Often Hindus will make grand promises to their gods in exchange for favors or protection, only to find that it is incredibly hard or impossible for them to follow through with their commitments. When they experience the freedom that comes from following Jesus, it is an exciting revelation.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Scripture talks a lot about the freedom that is in Christ. Pray for Hindus who are held in fear by the belief that they need to earn help or protection from their gods. **(GALATIANS 5:1)**

Pray for more healings and miracles that will cause Jesus to become famous among Hindu communities as the God who heals.

Pray for Romans 8:1-2 to become a real testimony for many Hindus.

# Hindu Naming Ceremonies

A Nepali newborn is given a drop of honey so that their first taste is of the sweetness of life. In Nepali Hindu traditions, parents will often ask a priest to conduct a nauran, a ceremony on the 11th day after birth to announce the child's name. The parents invite their families, their community and their gods to bless and protect the child at this special event.

It is important that the nauran take place on the 11th day. According to some Nepali Hindu traditions, to miss this day makes the baby and their family vulnerable to trouble from the gods. Priests often refuse to conduct a nauran on another day, fearing it could affect them too. Not having a nauran on the right day may mean the Hindu community will not allow the child and their family to participate in festivals – it is considered to be bad luck all around.

Maya was a young Nepali mother in the USA who could not find a Hindu priest

to conduct a nauran for her newborn on the 11th day. Maya's sister suggested that the baby could be blessed and prayed for by an American priest she knew, a priest of Sri Yeshu (Lord Jesus) who enjoyed learning about Nepali traditions. As a priest of Sri Yeshu, Chris could ask for a blessing on any day.

Maya agreed and invited family and friends to her home. Chris used many of the sights, sounds, smells and other symbols and elements that Maya was familiar with to explain how Sri Yeshu's life demonstrates His loving plan for the world. That day, Maya and her family learned about Sri Yeshu and felt confident that their baby had been truly blessed.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray a blessing on Hindu children and for them to have the opportunity to know Christ. **(SEE LUKE 2:27-32)**

Pray for Hindu parents to ask the Creator for help in parenting and to recognize His answers. **(SEE MATTHEW 7:7-11)**

Pray that Hindus living in a place where they are a minority will find Christ-followers who enjoy learning about their traditions and finding creative ways to share God's Word. **(SEE ACTS 17:23-28)**

# Witchcraft and superstition

In communities where it is common to engage with the supernatural for protection or power, people who engage with spirits on behalf of others are influential, being both feared and revered. Dayans, also known as witchdoctors, are mostly active in poor, rural areas in India, among tribal groups where superstition is widespread.



Recently, two Indian evangelists visited a village they had never been to before. Not really knowing what to do, they started singing worship songs to Jesus and praying for the village in His name. A group of women gathered to listen; some of them were troubled by the worship. The two felt led to pray for one woman in particular and God used them to deliver her from demonic harassment. Once the woman was at peace, they told her the good news

of Jesus Christ. She immediately put her faith in Jesus along with her husband and children.

The next day, the evangelists visited the family to encourage them in their faith. They discovered that this woman was the main dayan of her village, as was her father before her. She showed them an entire room dedicated to black magic. All the people in the village would visit her for fortune telling or to put curses on their neighbors. Now she had repented of all these things. She emptied the room and threw out all the items.

As the woman grew in her faith, she began to share her testimony with her friends and family. Everyone knew who she was and could see how much Jesus had transformed her life. Many people became believers through her testimony and started to meet in her home for prayer and worship.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray for people trapped by superstitious beliefs and engaged in witchcraft, that they will find freedom and peace when they experience the love of Christ.

**(ROMANS 8:37-39)**

Pray for Christian workers in villages like this to have the full armor of God.

**(ROMANS 6:10-28)**

Pray for new fellowships of believers in unreached Hindu communities.

**(PHILIPPIANS 1:9-10)**

# Hindu Weddings

If you ask a Hindu wife about her wedding, you may be invited to spend a few hours looking at photos and videos!

The marriage ceremony is not just a memorable life event; it is also one of the *samskaras*, or sacred rites of passage. Most families follow traditions as much as possible to ensure blessings upon the new couple. As a result, many parts of the wedding festivities are similar across a wide variety of Hindu traditions.

The bride-to-be often has an elaborate *mehndi* (henna) design painted from her fingertips to her elbows. The groom's name may be hidden within the detailed patterns. When the groom leaves his home for the wedding venue to receive

his bride, a procession of friends and family goes with him. In some traditions the groom rides on a colorfully decorated horse, while they dance to lively drumbeats and set off firecrackers ahead of him. The feeling of celebration spreads to those they pass by.

Once the families of the bride and groom are together, the groom's side places a garland of flowers upon the bride. They also give her a special necklace, an outward symbol of her being married, as well as a new *sari* (traditional South Asian dress).

Large celebrations follow with family, friends, neighbors and colleagues giving blessings and gifts to the new couple before enjoying a lavish meal.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray that Christ-followers worshipping the Lord will be like a wedding procession spreading joy in the streets. Pray that many Hindus will find joy in the Lord.

**(LUKE 19:37-38).**

Pray that many engaged, and newly married Hindu couples will have happy marriages and together know the blessings of God, receiving the "garments of salvation" and "robes of righteousness."

**(ISAIAH 61:10, 62:5)**

Pray that entire Hindu communities will receive invitations to enter Christ's Kingdom to celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb.

**(SEE REVELATION 19:9)**

# Charity in Hinduism

In the summer heat and weakened by malnutrition, thousands suffer and face death in Bihar, a largely rural state in northeast India. With one of the weakest healthcare systems in the country, the poor in Bihar are particularly at risk from a recurring epidemic of acute encephalitis. Bihar is over 80% Hindu and only 0.12% of the population is Christian.

Nevertheless, when local believers in one part of Bihar rallied volunteers together to distribute supplies and medicine in the hospitals to needy families, Nivedita was the first to raise her hand.

Nivedita is a part of the 1% of India. She and her husband run a successful business in a Bihari city and she has more social engagements packed into her calendar than she can possibly keep. She is from a high-caste, Brahmin background and her wealthy family

trained her to be benevolent to others but also to maintain her image in society. Nivedita was shocked at the chaos and desperation evident at the local hospital where large crowds scrambled to get supplies. She is used to being a giver, but the need was overwhelming.

Charity is considered to be an important virtue in Hinduism. Hospitality and giving to the poor are seen as a religious duty (dharma). Hindu teaching promotes the idea that if every individual in society performs their religious duties, then the needs of all would be met. However, the divide between rich and poor in India remains a wide one.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY

Pray for the poor in Bihar, and for organizations working to improve healthcare in this needy state.

Pray for wealthy, high-caste families in Hindu society, to use their resources and influence to help the poor.

**(PROVERBS 14:31)**

Pray for Christians to follow Christ's teaching on giving to the poor.

**(MATTHEW 6:1-4,  
MATTHEW 6:19-21,  
LUKE 18:22)**



# Young Brides

Preeti's family arranged her marriage 3 years ago when she was still in college. As is common among some groups in India, she remained in her parent's home after her marriage while finishing her college studies.

Preeti's sister follows Jesus and has shared much with her about God's love and power. Preeti has had dreams and visions of Jesus, experienced healings and answers to prayer. However, she has resisted a commitment to following Jesus out of fear of her in-laws and what she will face when she goes to live with her husband's family. She knows that as a daughter-in-law she will be expected to perform various rituals and fasts in the worship of the family deities. If she doesn't, any misfortune the family experiences will likely be blamed on her for not fulfilling her duties.

For many young women from Hindu families, there is a high cost to following Jesus. If they choose to follow Jesus before their marriage is arranged, their family could have a hard time finding a spouse for them. Alternatively, they might be married into a family that will pressure them to perform Hindu religious duties. In some Hindu cultures, a young wife moves in with her in-laws and she can be treated poorly in her new home. This often happens even if she does join in all of the traditional rituals and worship.

However, for those women who have counted that cost and remained strong in their faith, many have become powerful influences in their in-law's homes. With time, many families experience Jesus' blessing and peace and allow their daughters-in-law to continue worshipping Jesus. Some families are greatly impacted, and other family members also come to faith in Jesus.

## HOW CAN WE PRAY

Pray for young women believers who do not have the support of their families.  
**(ISAIAH 43:1,2)**

Pray for women who are the only believers in their family to receive the blessings of  
**MATTHEW 5:1-12.**

Pray for women believers to be light and salt to their families.  
**(MATTHEW 5:13-16)**

# Leaning Forward

While the majority of Hindus (over 1 billion) live in India, over 100 million Hindus live outside of India. It is certain that Hindus around the world were deeply impacted by the Covid-19 epidemic. However, the suffering of Hindus in India, and particularly Dalit Hindus, deserves special note.

Around 200 million Hindus in India are Dalits. Because most of them work in the informal sector of India's economy, as daily wage earners or at jobs with little guarantee of security, they are at the forefront of those suffering due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the

resulting almost complete lockdown in India. Members of the Dalit community have historically been shunned for centuries and are often treated as the lowest in Indian society.

While many of the millions left unemployed due to Covid-19 are certainly from Muslim and a few other minority communities, the majority are Hindu. It is almost certain that, by the time this guide lands in your hands, those who have lost so much will, at best, only have had a portion of their lives restored. For many Hindus, the scars of Covid-19 will remain long after a vaccine is found and a new normal

resumed. This is in addition to the many other challenges that face Hindus in India, including communal conflict, regional tensions between neighboring nations, and the continued influence of Hindu nationalists.

Against this backdrop, it is easy to become discouraged in our prayers. However, Max Lucado rightly points us back to our Creator and King, when he says, "Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference."

*Thank you for praying with us and many more around the globe, on behalf of Hindu peoples everywhere. We look forward to praying with you and many more around the globe next year.*



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A GLOBAL PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION MINISTRY  
[ORDERS@WORLDPRAYERGUIDES.ORG](mailto:ORDERS@WORLDPRAYERGUIDES.ORG)

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