



INDIA

INCREASING PERSECUTION

JAN-FEB 2006.

THE spiritual battle is increasing in India.

Many Dalats, the poorest people of India, are converting to Buddhism which they believe gives them respect which they do not receive in Hinduism.

Reports say there is now also a mass movement towards Christ among the Dalats, and this has Hindu organisations really worried. They see that people are clamoring to hear the Gospel, to have a relationship with Jesus, and they want to stop it.

Mission India says Hindu extremists are seeking to re-convert those who have become Christians. “Those who are re-converting may be fruit of tract or hit and run evangelistic campaigns. Discipleship is important to make sure that every person who hears the Gospel has a relationship with a local Christian. When new believers have a relationship with local Christians, re-conversion does not happen.”

Call for Nationwide Anti-conversion Law

FEB 11. An estimated 300,000 Hindus converged on the Dangs region of Gujarat for a 3-day Shabri Kumbh Mela - a “re-awakening” event. The main slogan for the Kumbh Mela is ‘Hindu Jago, Christi Bhagao’ (Hindus arise, throw out the Christians).

Speakers at the rally claimed Christianity is a major threat to Indian nationalism, and called on tribal Christians to “reconvert.” A resolution at the Mela called on the central government to take serious note of conversion issues in tribal areas and enact laws to prevent them. It called for a nationwide anti-conversion law.

The leaders also claimed that anti-conversion laws formed by the state governments of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Gujarat and Orissa have proved ineffective because of loopholes.

Attempt to burn pastor alive

JAN 12-13. In **Nizamabad** district, AP, two pastors and five others sustained injuries in two attacks. A mob of about 100 extremists attacked a group of Christians led by a pastor as they distributed pamphlets. Police intervened before they could burn the pastor alive.

In the second attack, an extremist group dragged five people from a 5-year-old girl’s birthday party and beat them. The pastor was kicked unconscious and left.

Homes Burned and Christians Beaten

JAN 15. A brother of a pastor, returning from the market in Matiapara village in **Orissa**, was beaten and abused. To prevent problems in this small village of 70 people (where only nine are Christians), the incident was not reported to the police. The next day, however, local villagers armed with "lathis" (bamboo rods) attacked the Christians. Their houses were ransacked and the home of the pastor was set on fire. Nearby homes also caught fire and were destroyed. Six of the eight homes burned belonged to Christians.

Hindu villagers have accused the Christians of forcible conversion. And a militant youth group claimed the Christians were using torture to convert Hindus.

Orphanage stoned. Child killed

JAN 26. In **Rajasthan**, an angry mob attacked a Christian orphanage, stoning one of the children to death in the rampage. About 100 abandoned children and orphans along with two pastors were in the home at the time of the attack. The attackers demanded that the Christians revert to Hinduism.

Four leaders arrested

JAN 26. Four Christians were arrested in **Jabalpur**, accused of converting tribals to Christianity. A bus load of 23 tribal Christians were on their way to a Church convention in Nagpur when police, acting on complaints from a member of a Hindu organisation, arrested the four leaders and charged them under the state's "Religion Freedom Act."

Christians beaten with iron rods

In **Bhopal**, 25 Christians were beaten up by attackers. A witness said he saw about 35 people armed with iron rods and sticks fleeing from the house where the Christians had been praying. Several of the Christians, including a priest and a child, were seriously injured.

JAN 28. Extremists armed with sticks, rods and other sharp weapons attacked a Christian seminar being held in a private home in **Bhopal**. The militants began to pelt the building with stones, shattered windows and tried to break down the doors. Accusing the Christians of organizing religious conversions, they began to beat the worshipers with rods. At least 18 were injured, including six who were rushed to a hospital in serious condition.

The assault left the pastor who had organized the seminar, with fractures in his hands and legs while the guest speaker suffered a broken hand and a head injury requiring eight stitches. This was the fourth attack against Christians in the state in four days.

Children's hostel inauguration stoned

JAN 29. Bishop Thomas Dabre and 3 priests were inaugurating a hostel for tribal children in the village of Ghosali, **Maharashtra** when they were pelted with stones and verbally abused. One of the priests sustained head injuries.

The incident began when over 100 members of the militant organizations began protesting against the hostel, claiming that its purpose was to convert the children to Christianity. Local villagers who were grateful for this new facility drove the militants away before violence could escalate.

Pastors beaten and humiliated

JAN 30. In **Indore**, Pastor Jojin was distributing tracts in slum areas of the city when he was accosted, beat and driven out of the area. On Feb 5, about 40 people entered the church compound as the pastors were preparing for the morning prayer service.

The door of the church was smashed in and the mob began beating Pastor Jojin and Pastor Jijo, a trainee. Bibles were destroyed. The two pastors were paraded through the streets as the crowd humiliated and thrashed them on the way.

When the police intervened, the injured pastors were first detained but later taken to the hospital. Three of the attackers have been arrested. They accused the pastors of misleading the public and preparing them to be converted to Christianity.

If these were isolated incidents, it would still be extremely serious. But it is worse. All across India, Hindu radicals are openly attacking Christians, and the situation is getting more and more difficult for the believers.

Pray that God will strengthen His church, mend the broken bones, and uplift the spirits of the persecuted believers. Pray that their testimony and faithfulness will result in many coming to Christ.

“But I tell you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who insult and persecute you; that you may *prove to be* sons of your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:44-45)