



Bible Access List

Where Bible access is most difficult, and Bible shortage is greatest

India

Bible Restrictions Rank: **42**
CONSIDERABLE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **4**
Bible needs estimate is more than ten million



An Overview of Bible access in India

India, home to the largest population in the world, has a Christian community of approximately 73 million believers, making up about 5% of the population. Despite this significant number, it is estimated that approximately only a third of Christians in India have access to a Bible due to a variety of issues and some restrictions. This underscores a deep and urgent need to provide the Word of God to millions who lack access due to legal, economic, and social barriers.

The landscape of Bible access in India is complex and increasingly restricted, shaped by a hostile socio-political environment. While owning a Bible is technically legal, the reality is far more challenging. Importing Bibles is officially allowed but is complicated, monitored, and often risky due to deep-seated suspicions that Bibles are tools for conversion, an act that is criminalized in at least 11 states. While expats can bring personal copies without issue, importing larger quantities can raise red flags, drawing scrutiny from both government authorities and Hindu extremist groups.

Printing Bibles is possible provided one has financial and technical resources. However, while the Bible can still be printed in India, distribution outside of formal Christian circles is difficult and heavily monitored. Churches and ministries often self-censor their Bible distribution efforts to avoid accusations of forced conversions, legal harassment, or even violent reprisals.

In many rural areas, the risk of violence for owning or storing Bibles is severe, particularly in states like Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Manipur, where radical Hindu groups frequently attack churches, burn Christian homes, and pressure believers to renounce their faith. Storing multiple Bibles, whether for personal use or church distribution, can invite serious repercussions. In high-risk states, Bibles have been confiscated, burned, and in some cases, their owners have faced physical violence or forced displacement. Even in moderate-risk areas, Christians often hide their Bibles or refrain from openly reading them to avoid harassment.

Economically, India has made strides in digital connectivity, but internet access remains out of reach for nearly half the population. Even among those with internet access, many cannot afford smartphones or data plans, further limiting online Bible engagement. Christian bookstores in some areas are monitored, restricted, or face pressure to avoid selling Bibles, while believers in many parts of India struggle to obtain copies at all due to a combination of poverty, supply limitations, and social hostility.

Before we continue, would you take a pause and pray for India?

How can I pray for India?

- **For Open Access and Safety.** Pray for safe and unhindered distribution of Bibles, especially in states where Hindu nationalist groups actively suppress Christianity. Pray for creative ways to bring God's Word to believers without inciting hostility.
- **For Church Growth and Endurance.** Despite persecution, the church in India is growing. Pray for protection and strength for pastors and believers who face pressure to renounce their faith. Pray for resilience among converts who face family and community rejection.
- **For Global Partnerships and Provision.** The need for Bibles in India is immense. Pray for organizations and individuals working to provide Bibles in print, digital, and audio formats to reach believers across diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.

After praying for India, continue reading on the next page to learn more.

Bible Access Restrictions

Some Access Restrictions



Import restrictions



Storage restrictions



Ownership restrictions



Distribution restrictions

Other Limiting Factors

Some Other Factors



Poor



Poor internet access

Bible Shortages Among Believers



Bible ownership is low, **estimated** Bible need is >10 million



Impacted by armed conflicts

Main religion: Hinduism

Country population:
1,441,720,000

Christian population:



73,233,000, 5.08% of total population

World Watch List: #11

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN INDIA?

A Nation Hostile to Christians

In India, access to the Bible is severely restricted due to Hindu nationalist hostility, legal barriers, and violent persecution. While there is no national ban on Bible ownership, many Christians—particularly those who have converted from Hinduism—face intense pressure to renounce their faith, and access to Scripture is often blocked by social, legal, and economic barriers.

Anti-Conversion Laws: Criminalization of Christianity

India's anti-conversion laws, enforced in 11 states, pose a significant threat to Bible access. These laws claim to prevent forced conversions but are widely misused to target Christians. In states like Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh, Christians have been falsely accused of converting people through allurement or fraud, leading to arrests, fines, and mob violence.

Here are some examples of this happening:

- In January 2024, a Christian missionary school in Madhya Pradesh was attacked by a mob claiming it was converting students by force.
- In June 2024, Christian families in Chhattisgarh were violently assaulted by a mob and forced to sign a pact agreeing to "reconvert" to Hinduism within 10 days.

In some cases, owning or distributing Bibles can result in accusations of illegal proselytization, forcing believers to practice their faith in secret. The fear of harassment prevents many from openly seeking or possessing Scripture.



Violence and Intimidation: A Daily Threat

Christians in India are frequently subjected to violence, church attacks, and forced displacement. In 2024, at least 400 churches or Christian properties were attacked, and thousands were forced to flee their homes due to faith-related persecution.

One of the most extreme cases occurred in Manipur, where ethnic-religious violence resulted in the deaths of at least 220 people, the displacement of 67,000, and the destruction of over 100 churches. Christians were specifically targeted, with mobs looting security barracks, seizing weapons, and attacking places of worship. The crisis in Manipur reflects a broader trend across India, where Christian communities in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh have also faced mob violence and targeted persecution, further complicating Bible access in these regions.

Social and Economic Barriers to Bible Ownership

Beyond persecution, poverty and discrimination further limit access to Bibles. Many Christians in India come from Dalit and tribal backgrounds, facing severe economic hardship and systemic exclusion from government benefits. Christian Dalits are denied affirmative action benefits, unlike Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist Dalits. This exclusion deepens poverty and limits their ability to afford basic necessities, let alone purchase a Bible.

Furthermore, only a little over half of the population have internet access, meaning digital Bibles are not a viable solution for almost half of the population. And in rural areas, where many Christians live, low literacy and lack of electricity make Bible access even more difficult.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in India

India	Islamic Oppression	Religious Nationalism	Ethno-religious hostility	Clan oppression	Christian denominational oppression	Communist and post-Communist oppression	Secular intolerance	Dictatorial paranoia	Organized corruption and crime	Reference
Persecution Engines →										The more fully shaded the circle in orange, the stronger the level of persecution. The number of "+" signs indicates the frequency or intensity of the driving factors behind it.
Persecution Drivers ↓	Weak	Very strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Not at all	Strong	Weak	
Government officials		++++	+++	++++				++++	++	
Ethnic group leaders		++++	++++	++++				++++		
Non-Christian religious leaders		+++++	++++	+++				++++		
Christian religious leaders										
Violent religious groups		+++++	++++					++++		
Normal citizens		++++	++++	++++				++++		
Extended family		++++	++++	++++				++		
Political parties		+++++						++++		
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups										
Organized crime										
Multilateral org. & Embassies										

India ranks high in persecution, with an extremely high level of pressure and violence against Christians. The dominant forces behind this hostility include **religious nationalism** (Hindu nationalism), **ethno-religious hostility**, **clan oppression**, and **dictatorial paranoia**. These are driven by government officials, ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups, normal citizens, extended family, and political parties. All these collectively create a hostile environment where Christians face intense pressure to renounce their faith, and Bible distribution efforts are obstructed.

The World Watch List of Open Doors sheds light on the broader context of persecution of Christians. But now we have to ask the question: How does this affect Bible access? Furthermore, where can we pinpoint the problem so we can address the need and demand for Bibles in India?

A CLOSER LOOK AT PERSECUTION ENGINES

A persecution engine is simply this: the source of persecution in the country. A persecution driver (or actor) is the one “driving” the persecution. Taking a closer look at these engines and drivers in proper context, will give us insight on how we can solve the problems of Bible access in the country.



The Rise of Hindutva and the War Against Christianity

Hindu nationalism, championed by groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bajrang Dal, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), has become the most dominant force of persecution in India. These groups aggressively push the idea that India is inherently a Hindu nation, and non-Hindu religions, particularly Christianity and Islam, are foreign threats that must be eradicated. Their influence extends deeply into politics, law enforcement, and local governance, allowing them to operate with impunity.

One of their primary tools of persecution is the Ghar Wapsi (Homecoming) movement, a nationwide campaign to pressure Christian converts, especially those from Hindu backgrounds, to renounce their faith and return to Hinduism. Those who resist face violent attacks, social boycotts, destruction of property, and even forced displacement.

Even possessing a Bible can mark someone as a target. Christian homes and churches in Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh have been raided by radical mobs, with Bibles and other Christian materials confiscated or burned. Hindu nationalist vigilantes frequently accuse Christians of illegal conversions, leading to arrests, legal harassment, and public beatings, further limiting access to God's Word.



State-Sanctioned Suppression of Christianity

Under the rule of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has witnessed a rapid erosion of religious freedom, as the government enforces strict surveillance, censorship, and legal restrictions against Christian communities and organizations. The administration uses laws and bureaucratic hurdles as weapons to stifle Christianity's growth.

Eleven Indian states have implemented anti-conversion laws, criminalizing religious conversions under vague definitions of "force, fraud, or allurement." These laws have become a tool for Hindu extremist groups and local authorities to target pastors and Christian believers.

An example of this happened in Betul District back in January 2024, Bajrang Dal members stormed a Christian missionary school, falsely accusing the staff of forcing religious conversions. They disrupted classes and incited a violent mob, yet no legal action was taken against them.

The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) has been systematically used to block international funding for Christian organizations, crippling efforts to print and distribute Bibles. Many Christian NGOs, such as the Evangelical Fellowship of India and the Church of North India, have had their licenses revoked, cutting off crucial resources for believers in need of Scripture.

Through these oppressive tactics, the Indian government is ensuring that Bible access remains a formidable challenge for millions of believers.



Tribal Persecution and the Destruction of Christian Communities

In tribal regions like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, Hindu nationalist movements have infiltrated indigenous communities, manipulating local leaders to turn against Christianity. While many of these tribes historically coexisted with Christians, Hindu radical groups have fueled suspicion and violence, creating a climate of fear and oppression for Christian converts. Christians in these areas are given a brutal choice: renounce their faith or face isolation, violence, and expulsion.

Bible access is further restricted by mob attacks on churches and the burning of Christian literature. In Bastar region, Chhattisgarh, tribal Christians have faced increased hostility, with Hindu nationalists blocking aid, banning Christian gatherings, and cutting off access to food and water supplies. In some villages, Christians are completely banned from public spaces, making it impossible for them to access Bibles or attend church services.

By leveraging tribal identity and cultural loyalty, Hindu radicals have successfully weaponized ethnic hostility, turning entire communities against Christianity and making Bible access nearly impossible.



Family and Social Isolation as Weapons Against Christianity

Beyond government policies and violent nationalism, one of the most powerful forces restricting Bible access in India is family and clan-based oppression. In many rural communities, Christian converts face relentless pressure to abandon their faith, often from their own relatives. The caste system, deep-seated in Indian culture, reinforces these barriers, as many Hindu families view conversion as a disgrace that brings shame and dishonor.

Women are particularly vulnerable—many are forcibly married to Hindu men to prevent them from practicing Christianity. There was an incident in Punjab back in April 2024, where a Christian widow was falsely accused of influencing others to convert. As a result, her in-laws cut her off, seizing her late husband's property and leaving her destitute.

Another example happened in Haryana (June 2024), where Christian families in a rural village were publicly shamed and threatened with violence for refusing to take part in Hindu rituals. The local panchayat (village council) declared that they were "corrupting" the community and banned them from all village activities, including food distribution.

Even in death, persecution persists. Christian pastors and believers are frequently denied burial rights, forcing grieving families to travel long distances to find a place to lay their loved ones to rest. In some cases, radical Hindus have exhumed and desecrated Christian graves as a warning to others.

Through social ostracization, economic punishment, and forced marriages, Hindu extremists and family members alike ensure that Christians remain isolated, vulnerable, and unable to access the Bible.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN INDIA

Against the backdrop of rising persecution, economic barriers, and linguistic challenges, Bible access in India remains critically low. Research from the Bible Access List estimates over **10 million believers** urgently need a Bible. The demand far outweighs the available supply, leaving millions still in need for the word of God.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Despite the challenges, the Church in India continues to grow, particularly among Protestant communities. Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are seeing significant increases, especially in rural and tribal areas where people are turning to Christ despite intense pressure from Hindu nationalist groups. The growing number of believers further widens the Bible access gap, making it essential to provide Scripture to sustain and accommodate the growth of the church.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

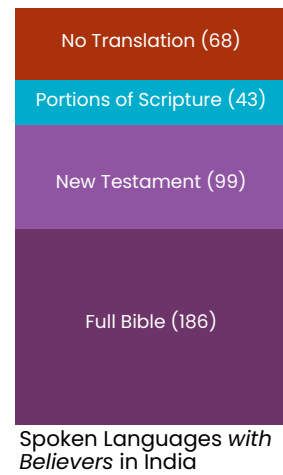
Printed Bibles remain the highest priority for Indian Christians, especially in rural areas where internet access is limited, and digital resources are unreliable. **Audio Bibles** are the second most critical format, as many believers, particularly in tribal regions, struggle with literacy.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

India’s vast linguistic diversity presents another significant challenge. Research estimates that known believers speak at least 396 languages. Among these languages:

- **186** have a complete Bible translation.
- **99 languages** only have the New Testament.
- **43 languages** have only portions of Scripture available.
- **68 languages** remain without any Bible translation

This leaves entire communities without access to God’s Word in their native tongue. The need for continued translation efforts is urgent, as millions still lack the ability to engage with Scripture in a language they fully understand.



THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in India is not just about filling a logistical gap, it's an urgent mission the global church needs to get involved with. Persecuted Christians, new believers, and seekers alike are longing for God's Word, yet face severe obstacles in accessing it.

Meeting this need requires overcoming challenges of persecution, poverty, and translation gaps through strategic efforts. By prioritizing print and audio Bibles, advancing translation initiatives, and mobilizing global partnerships, we can ensure that every believer in India has access to the life-changing power of the Word of God.



1.7%
Annual Church
Growth



Bibles needed for both
**Believers
& Seekers**



>10 million
Bible needs estimate



**Printed
Bible**
Preferred Format



**Audio
Bible**
Format 2nd Priority