



Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailed analysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.

India



Population: 1236.34 millions (#3 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 3,287,263 square km. Occupying most of South Asia, India is the world's 14th largest country and the second most populous. India contains a wide variety of climates and terrain. The southern portion of the country is hot and tropical and includes two mountain ranges that follow the eastern and western coasts. The Western Ghats extend from the southern tip of India to the northwest, halfway to Pakistan, while the Eastern Ghats reach from the southern tip of India almost to Bangladesh. The Deccan Plateau occupies the area between the two ranges. The fertile Ganges Plain is centered in northeastern India bordering Nepal, and contains some of the world's most densely populated land. The Himalayas are a result of the Indian Plate pushing into the Eurasian Plate. The mountains extend from Kashmir to Myanmar and contain cold, mountainous climates as well as some of the wettest monsoon climates in the world. Large, well-known rivers such as the Ganges and Brahmaputra originate in the Himalayas and water the country before emptying into the Indian Ocean. The Thar Desert in western India borders Pakistan, and with the Himalayas strongly influences weather and climate. Droughts, flash floods, severe weather, and earthquakes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, pollution, and inadequate fresh water supplies. India is administratively divided into 28 states and seven union territories. Some of the seven union territories consist of island chains such as Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the south in the Indian Ocean.

Population: 1,189,172,906 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.344% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 2.62 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 65.77 male, 67.95 female (2011)

Peoples

Indo-Aryan: 72%

Dravidian: 25%

Mongoloid and other: 3%

Unlike China, with its dominant Han Chinese population, India consists of an amalgamation of different ethnic and linguistic groups among which no group constitutes a majority. India is home to a wide variety of cultures, with Indo-Aryan ethnicities (72%) predominating in the north and Dravidian (25%) in the south. Indo-Aryans tend to be somewhat more Caucasian in appearance and Dravidians somewhat darker, although millennia of intermixing have created a broad ethnic spectrum without distinct boundaries.

Languages: Hindi (41%), Bengali (8.1%), Telugu (7.2%), Marathi (7%), Tamil (5.9%), Urdu (5%), Gujarati (4.5%), Kannada (3.7%), Malayalam (3.2%), Oriya (3.2%), Punjabi (2.8%), Assamese (1.3%), Maithili (1.2%), other (5.9%). All the aforementioned languages are national languages with the exception of Maithili. Other national languages include Kashmiri, Sandiskirt and Sindhi. English has few native speakers but has associate status and is the most important for communication in government and commerce.

Due to a period of British colonialism, English is widely used as the language of politics, commerce and national communication. Hindi, spoken by 41% of Indians, is the country's most widely spoken language. The 478 million Hindi speakers are most concentrated in the northern Indian states of Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttaranchal. Although written in different scripts, Hindi and Urdu, spoken primarily by Muslims, are largely mutually intelligible; the two languages are sometimes called Hindustani.

Bengali is spoken by about 95 million Indians in West Bengal as well as in the neighboring nation of Bangladesh for a total of 230 million speakers worldwide. Telugu speakers number around 94 million mainly in Andhra Pradesh in southern India. Marathi is spoken by around 82 million speakers predominately in Maharashtra. Other languages in India which are spoken by large numbers of people include Tamil in Tamilnadu, Urdu, Gujarati in Gujarat, Kannada in Karnataka, Malayalam in Kerala, Oriya in Orissa, Punjabi in Punjab, Assamese in Assam, and Maithili. Other Indian languages make up the remaining 5.9% including languages spoken in many of the far eastern states such as Manipur and Nagaland.

Literacy: 61% (2001)

History

The Indus valley was home to one of the world's oldest civilizations thought to date to approximately 3000 BC. Numerous independent states with shifting borders rose and fell in the territory of modern India throughout its rich history. Science and technology blossomed in India during the Middle Ages. During the 16th century, various European powers began establishing colonies in India. India was a colony of Great Britain until independence was achieved in 1947 through non-violence resistance organized by leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi. India became a unified nation only after independence through the integration of British India previously under direct English rule with various regional client states administered by hereditary rulers. Since then, India has had several wars with neighboring Pakistan and border disputes with China over the disputed Kashmir region. Tensions between India and Pakistan continue to be high today. India developed its first nuclear weapon in the late 1990s.

Culture

Hinduism heavily influences society. Saturday is the day of worship. Tea is the national drink. The caste system influences many aspects of everyday life. Access to Hindu temples has been limited in the past to lower castes, but government legislation prohibits discrimination based on caste. Lower castes and the Dalits (untouchables) continue to receive poor treatment from higher castes with little active government intervention. Intercaste marriages are increasing, although discrimination and violence arising from caste differences still surface periodically, especially in rural areas. In recent years, a middle class has emerged as the economy has modernized. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are very low compared to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,500 (2010) [7.38% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.519

Corruption Index: 3.3

Like neighboring China, India has seen impressive economic growth and an emerging middle class. India has had an economy dominated by agriculture and textiles which is transitioning to include manufactured goods and services. Recently India has gained greater importance in the worldwide economy with services provided through telecommunications and software engineering and has also recently begun its own space program. India produces a large number of educated individuals who speak English and can be hired by companies based in English speaking countries. Even with recent annual economic growth averaging around 7%, the majority of the population is employed in agriculture. Intense cultivation of land for agricultural

purposes has resulted in environmental degradation in densely populated rural areas as well as a decline in the water table. This may lead to future problems with water scarcity. Many of the problems in India concerning the economy are linked to addressing the needs and assisting the development of an underdeveloped rural economy which includes hundreds of millions of people.

Corruption is perceived as pervasive and present in most areas of society. Human trafficking for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation are serious issues which are widespread. The government has done little to address human trafficking challenges. India is one of the world's largest illicit drug producers for opium.

Faiths

Hindu: 80.5%

Muslim: 13.4%

Christian: 2.3%

Sikh: 1.9%

Other: 1.8%

Unspecified: 0.1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 17,300,000

Seventh Day Adventists 1,488,302 3,923

Jehovah's Witnesses 33,089 432

Latter-day Saints 9,188 36

Religion

Hinduism is the most prevalent religion in India, being practiced by 80.5% of the population. Only a few provinces do not have Hinduism as the most prominent religion, all of which are in northern India or in far eastern India. Muslims make up 13.4% of the population and are the majority in only a portion of the states of West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir. Muslim communities can be found in many areas of northern India and is usually the largest minority religion throughout the country. India is home to approximately 157 million Muslims, the third largest population of Muslims in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan. Christianity is the third largest religion in India with 27 million adherents (2.3%) and makes up the majority of the population in the far eastern provinces of Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya. Most Christian converts tend to come from lower castes. Christians have established communities in many areas and are a sizeable minority particularly in southeastern India between Hyderabad and Kolkata as well as around Goa. The largest Christian denominations include Catholics and Syrian Orthodox. Sikhs make up 1.9% of India's population and are predominantly found in the state of Punjab. According to the census of India, there were a total of nearly eight million Buddhists and 4.2 million Jains as of 2001, each of which make up less than one percent of the population.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism, now practiced mainly in other nations of east and southeast Asia, originated in India. Hinduism represents a broad spectrum of beliefs varying from polytheism to pantheism to monotheism. The branches of Hinduism lack any centralized authority, and Hinduism is scarcely interpreted in the same way in any two villages. Most educated Hindus may accept certain core elements of their faith, yet reject many others. Hindu temples are rare among Indian expatriate communities. Although the vast majority of Indians are Hindu or Muslim, other indigenous religions, including Sikhism (20 million adherents) and Jainism (8-10 million adherents), constitute small minorities. These religions share similarities with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam in addition to their own unique features.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 29th

The constitution allows for religious freedom which is often restricted by state and local governments. India is a secular state with no official religion. Government does not sponsor Hinduism and Hindu culture but has shown favoritism towards Hindus over the years. Anti-conversion laws restrict Christian proselytism in five states (Gujarat, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh), challenge individuals to convert from Hinduism to other religions, and reinforce the status of the Hindu majority. Additional states have considered Anti-conversion legislation, such as Rajasthan, but these proposals have not become law. Anti-conversion legislation limits the freedom for NGOs to operate. Legislation specifically bans proselytism with the allurements of monetary gain or intimidation. Many Christians have wrongfully been accused of alluring converts by other means by Hindu extremist groups. Local police at times have done little to protect the rights and lives of religious minorities. Violence targeting Christians has been most extreme in Orissa and Karnataka and violence against Muslims occurs most regularly in northern India and Gujarat. Religious extremists carried out terrorist attacks in Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Delhi in the late 2000s.^[1]

Largest Cities

Urban: 29%

Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, **Ahmedabad**, Pune, **Surat**, **Kanpur**, Jaipur, Lucknow, **Nagpur**, **Patna**, **Indore**, **Vadodra**, Coimbatore, **Bhopal**, **Ludhiana**, **Kochi**, Visakhapatnam, **Chennai**, **Varanasi**, **Madurai**, **Meerut**, **Nashik**, **Jamshedpur**, **Jabalpur**, **Asansol**, **Dhanbad**, **Fardab**, **Allahabad**, **Vijayawada**, **Amritsar**, **Rajkot**.

Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

Nine of the 35 largest cities have a congregation. 9% of the national population lives in cities with over one million inhabitants.

LDS History

The first city the Gospel was preached in India was Calcutta in 1850. A couple British soldiers who joined the Church the year before elsewhere bore the testimonies to those around them in Calcutta. Elder Joseph Richards came the following year and baptized several and helped establish a branch in the city. Missionaries taught the Gospel in several other Indian cities in the early 1850s such as Bombay, Madras and Poona, establishing branches of the Church as they labored. In 1858 missionaries serving in the country returned to the United States and all the branches in the country were discontinued by 1903. The early converts to the Church in India were mostly Europeans living in the country. Missionaries called to labor in India were at the time unable to learn the native languages; this may have been a result of working primarily among Europeans.^[2] In the 1960s and 1970s, India was a part of the Southern Far East Mission, headquartered in Hong Kong. Church activities in India did not return until the 1960s and 1970s when several Indians were introduced to the Church and were converted. India was included in the Singapore Mission before becoming its own mission headquartered in Bangalore on January 1st, 1993. A significant milestone was the division of the India Bangalore Mission to create the India New Delhi Mission at the end of 2007. The new India New Delhi Mission included Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, and Nepal.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 9,188 (2010)

In 1980s, there were approximately 200 members. LDS membership reached 800 in 1990, 1,800 in 1995, and 2,865 in 2000. During the 2000s strong membership growth occurred as membership totaled 4,013 in 2002, 5,453 in 2004, 6,454 in 2006, 7,576 in 2008, and 9,188 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged from 8-20% between 2000 and 2010 and generally varied from 8-12%. In 2010, one in 129,427 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 36

The first branches in the country were organized in Bangalore, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, and New Delhi. The first district in the country was organized in 1980 in Bangalore. Two additional districts were organized in New Delhi (1986) and Hyderabad (1988). Nine branches and three districts functioned throughout the country by early 1990. Congregation growth accelerated, reaching 13 in 1993 and 20 by the end of 1995.

In 2001, the Bangalore India District consisted of nine branches with three in Bangalore, three in Coimbatore and one each in

Chennai, Cochin and Erode. The Hyderabad India District at this time had six branches in its boundaries; four in Hyderabad, one in Karimnagar and one in Rajahmundry. The India New Delhi District had two branches, both of which were in New Delhi. There were also three mission branches in India which reported directly to the mission president in Bangalore in Goa, Kolkata and Mumbai. In the following years the branches in Cochin and Karimnagar were discontinued.

Growth in congregations has also begun to accelerate in recent years. Branches increased in the country from 21 in 2002 to 30 as of September 2009. This growth occurred primarily in areas with few or no existing congregations. As of mid-2001 there was one branch in Rajahmundry. Two branches were created in the nearby cities of Kakinada and Vishakhapatnam a few years later. The branches in Rajahmundry and Vishakhapatnam were both divided to create two new branches around 2006 or 2007. Currently Vishakhapatnam has three branches (the newest being the Gajuwaka Branch created in 2009), Rajahmundry has three branches and Kakinada has one branch. A branch was also created outside of Bangalore in 2007 in the Kolar Gold Fields (KFG).

At the time the India New Delhi Mission was organized there were only four branches in northern India (three in New Delhi and one in Kolkata). By the middle of 2009, the number of branches in New Delhi doubled with the creation of the Dwarka, Noida and Pitampura Branches in 2008 and early 2009. Considering the third branch in New Delhi - the New Delhi 3rd Branch - was just created a year or two before, indicative of rapid congregational growth. Much of this rapid growth in congregations occurred due to new areas opening in the city for missionaries to labor in. In 2010, a seventh branch was organized in New Delhi, the New Delhi 4th Branch.

Between 2009 and mid-2011, four additional districts were organized in Chennai (2009), Coimbatore (2009), Visakhapatnam (2009), and Rajahmundry (2011). The India Bangalore and New Delhi Mission Branches include groups of members in isolated locations.

Activity and Retention

Activity rates in India appear to be quite good for Asia. Indian branches average of about 250 members per congregation. Many of the older branches in India in the cities of Bangalore, Chennai, Coimbatore, and Hyderabad have sacrament meeting attendance well over 100 people. However when smaller branches recently created or in isolated areas are taken into account, like the Goa Branch with around 30 active members in 2009, the average number of active members per branch is probably closer to 100. The number of active members in India is likely around 3,000, or 40%. Activity rates appear to vary from branch to branch. When Elder Oaks visited New Delhi in the fall of 2007, 54% of the membership attended district conference. Activity rates appear to be lower in the south due to accumulated inactivity over the years. Missionaries in the India Bangalore Mission reported in August 2009 that retention needed more attention but had been steadily improving. There has been little increase in increase in congregations in Bangalore and Hyderabad since 2000, which likely indicates retention and inactivity problems. Sacrament meeting attendance numbers were increasing in 2009 in the India Bangalore Mission. It appears that at least half of the approximately 500 converts who have joined the Church annually in recent years have been retained. Most of these newly created branches in New Delhi have few members and usually had 50 or less attending meetings each week. India had the highest percentage of members attending seminary and institute (1,108 or 14.6%) during the 2007-2008 school year among countries with an official Church presence in Asia.

Elder Oaks visited New Delhi India with a member of the Asia Area Presidency in the fall of 2007. A district conference was held for the three branches in New Delhi with an attendance of 347 of the 641 members in the district. At this time 93% of the 344 endowed members had current temple recommends.[\[3\]](#)

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Hindi, Tamli, Telugu, Urdu, Bengali

Hindi, Telugu and Tamil have the most Church materials translated but not all the scriptures have even been translated into these three languages yet. The full version of Book of Mormon is available but the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price have not been translated into any Indian languages. Several DVD movies such as Finding Faith In Christ and The Restoration are available in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil. Urdu is spoken by 5% of the population and has the Book of Mormon, The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony and a couple audiovisual materials translated, but not Gospel Principles and many other Church materials. Bengali, the second most prevalent native language in India, only had a few basic Church materials translated in August 2009 such as Gospel Principles, The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony, and The Articles of Faith. Selections from the Book of Mormon were published in Bengali in 1985. Marathi is spoken by 7% of the population and only has Gospel Principles and The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony translated. The only Church materials in Malayalam and Punjabi are Gospel Fundamentals and The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony. Kannada is spoken by 3.7% of the population and only has The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony translated. Hindi has one edition of the Liahona published annually. Tamil and Telugu have four editions of the Liahona published annually. Urdu has three editions of the Liahona published annually.

Meetinghouses

The number of chapels in India has also multiplied recently. The first LDS chapel in India was constructed for the Rajahmundry

Branch and dedicated in 2002. Since this time many new chapels have been built or are under construction. A chapel to house branches in Hyderabad was constructed in 2007. Chapels also exist in Bangalore and Coimbatore. In 2009, ground was broken for the first chapel in Chennai and four new chapels were approved for construction in India. Congregations not meeting in Church-built chapels meet in remodeled buildings or rented spaces.

Health and Safety

Sanitation can be poor in both rural and urban locations. Threats of violence against foreign missionaries have occurred and some LDS missionaries have experienced intimidation and wrongful accusations of violating the law. Religiously unstable areas pose a safety threat to missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has engaged in various humanitarian projects in India, although many additional opportunities exist. The Church sent food, clothing and emergency supplies to victims of a large earthquake in Gujarat in 2001.^[4] In 2002, members and missionaries in Bangalore volunteer at an orphanage for handicapped children.^[5] Members in India made over 1,200 family kits containing emergency supplies for victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.^[6] Neonatal resuscitation training, clean water projects, and wheelchair donations were sponsored by the Church in 2008.^[7] In 2008 and 2009, the Church assisted in building 20 dams in Rajasthan to provide greater water availability in the region. Seventh Day Adventists in particular have constructed many schools and hospitals which assist with national development as well as providing community pillars for the faith.

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Visas have not been easy to obtain for many missionaries who are called to India. Some of these missionaries are unable to get their visas before they leave the MTC and are temporarily reassigned to another mission in the United States. Some missionaries are unable to get visas or renewals and have to be reassigned to a different mission. In early 2010, the government continued to not issue visas to American missionaries and the number of young elders began to decline as missionaries completed their missions. Senior couples have been unable to be replaced, resulting in some of the limited number of young elders assigned to mission logistics and finances.

Christian intolerance is also widespread in India and is most intense around elections and Hindu holidays. There were instances in 2008 when elders were falsely accused of giving money to people who joined the Church (a crime in India) and some missionaries were briefly imprisoned. These instances with false accusations have been resolved with help from local and mission leadership. Restrictions on sharing the gospel exist in some regions. Out of the six zones in the India Bangalore Mission in September 2009, open proselyting was permitted only in four.

Cultural Issues

As the Church goes forth throughout India, poverty and illiteracy will likely become greater obstacles than currently experienced in areas where the Church is established. Although Indian's growing economy is helping establish a middle class and reduce poverty, the rural population in particular suffers from low living standards. Furthermore, there are hundreds of millions of Indians who are illiterate; the majority of whom are women. Those who lack literacy skills will meet greater difficulty in serving in the Church than those who are literate. Other Christian groups have addressed the challenge of literacy through audio scriptures, multimedia presentations, and the establishment of Christian schools.

Many parents in India exercise a large amount of control over their children even in their adult years. Missionaries frequently report that youth may regularly attend Church for an extended time until they turn 18 and can be baptized without parental consent. Although this can challenge the prospects for youth who are interested investigators, this has likely contributed to higher retention and activity rates. However the strong bond between parent and child may be partially responsible for the failure of many Indian members to serve missions in part-member families.

National Outreach

The size and diversity of the population of India is in itself a challenge and opportunity for the Church. Considering India is the second most populated country with 1.166 billion people making up 17% of the world's population, there is tremendous opportunity to fulfill God's commandment to take the Gospel to His children. So far the Church has established itself in several of the largest cities in the country. There has been very little expansion into cities without a Church presence for at least ten

years. Currently only nine of the 35 cities in India with at least one million inhabitants have an LDS congregation. As of 2008, there were 281 cities with over 100,000 inhabitants without a Church presence.

Not only is the Church's influence in the country very limited in the cities it is currently established in, but there is a Church presence in only seven of the 35 states and union territories in India, five of which are in southern India. The other two are Delhi and West Bengal. Very few people in the states where the Church is present have easily accessible congregations. Most of these states have tens of millions who reside far from existing congregations. There are a few groups reported to meet for members living in remote areas and existing in too few numbers for a branch to be created. Missionaries reported that a group met in Pune, which is nearby Mumbai, as well as a very small group consisting of only a couple individuals in Rajasthan.

The Church in India has grown the most rapidly and is mainly established in areas where the Christian population is less than 10% but greater than 1%. These states are all located in south or southeastern India and have large populations, which provide the Church with an opportunity to reach those who have already been brought to a belief in Jesus Christ while also reaching out to the much larger Hindu majority. The Church does not have a single congregation established in areas of India where the population is predominantly Christian. In neighboring Pakistan, the Church has seen success among Pakistani Christians, who oftentimes live in compounds segregated from the rest of the population due to much religious intolerance in the country. These areas which are predominantly Christian in eastern India are likely unreached by the Church as of present due to their distance from the established areas of the Church. The predominant Christian areas of India also have much smaller populations that number in the millions and not the tens of millions like the rest of India and do not have the scriptures or Church materials in local languages. Many of the Christians in this area of India belong to Protestant denominations and include Baptists and Presbyterians. The remote location of these states combined with sporadic political instability for separation and independence from India might lessen the likelihood of the Church moving into this area of the country in the near future. However missionaries in southern India have taught investigators from this region. Many of these investigators were very interested in bringing the Church back with them to their home states.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Currently the Church's centers of strength are in Bangalore and Hyderabad. These cities have branches which tend to function more like wards. The Hyderabad 2nd Branch, for example, had between 150-180 people attending Church meetings in April 2009. In 2009, there were a record number of native Indian missionaries serving in the India Bangalore Mission and missionaries noted that there were an increasing number of interviews for temple marriages. Inactivity in some locations is also due to a lack of nearby congregations. Members living on the opposite side of a large city from the Church's meetinghouse must make huge sacrifices in time and money to actively participate.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church has the unique opportunity extend outreach to believers of religions which have received no previous coordinated LDS outreach. Jainism originated in India anciently and is heavily influential on culture in areas of the country. Many of its adherents are also considerably wealthier than most Indians. Sikhism was founded in the sixteenth century and most of its followers reside in Punjab. Combined these two lesser known religions only have around 25 million followers in India. Some Jains and Sikhs were likely exposed to the message of the Gospel outside their home country in areas of nations where the Gospel is preached, but it is unclear as to how these religious communities will react to the message of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Kolkata and Mumbai do not have very active missionary programs and no full-time elders serve in these cities due to religious tensions between Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Local members in these locations will likely remain primarily responsible for increasing convert baptisms and retaining new members. These locations may be suitable for senior missionary couples to serve in the future.

Language Issues

The large number of languages in India is an intimidating obstacle for church growth. Church materials are available in very few of the languages in India and most do not have very many church materials translated. There are no church materials available in Gujarati, Oriya, Assamese, and Maithili, each of which has at least 10 million speakers. Many of these latter languages do not have any Church materials translated yet because there are not any branches located in the regions of India in which these languages are spoken. The translation of additional LDS scriptures into the most commonly spoken languages is greatly needed as no local languages have all LDS scriptures available at present. Utilizing local members fluent in these and other languages to help increase the number of languages with LDS materials may accelerate the translation process.

Missionary Service

By the middle of 1993, there were 30 missionaries serving in the India Bangalore Mission.^[8] In the late 2000s, the number of LDS missionaries in India appeared to number as many as 150. Visa restrictions prevented the assignment of additional nonnative missionaries in the early 2010s resulting in significant reductions in the number of LDS missionaries in India as areas were consolidated. The LDS Church in India appears close to becoming self-sufficient in staffing its full-time missionary force

largely due to young adults comprising many Latter-day Saint converts today. Enrollment in seminary and institute has been impressive and provides opportunities for missionary preparation. Greater coordination with mission and local church leaders in finding and preparing local members to serve missions could significantly reduce dependence on foreign missionary manpower and prepare for greater national outreach expansion.

Leadership

In the past decade, the Church has often waited to open new congregations in lesser reached or unreached areas of India until local membership can provide the needed number of priesthood leaders to fill branch callings. The KFG Branch was created in 2007 and had a full native branch presidency. Foreign missionaries have temporarily served as branch presidents in newly opened branches in larger cities until replaced with a native branch president. Districts in Bangalore and Hyderabad have the greatest strength in potential leadership and are the closest to becoming stakes. India is not self-sustaining in its missionary force, leaving missionary work vulnerable to government choosing whether to issue visas to foreign missionaries. The first mission president was an Indian convert named President Gill who helped grow the Church tremendously in the country with many new branches organized throughout India during his tenure.

Temple

India is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Considering over 90% of the 350 some endowed Indian members of the Church held a current temple recommend back in 2007 demonstrates the zeal many Indian members of the Church have for the temple. A temple announced for India will be unlikely until there are at least a few stakes organized in order to provide the needed leadership, temple workers, and patrons to keep the temple well-utilized.

Comparative Growth

In Asia, the Church experiences some of its strongest membership and congregational growth and highest convert retention in India. Only Malaysia has regularly created new congregations. Among countries with a Church presence limited to the past few decades, the Church has a stronger leadership and local missionary force in Mongolia. However, India is among the most unreached for the Church.

Protestant and Catholic faiths which entered India during the period of British colonialism achieved a large head start on growth. However, many modern mission-oriented faiths have also achieved rapid growth. The Seventh Day Adventists achieved between 61,000 and 198,000 baptisms per year in India between 1998 and 2008, with the number of congregations increasing from 1,061 to 3,726 over the same ten-year period.^[9] There were more than 1.4 million active Adventists in India at year-end 2008. The number of Southern Baptist congregations among some interior peoples of India, Cambodia, and many other nations almost doubled every year between 1993 and 2000, with over 1,000 new churches were organized among one interior Indian people in 2000 alone.^[10]

Gospel For Asia (GFA), a Protestant missionary group started by native Indian K. P. Yohannan in 1980, represents the most remarkable model of international missionary recruitment. GFA fielded over 11,000 native missionaries from India in the early 2000s and plans to reach 100,000 missionaries by 2020. GFA organizes over six new congregations in India and South Asia each day, over twice as many as the LDS Church organizes in the entire world.^[11] Yohannan's book *Revolution in World Missions* expounds principles of native missionary recruitment and training.^[12]

Future Prospects

Bangalore and Hyderabad are current centers of strength for the Church and Coimbatore, Chennai, New Delhi, and Visakhapatnam are emerging centers of strength for the Church. We would likely see these areas have a stake or multiple stakes organized before a temple would be announced for India. We may also see other large cities emerge as centers of strength for the Church, like Kolkata and Mumbai, once these areas have more than one branch and have a more active missionary program.

The solid growth of the LDS Church in India over the past decade and relatively high rates of convert retention and member participation demonstrates favorable prospects for continued growth. However, LDS growth to date has been on a tiny scale and relatively slow compared to other outreach-oriented faiths. Church members continue to be concentrated in few regions of the country; most Indian states and ethnicities have no gospel witness, and no LDS resources are available in most Indian languages. Furthermore, visas for foreign missionaries are limited. Continued growth will largely depend upon finding the vision and resources to bring the gospel into new regions, developing and improving methods to effectively reach large numbers of receptive people with limited missionary manpower, and training local members in self-sufficient and self-perpetuating member-missionary and full-time missionary programs.

Regional India Profiles

North India (38.5%) - Uttar Pradesh (166.2 million), Rajasthan (86.5 million), Madhya Pradesh (60.3 million), Punjab (24.4 million), Haryana (21.1 million), Delhi (13.9 million), Jammu and Kashmir (10.1 million), Uttaranchal (8.5 million), Himachal Pradesh (6.1 million)

Northern India received limited visits from mission leadership and mission resources until the creation of the India New Delhi Mission in late 2007. The new mission allowed for a large number of new proselyting areas to open, but none outside of Delhi, leaving 383 million or 96.5% of the population of North India residing where no congregations function. The immense size of the unreached population overwhelms current mission resources. The Church has seen progress in adding congregations and retaining converts during the 2000s.

Christian groups have struggled to gain converts in North India due to the strong Hindu majority and anti-conversion legislation. The Indo-Aryan peoples of North India have been less responsive to Christian outreach yet have seen progress in the LDS Church in the late 2000s. The LDS Church will need to rely on local members' efforts to expand mission outreach in North India outside of Delhi.

East India (22%) - Bihar (83.0 million), West Bengal (80.2 million), Orissa (36.8 million), Jharkhand (26.9 million)

The Church created the first branch in East India likely in the 1990s and has yet to create additional congregations. States in East India have tiny Christian populations and strong anti-Christian sentiment. Orissa has the greatest percentage of Christians, providing opportunity for the Church to reach believers of Christ, but some of the heaviest Christian persecution and violence which deters the mission from opening proselyting areas in East India. Prospects for greater outreach in East India appear unfavorable in the near future due to declining numbers of full-time missionaries from visa issues and the lack of native members in this region.

South India (22%) - Andhra Pradesh (76.2 million), Tamil Nadu (62.4 million), Karnataka (52.9 million), Kerala (31.8 million)

The Church first arrived to India in Coimbatore and other large cities in South India in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These areas experience the greatest Church outreach in India and have the most language resources in India. South India's five districts provide outreach centers to expand mission outreach to other large cities.

West India (14%) - Maharashtra (96.9 million), Gujarat (50.7 million), Goa (1.3 million)

The Church's presence is limited to Mumbai and Goa. Very few Christians reside in this region of India. The geographical separation from West India to mission headquarters in Bangalore challenge future outreach. Although Goa has a large number of Christians, very few converts have joined the Church with low retention in the Goa Branch. Mumbai appears likely to have non-proselyting missionaries assigned to work with interested individuals referred by members.

Northeast India (3.5%) - Assam (26.7 million), Tripura (3.2 million), Meghalaya (2.3 million), Manipur (2.2 million), Nagaland (2.0 million), Arunachal Pradesh (1.1 million), Mizoram (0.89 million), Sikkim (0.54 million)

Northeast India appears the region with the greatest potential for growth yet has no outreach. Protestant groups have converted the majority of the population in some states. Geographic isolation from mission headquarters in New Delhi challenges outreach. The Church has seen some success in attracting converts from predominately Christian groups in neighboring Burma.

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