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ASAP Day of Prayer & Fasting

Volume 8, Issue 3
3 October 2009

Hindus & Their Festivals

As the Hindu festivals are celebrated throughout the world this month, use these on-site requests to pray that blinded eyes will be opened to the Truth!

"But if our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, KJV).

ASAP -- As you pray for the South Asian peoples this month, please remember the 969 million Hindus affiliated with the South Asian peoples affinity group. Hinduism originated in the Indian subcontinent. It is the world's third-largest religion after Christianity and Islam, with approximately 1 billion adherents, of whom approximately 905 million live in India. Reincarnation and a supreme being revealed in a variety of forms and natures are fundamental to Hinduism. It is said that there are more than 300 million gods worshipped. Essentially it is believed that a person's soul will continue to be reborn until it attains salvation. Becoming part of or one with the supreme being is the goal of all Hindus. As the "Festival of Lights" is celebrated this month among Hindus worldwide, pray that they will truly come to know the Light of the World--Jesus--the only one who can make them one with God. "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6, NIV).

SOUTH ASIA -- I wanted to write and let you know about a series of Hindu festivals that have and are occurring across South Asia. These festivals are full of celebration, music, food, dancing, and virtually every form of enjoyment that you can imagine. The people are all gathering around the idols that they have produced over the last months to give a special time of worship to their favorite deity. Then the Hindu families take the idols to a body of water where the idols will "return to the earth."

Many times at the end of these festivals, the area resembles the state fairgrounds once all the rides have gone. Trash litters the ground and remnants of a once great occasion stand lifeless as all the people have gone home.

It is at this time that I am asking you to pray specifically for the people who have enjoyed many days of festivity and are now returning to normal life. They are now facing the true emptiness of their faith as these many days of celebration have ended without any response from their gods. The idols have all sunk lifeless into the water never to rise again.

I believe that many Hindus across South Asia are feeling the same emptiness that I felt in those days before my heart was awakened to the truth of the Gospel. I am sure you can remember that emptiness as well. Can you take some time today and during the next weeks to pray specifically for the many empty Hindu hearts that need to receive life from the Spirit of God?
*Gene Yaussy

*All names have been changed

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We are in the midst of one of the major Hindu festivals of the year. This is a time of both feasting and fasting and women lead forth in this season. For hours they sing and dance and lavishly worship these lesser gods, hoping to please them.

Sitting here we can smell the burnt offerings being offered to the mother goddess.

Praise our God and King that He does not slumber nor sleep.

Praise God that Christ has secured our victory over our enemies

Pray that we are bold in telling His Story and that even in the midst of the festivities people see there is no real hope in these lesser gods and would hunger for the Holy King of Heaven.
*Pearl Yarwood

Today is Durga Pooja day. It's a day to celebrate the gods within objects. The gods have blessed us with all these things, so we worship these things. Or at least if you're a Hindu this is what you believe. It's sad isn't it? To bow down and give offerings to something that can't do anything for you in return. Pray for Hindus today, there are 800 million in India, and many more around the globe... perhaps across the street from your house! So often in this society, religion and culture blend together. Many of the people here can't tell you why they do this or where this started.... Tomorrow Hindus will take their idols and put them in water to dissolve and take their wishes out to sea. Pray that Hindus will come to know the God who created the seas and knows them by name. *Megg Carvell

SOUTH ASIAN HINDU FESTIVALS
Hinduism refers to a diverse set of religious, philosophical, and cultural beliefs and practices. Reincarnation

and a supreme being revealed in a variety of forms and natures are fundamental to Hinduism. A basic desire for freedom from the evils and pitfalls of life guides much of their practices. Hinduism is one of the oldest religious traditions practiced today. It has no founder. The revered sacred texts called the Vedas (pronounced VEH-dah) contain much of their tradition. There are a great number of rituals and festivals that venerate a diverse group of deities. Many consider these deities to be manifestations of one supreme being, Brahman. Others see a singular god with different forms. Actions are considered to determine a person's progress toward salvation, which is the freedom from the cycle of reincarnation. Actions of virtue will lead one closer to the goal, while evil actions add to the separation and prove a lack of understanding. South Asian Hindus celebrate a Hindu festival almost every month. The festivals are symbolic of a link between the home, the village, and the larger outside world. Understanding the reasons for observing the festivals help Christian intercessors know how to pray effectively for the Hindus who do not know Jesus as Savior. Only God, through the Holy Spirit, can give South Asian Hindus a new, true reason to celebrate. Please pray for Hindus to find true salvation in Christ. *Deanna Cassmore

Pray for the women of Himachal Pradesh. God has made it clear to us that He is working mightily in the women here. It is often the responsibility of the Hindu wife to carry out the religious activities and prayers for the family, and we are seeing Hindu women be the first in their families to come to know Christ and then ... lead the rest of their family even their husbands to Christ. In such a male dominated culture, they are truly the

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unlikely candidate, but God is using the unexpected! Pray that God will continue to raise up a powerful force of women and use them to sweep His Gospel through this state and through this nation. *Delia Burleson

DIVALI, one of the most popular Hindu festivals, will be celebrated by Hindus around the world this month. The festival covers four days, but the primary date is Oct. 17. Often called the Festival of Lights, it is marked by fireworks, candles, and strings of lights wherever they can be hung. There are as many stories about the meanings of Divali as there are lights in each city, but the basic belief is that Divali represents the victory of good (light) over evil (darkness). In South India, the day is celebrated with a ritual oil bath in the morning, donning new clothes, eating special sweets, and greeting one another with "Have you had your Ganges bath?" (referring to the oil bath that is considered as purifying as a bath in the holy Ganges River). Transgressions are forgiven, and people are united in heart and spirit. Will you pray for the Hindus of South Asia this week? Ask God to reveal His Son as the true Light of the World. Pray that their eyes will be opened to see the darkness that surrounds them and that their hearts will be prepared to receive the seed of the gospel. Pray that this time next year, there will be fewer Divali celebrations and more salvation celebrations! Ask God to help you meet Hindus in your neighborhood, and to give you opportunities this week to talk to them about the ultimate victory of good over evil. *Deanna Cassmore

It is very common for Hindus to invite friends and neighbors home to celebrate Hindu festivals. During the Divali festival, Hindus invite friends from any faith to join in the fun of bursting firecrackers. Special foods

are prepared and shared and gifts are given. In Maharashtra near Mumbai, a national believer decided to invite his Hindu friend over for Christmas. The Hindu friend replied, "Why did you wait so long to invite us to join you in celebrating Christmas? We always invited you to our Divali holiday and you never invited us at Christmas to tell us what you believe." Pray that believers will eagerly invite their Hindu friends to participate in their Christmas activities this year. *Jodi Hunter

"Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John.8:12).

We are currently in the season of festivals here in India. We just got through with the big Muslim holiday, which was immediately followed by a big Hindu festival. In this Hindu festival all the communities build a big statue of their god. They celebrate and worship it every night for days. Then at the end of the festival they have a huge ceremony where they light the god on fire and explode the statue and shoot off all kinds of firecrackers and dance and worship this statue. It's sad to see people worship something they had to make and something they have to destroy.... Pray for the darkness of this festival season. *Chelsea Abbott

OCTOBER HINDU FESTIVALS

- 2 Ghandi Jayanthi – Ghandi's b-day
- 3 Lakshmi Puja – women's favorite
- 4 Valmiki Jayanti – Hindu sage
- 8 Karwa Chauth – wife fasts for blessings upon husband
- 17 Diwali – Festival of Lights
- 17 Kali Puja – one of fiercest deities
- 19 Bhai Dhooj – sister fasts for blessings upon brother

**Thank you for praying for
South Asian Peoples!**

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