



Christian  
Solidarity Worldwide

**INDIA**

**Annual Report  
2001**

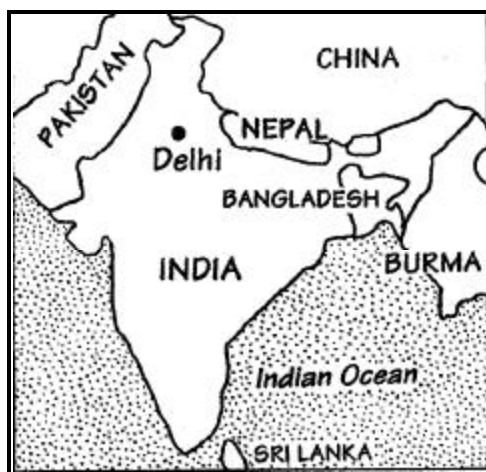
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# 1 COUNTRY PROFILE

## 1.1 MAP AND GENERAL PROFILE



### **Country Name**

**Republic of India**

### *Capital*

New Delhi

### **Geography**

#### *Border countries*

Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Burma

#### *Border waters*

Indian Ocean

#### *Area*

3,204,000 sq km

#### *Terrain*

Very mixed, ranging from extensive plains to high mountains in the north-west and the north-east

#### *Climate*

Very mixed, depending on the area and the time of year; generally hotter in the plains and cooler in the mountainous areas

### **People**

#### *Population*

1.1 billion

#### *Life expectancy*

64 years

#### *Ethnic Groups*

Over 4,500, main ones being Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil and Urdu

#### *Religions*

Hindu (79%), Muslim (12%), Christian (2.5%), Sikh (1.9%), Buddhist (0.7%), Other [including animist](3.9%)

#### *Literacy*

56%

#### *Languages*

18 major languages headed by Hindi and English; more than 1,500 minor languages

### **1.1.2 Government**

India is officially a secular republic, and is the world's largest democracy. It is comprised of 28 union states and seven union territories. The states have a certain amount of autonomy, and their own legislative Parliaments. This is similar in some respects to the system in the USA. The federal Parliament is the main legislative body for the country as a whole. The country also has a written constitution. The Prime Minister is the head of the Government. There are many political parties competing for power, and the present Government is a coalition. Hindi is the official language of the Union, with English being the legislative and judicial language. India has been an independent state since 1947.

### **1.1.3 Economy**

Despite containing some of the largest cities in the world, India is predominantly rural and agricultural. Around 70% of the labour force works in agriculture. However, industrialisation and urbanisation continue apace. Wealth is unevenly distributed, both between the different castes, and geographically (prosperous states include Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu; poorer states include Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan).

### **1.1.4 Military**

The Indian military is relatively well equipped, and remains one of the most funded parts of the state infrastructure. It was recently estimated that in India there are four soldiers for every doctor.

### **1.1.5 International Disputes**

India has had frequent quarrels with her neighbours since independence. These have included three wars with Pakistan (as well as several smaller scale conflicts in the disputed state of Jammu-Kashmir) and one with China. There is an intense rivalry between India and Pakistan, which has included a nuclear arms race.

## **1.2 HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

Having formed the core of the powerful Moghul Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, India had regressed to a patchwork of small kingdoms by the time that Britain began to extend her influence over much of the sub-continent in the 150 years after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. It was only, though, in 1858, following the Indian Mutiny, that the British Crown took over the running of India from the East India Company.

India became an independent state in 1947. The political scene was dominated for many years by the Congress Party. However, the present Government is led by a coalition, the National Democratic Alliance. This claims to respect India's tradition of secular government and religious tolerance. However, the leading party in the coalition is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party linked to militant Hindu groups. The BJP's commitment to secular government and religious toleration is open to question. The BJP made significant gains in 1991 (when it became the largest opposition party), 1995 and 1998 (when it won the election and became the leading member of the coalition). The coalition government fell in 1999, but the BJP won the election and became the leading party in a reformed coalition.

### **1.3 GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS**

#### **1.3.1 Thematic Concerns**

As well as many examples of religious persecution occurring within India (see below), there are other human rights concerns. These include torture and ill-treatment in prisons, especially of political prisoners; atrocities committed by armed groups opposed to the government (the most prominent being the attack on the Indian parliament in November by Muslim extremists); rapes and assaults carried out upon women by members of the security forces; "disappearances" involving people vanishing after being seized by the armed forces; and the continued mistreatment of Dalits, both individually by high caste neighbours, and collectively by a state which continues to drag its feet on the issue of giving Dalits full rights in practice as well as in theory.

#### **1.3.2 India and the UN**

India has been a member of the UN Commission on Human Rights ever since independence in 1947.

She ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1979, three years after they came into effect. India ratified the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) in 1959; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 1968; and the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1992 and 1993 respectively.

However, India has not ratified the Optional Protocol (OPT) to the ICCPR; the Convention on the Status of Refugees (CSR); or the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).

Christian Solidarity Worldwide highlighted persecution in India number of times at the UN during the year [see 2.3.4 and 2.3.5 below]

### **1.3.3 The Caste System**

The caste system in many senses characterizes and divides Indian society. On the whole it is divided into four parts. The top layer - or Brahmin – comprises those who learn and teach the Hindu scriptures. Second is the warrior caste, followed by the professional caste (lawyers, bankers etc), and finally the workers. However these workers are quite distinct from the Dalits below them who will be responsible for the ‘dirty’ jobs.

Stigmatised and oppressed by the caste system, the Dalits of India - numbering over 300 million people (one third of India’s population) – find themselves at the bottom of a system with no ladder to climb up.

They are the most oppressed people in India. They are also known as the untouchables or outcastes, literally outside the caste system. The majority face daily discrimination in every area of life and random acts of violence against Dalits occur frequently. It is estimated that an incident against a Dalit takes place every hour.

In the last few decades Dalits have become increasingly aware of their rights and through education they are increasingly able and passionate about articulating these. Their movement has been politicized and has led to a number of legal changes. Notably in the 1950s a reservation system in education and government employment was introduced under which a percentage of places was reserved for Dalits. Thus in modern day India Dalits can be found at many levels of society. However the caste system is deeply entrenched in everyday life such that even a person’s name is an indication of their caste and leads to discrimination regardless of their profession.

There is much less discrimination in towns than in the rural areas where segregation is a part of daily life. Dalits are considered unclean; thus in a village with a stream the Dalits will always live downstream and the Brahmins upstream. Surnames usually mark out your caste, but if it is at all unclear people will simply ask. Forms, job applications, etc will all have a section for caste details. Even the Hindu gods belong to the various castes, eg. Ram to warrior caste. Inter-marriage is not allowed and those who violate this can be hanged by their family, usually under intense peer pressure from others. The Judiciary is 99% Brahmin therefore there is no incentive to go to court because justice is often elusive.

Many Christians are from a Dalit background. Brahmins are often more resistant to Christianity because of the perceived equalizing effect of church life. Tamil Nadu is probably the state least affected by the caste system because of the strong progressive movement there. However the reservation system has led to inter caste tension. South India has the worst caste problem within the churches, and separate caste churches still exist there. In North India the majority of Christians are from a Dalit background, so there is less discrimination.

The Christian church is becoming increasingly aware of the need to support the Dalits in their struggle for justice and of the need to integrate fully those adhering to Christianity. At the forefront of this drive is Christian Solidarity Worldwide's partner organisation in India, the All India Christian Council (AICC). However, prejudice in some sections of the church continues, and much work remains to be done.

During 2001, many Dalits took further steps in their campaign for human rights and their desire to be free from what they saw as an oppressive Hinduism, by organising and attending a mass conversion rally [see section 2.1 below].

#### **1.4 RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND**

India is predominantly Hindu. The historical antecedents of this began in the third millennium BC., when the origins of what became Hinduism started in the Indus River Valley. These origins consisted of a temple-based, god-king system akin to that in Babylon.

The Aryan invasion of the second millennium BC added a polytheistic system resembling the later Greco-Roman paganism. The Aryans also brought the Vedic texts, seen as divine revelation, and they established the caste system.

In the sixth century BC, reform movements began, including the Jain and the Buddhist religions. Several hundred years later, around 300BC, the Hindu epics were composed. These form the basis for much modern Hindu belief, although the term "Hinduism" did not come into use until around 1200 AD.

However, Christianity also has a long history in India, since, according to tradition, St Thomas preached the gospel in India before being martyred there. Christianity did not, however, spread widely until the 1790s, when the English evangelist William Carey began his work. India has had for several centuries a thriving indigenous church.

As Islam spread eastwards in the centuries after the seventh century AD, clashes began between Hindus and Muslims. These clashes were not only religious, but also political and cultural. They increased in ferocity as the centuries wore on, although partly held in check by the British Raj. In 1947, during the process of Indian independence, even conservative estimates put the number of dead in Hindu-Muslim

clashes at one million. Sectarian clashes between adherents of the two religions have flared up periodically ever since, the most recent being in February 2002.

The rising tide of Hindu nationalism in the latter part of the twentieth century tended for a long time to target Muslims. However, during the last few years, the attention of militant Hindus has turned increasingly towards the Christians, and there have been many examples of persecution of Christians, particularly since 1996.

India is officially a secular state, where all religions have freedom of worship. Article 25 of the Constitution provides for freedom of conscience, and the freedom to adhere to any religion. It also guarantees the right to propagate a religion. Article 30 guarantees religious minorities the right to set up and to run educational institutions.

However, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians have faced discrimination at different times since independence.

Since the hardline Hindu BJP assumed power at the head of coalition governments from 1998 onwards, persecution of Christians has risen enormously in certain parts of the country. This has usually emanated from extremist Hindu groups, and state and local governments, rather than directly from the national government. However, the BJP's emphasis on Hindu expansionism (*Hindutva*)<sup>1</sup> has helped to create a climate in which persecution of Christians can flourish.

According to a secular Hindu journalist, for example, Hindu militants are "leaving no stone unturned, no avenue unexplored, as they seek innovative, pseudo-intellectual, and pseudo-cultural methods" to turn people against Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

False accusations are regularly made against Christians. These include a common one concerning alleged coercion in conversions; claims that Christianity alienates people from Indian culture (an example given is that some Christian schools don't allow students to wear the *kum kum* [red dot on the forehead]); wild accusations that Christian missionaries are spying for the CIA; and claims that church leaders are giving support to separatist rebels in the north-east.

Typical of such claims are those made by the head of the militant Hindu umbrella group, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), K.S. Sudershan. At a gathering of RSS workers from the seven north-eastern states on 21 January 2002, Mr Sudershan accused the Christian churches of helping to arm and otherwise aid the rebel groups and of "fuelling secessionist tendencies" among the region's youth.

He also alleged that "The threat to national security apart, the churches have been involved in converting Hindus to Christianity by luring the poor people with money and other temptations".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The philosophy of Hindutva- one nation, one religion, one culture – began as an ideology in the 1920s. As militant Hinduism has flourished in the 1990s, it has become increasingly significant. Under the present BJP dominated government, it affects many areas of life in India.

<sup>2</sup> *Compass Direct*, 15 March 2002

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*



The BJP is linked with some of the extremist Hindu groups that have been implicated in attacks on Christians and Muslims. Furthermore, as the US State Department's *2000 Annual Report on International Freedom: India* states (p.1): "ineffective investigation and prosecution of attacks on religious minorities is interpreted by some extremist elements as a signal that such violence is likely to go unpunished." This situation is partly due to the weaknesses in the legal system, but many observers attribute it in large part to the links between these groups and the BJP.

Between 1994 and 1997, it is estimated that at least 15 Christians were killed. As the persecution escalated from 1998 onwards, the figures grew. During 1998, there were 136 reported incidents of attacks on Christians in that year alone, according to the human rights group The United Christian Forum for Human Rights. In 1998 and early 1999, at least eight Christians were killed. According to the Indian Government's own figures (see below), that figure reached 33 Christians killed in the two years 1999-2000. In 1999, the most prominent killings were those of the Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons, burnt to death by a militant Hindu mob in January 1999, and the Roman Catholic priest Arul Doss, murdered by another militant Hindu mob armed with bows and arrows in September 1999.

#### **1.4.1 Government's Position on Freedom of Religion**

As noted above, the Constitution specifically provides for freedom of religion, and generally all religions in India do enjoy freedom of worship.<sup>4</sup> The most important article in the constitution pertaining to this is article 25. This guarantees freedom of conscience, the right to adhere to a religion, and the right to propagate a religion. Article 30 guarantees religious minorities the right to set up and to run educational institutions. Article 51 requires citizens to "promote harmony" regardless of religious differences.

However, as the US State Department noted in 1999:

While the law is meant to protect religious freedom, enforcement of the law has been poor, particularly at the state and local levels...In particular, Hindu extremist groups continued to attack Christians. In many cases, the government response was inadequate, consisting largely of statements criticizing the violence against Christians but with few efforts to hold accountable those persons responsible or to prevent such incidents from occurring<sup>5</sup>

The Indian Government resolutely defends its position on religious freedom. When a parliamentary question at the end of 1999 drew attention to the US State Department's Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999, which was critical of India's record on religious freedom, the Government replied that

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<sup>4</sup> The main government department responsible for religious matters is that for Home Affairs. There is also a quasi-governmental body called the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) set up in 1992, to help represent the concerns of the religious minorities. However, the effectiveness of the NCM has often been challenged by human rights campaigners in India.

<sup>5</sup> US State Department, *Human Rights Reports for 1999* (2000), India, p.28

Government regards this report as an internal document of the US Government. Government rejects any intrusive exercise into how we conduct our affairs. The Indian Constitution guarantees absolute religious freedom to the citizens of the country, reflecting the well-known social traditions of tolerance and respect for all religions.<sup>6</sup>

In line with this attitude, the Government of India has consistently refused to accept a visit from either the US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom or from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

However, the Government has many critics, who say that it is failing badly the whole area of religious freedom.

One area in which the Government is particularly open to criticism concerns its open involvement in the promotion and indoctrination of Hindu values and identity, especially in the realm of education. In the words of one commentator:

In India, the government recently proposed that the study of Hindu sacred texts be compulsory for its students. The government's proposal advocated that school curriculums be "Indianized, nationalized, and spiritualized." Since the Bharatiya Janata Party has come to dominate Indian politics, a number of other such measures have been forwarded by the government in its agenda of *Hindutva*—an attempt at defining the Indian nation by its dominant religious tradition, Hinduism. A number of groups and individuals, both religious and secular, have expressed outrage at such a proposal considering the great diversity of religions in the Indian sub-continent.<sup>7</sup>

An Indian historian, Prof. K. N. Panikkar, notes that the militant Hindu umbrella group the Sangh Parivar

has effectively used history as an ideology for political mobilisation, mythologising, distorting and falsifying it. Therefore, the widespread apprehension when the BJP government sought to fill the Council with historians of their hue.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 REVIEW OF 2001

### 2.1 POLITICS AND PERSECUTION

An example of persecution faced by Christians appeared in late July 2001. An anti-conversion bill was brought into the national Parliament by an MP from a militant Hindu Party, the Shiv Sena. It was intended to hinder all conversions under the guise of banning forced conversions, and it was aimed at the growing number of conversions to Christianity in many parts of India. The bill was unconstitutional because freedom of conscience is a basic right in India's constitution. However, militant Hindu MPs are numerous and powerful in the present Parliament, and there

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<sup>6</sup> *Indian Polity - Parliament Questions & Answers - Rajya Sabha*, Government [Minister of External Affairs] answer to unstarred question 327, 2 December 1999

<sup>7</sup> Prof Timothy Brown, 'Does Religion Promote – or Subvert – Civil Society?' *Civnet Journal* (vo.3, no.1, 1999)

<sup>8</sup> *The Asian Age*, 7 July 1998

was a danger the bill might pass and become law. In the event, however, it fell through lack of parliamentary time.<sup>9</sup>

The BJP-led government also spent much of the year planning to bring in a draconian new law which will monitor even more closely (and impede) foreign charitable donations. The present Foreign Contribution Regulation Act<sup>10</sup> has already victimized Christian organizations; its intended successor will do this all the more. As Ram Raj, the Dalit leader, has said, the move “is a clear attempt to cut off Christian involvement in the field of education, medical work and social development.” In the event, the bill was not introduced in 2001, but looks likely to be brought in at some point in 2002.

The Christian church forged stronger links with the Dalits - formerly known as Untouchables - during 2001. The All India Christian Council supported strongly the Dalit mass conversion rally on 4th November 2001 in India's capital, New Delhi. For the last four years Dalit leader, Ram [now Udit] Raj had been organizing and planning a mass conversion event to be held in Delhi.

Hinduism spawned and upholds the caste system, and so conversion from Hinduism was thus adopted as a strategy for change.

Despite the blocking tactics of the authorities, preventing thousands of Dalits from attending, around 50,000 did so. These Dalits converted from Hinduism to Buddhism. In so doing they made a political statement, expressing their rejection of India's caste system, which has led to their oppression and marginalisation.

Buddhism was chosen above all other religions for one main reason. Under the reservation system<sup>11</sup> Dalits can be Buddhists and still retain a right to these privileges but the system denies them to Muslim and Christian Dalits. Thus a decision to convert to Islam or Christianity has enormous repercussions.

Militant Hindu groups reacted angrily to the proposed rally, and made various threats and attempts to hinder it.

The event was supported by the AICC, the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the National Council of Churches in India (the official Protestant body)

The President of the AICC, Dr Joseph D'Souza, described the event as a “major social revolution”. International support was vital because this was a “freedom of conscience issue”. Other international observers included representatives from Christian Solidarity Worldwide [see section 2.3.5 below].

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<sup>9</sup> Several states in India either already have anti-conversion acts as part of their legislation (for example Orissa) or have attempted to enact it (for example Gujarat).

<sup>10</sup> This Act restricts the amount of overseas funding that religious and charitable organisations in India can use.

<sup>11</sup> The reservation system was introduced in the 1960s as a result of early Dalit campaigns for greater justice and representation. Under the system a percentage of government jobs are set aside or 'reserved' for Dalits

Joseph D'Souza was one of three Christian leaders to speak from the platform. Themes emerging from their presentations included the fact that Christians were there at the invitation of the Dalit leadership, and that they were there to support the Dalits as they asserted their freedom of conscience.

Dr John Dayal, the Secretary General of the AICC, noted in his speech that the Dalits were "affirming their God given right to liberty – a right denied to them for 3000 years".

Christians and Dalits also held a series of meetings during the year, pledging to co-operate more closely together.

New incidents involving attacks by militant Hindus upon Christians in India continued to occur (see below). Christians continue to be vulnerable to unprovoked attacks in modern day India.

## **2.2 DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL CASES**

### **2.2.1 Some Examples of Attacks Upon Christians during 2001 and early 2002**

**February 2002** A mob of 70 militant Hindus, shouting anti-Christian slogans and wearing saffron headbands – the emblem of extreme Hindu nationalists – attacks a Catholic church in Hinkal, a suburb of Mysore, at the end of the service. A number of Christians are beaten up and hospitalised.

A mob of 200 anti-Christian militants storms a Christian service at the house of Christian Sukhulal Bhavarao, in Madhya Pradesh state. Christians are attacked, Bibles ripped up, musical instruments destroyed, and threats made.

In the newly created state of Jharkand, two missionaries and a new believer are kidnapped by anti-Christian militants who threaten to kill all three, before eventually releasing them unhurt.

In Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh state, an evangelist, Lalta Prasad, is arrested after Hindu militants accuse him of converting people by coercion

**January 2002** A Catholic priest is attacked and badly beaten in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh state, in what appears to be a religiously motivated assault.

**November 2001** Four Christian workers receive serious injuries when they are attacked by a group of Hindu militants near Himmatgarh village of the Dhar district in Madhya Pradesh state. The Christians have been showing a film on Jesus Christ.

A Roman Catholic nun is murdered in the Balrampur district of Chattisgarh: the local bishop suspects Hindu militants, who have been hostile to the work of the nun in the community.

**September 2001** An Operation Mobilisation team is attacked by members of an extremist Hindu organization whilst they are showing a video based on the life of Jesus.

**August 2001** A priest, Father Mendonca, is badly injured in an attack by over forty Hindu extremists, near Bombay. In Madhya Pradesh state, a nun is shot in the face by four men believed to be militant Hindus.

**June 2001** Campaign by Hindu militants to force the closure of Christian orphanages, including that run by Bishop M A Thomas in Kota, Rajasthan state. Bishop Thomas and his family receive death threats.

**February 2001** A young evangelist, Riyaz Augustin, is beaten to death by a gang of Hindu extremists. Catholic priest Fr Tommy Manjuli shot dead by an unidentified gunman.

**January 2001** Two Christian priests are abducted and badly beaten in Jaher village, Rajasthan. Churches attacked in Orissa state and in Tamilnadu state. In the latter incident, several Christians are viciously assaulted, with at least one seriously injured.

Many other attacks upon Christians have gone unreported. Even official Government figures, released in August 2001, showed that in the previous two years 33 Christians had been killed and over 300 injured. Many sources believe the actual figures, including all the unreported incidents, are much higher.

### **2.2.2 Ian Stillman**

Ian Stillman is a British Christian who has worked among the deaf in India for nearly 30 years.

He has been held in prison since August 2000 on drugs charges, although the evidence against him is very weak.

There have been many flaws in the judicial process. The original trial outraged justice groups around the world, as no credible evidence was offered to support the allegations against a man who is known internationally for his work with the deaf.

For much of 2001, Ian's treatment in prison was negligent, with little attention paid to his medical needs.

In early 2002, Ian's appeal was rejected. The campaign for justice goes on.

## **2.3 CSW ACTION**

### **2.3.1 Prayer**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide has continued to alert prayer networks to issues of current concern in India.

### **2.3.2 Information Sharing**

CSW has continued to work closely with our partners in India, the All India Christian Council (AICC). CSW has also briefed MPs and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the situation in India, and has shared information with reliable sources and with other NGOs.

### **2.3.3 Publicity**

CSW has given a series of radio interviews, sent several press releases, and has produced a detailed feature on India on the CSW Website.

### **2.3.4 Campaigning**

CSW worked with MPs to table four Parliamentary Questions on India during the year. CSW showed solidarity with the Dalits and the AICC by sending out a team to the Dalit rally of 4 November (see above and below). CSW has also been investigating the militant World Hindu Council (VHP), a charitable organisation, and its links with other, even more shadowy groups.

On the Ian Stillman case, CSW provided legal advice; produced up-to-date briefings and press releases, and produced an Urgent Prayer Network issue on the case and otherwise encouraged prayer and campaigning on Ian's behalf.

Both at the UN and at foreign ministries overseas, Christian Solidarity Worldwide raised awareness of human rights issues in India through our UN Director. Briefings from the AICC were forwarded as part of this. Among the agencies briefed was the UN High Commission on Human Rights.

### **2.3.5 Solidarity**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide helped to ensure the participation of Dalit representatives at the UN World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, at Durban, South Africa [30 August – 6 September].

The Dalit delegation, including the prominent Christian human rights activist John Dayal, felt that the attending of the conference by the delegation gave them an important platform to begin the process of getting their voice heard. Although there have been other Dalit representations to the UN, it was felt that this delegation gained a particular breakthrough.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide felt that it was important that John Dayal had the opportunity to go to the conference, as he is a key figure in the human rights field in India at the moment.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide also stood in solidarity with the Dalits as they asserted their right to freedom of religion and to other human rights at the mass conversion rally of 4 November 2001. The main purpose of the Christian Solidarity Worldwide fact finding visit of 2-6 November was to demonstrate this solidarity. As well as standing with the Dalits at the rally, the Christian Solidarity Worldwide team also met with the Dalit leader Udit Raj (as well as with leading figures from within the AICC) and visited a slum area in Delhi to see first hand an example of the poverty most Dalits in India live under.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.4 CONCLUSIONS**

CSW continues to be strongly concerned by the extensive persecution suffered by Christians in India today. Despite the Government's pledge to uphold the secular constitution and to respect religious freedom, it seems to have done little at times to prevent active persecution of Christians and indeed other minorities. As the US State Department's Report on Religious Freedom points out, this almost certainly stems from the links the ruling coalition party the BJP has with militant Hindu organisations, the very organisations that are doing the persecuting. As long as militant Hindus continue to have such intimate relations with the ruling government, and as long as that government refuses to deploy the full power of the state to protect Christians and other minorities, then the Christians and other minorities will continue to be vulnerable.

## **2.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

CSW calls upon the Indian Government to:

- ?? Clamp down upon the activities and restrict the source of funds of militant Hindu organisations such as the Bajrang Dal and the VHP
- ?? Afford the full measure of state protection to Christian communities and individuals who have been attacked or are in danger of being attacked.
- ?? Encourage the representatives of the state, such as the police and the judiciary, to take seriously accounts by Christians of physical attacks, and to follow up these reports in a thorough and fair manner.
- ?? Abandon attempts to further restrict the flow of overseas funding into Christian projects in India - and indeed to ease current restrictions on such funding - in recognition of the useful role these projects play in Indian society.

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<sup>12</sup> For further details of this fact finding visit, see the Christian Solidarity Worldwide report [Visit Report: India, 2-6 November 2001], available from the Christian Solidarity Worldwide office and also posted on the Christian Solidarity Worldwide web-site.

CSW calls upon the UN:

- ?? Undertake more rigorous efforts to identify the caste system with oppression and racism.

CSW calls upon the British Government to:

- ?? Place human rights, and particularly persecution of Christians and other minorities, at the centre of bilateral talks with India.

### **Acknowledgements**

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