



The aicc Update

A report on activities of the aicc in December 2006

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The All India Christian Council, birthed in 1998, exists to protect and serve the interests of the Christian community, minorities, and the oppressed castes. The aicc is a coalition of thousands of Indian denominations, organizations, and lay leaders. Find in-depth info at www.aiccindia.org.

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Highlights

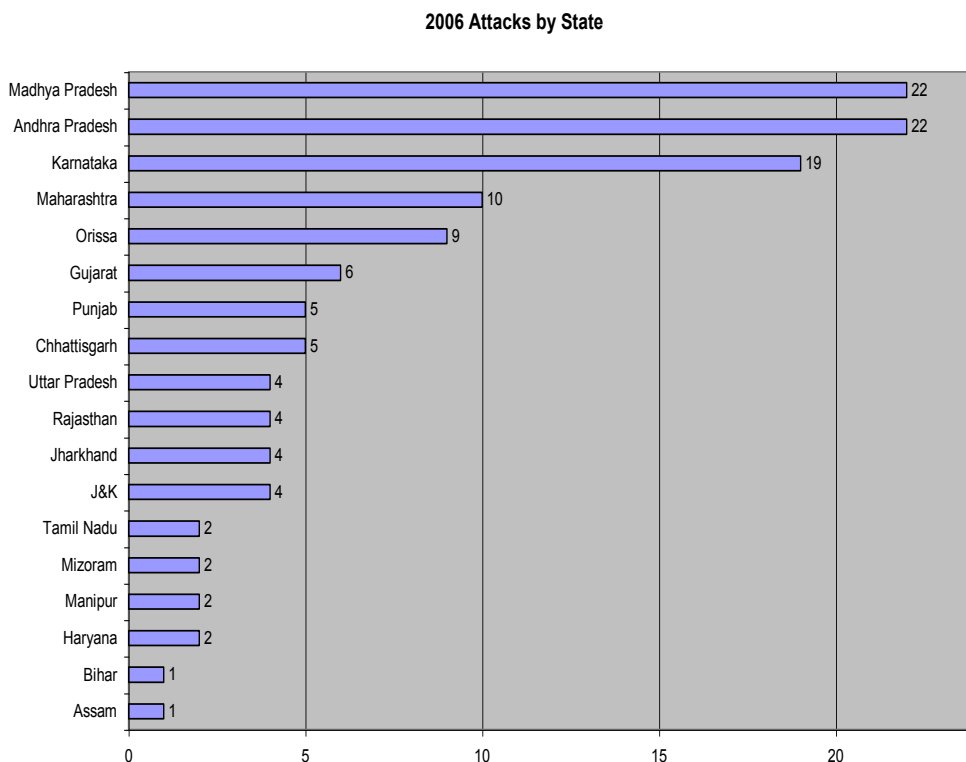
Summary: Aicc pursued several proactive measures in 2006 to protect and serve oppressed peoples in India.

2006 Summary & Review

The past year was marked by several state government laws making it harder for people to choose their own faith. The aicc also documented 124 attacks on Christians and many cases of discrimination against Dalits. But the aicc continued to pursue its proactive approach to serve the oppressed.

In the area of **violence against Christians**, the highest number of attacks occurred in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (see chart). Violence included beatings of Christian pastors, burning churches, vandalizing Christian homes, and harassment of missionaries and Christian workers.

NewsNote: The state legislature of Himachal Pradesh passed an anti-conversion law in late December. It is the eighth state in India to do so. Orissa was the first in 1967, followed by Madhya Pradesh in 1968, Arunachal Pradesh in 1987, Tamil Nadu in 2002, Gujarat in 2003, Chhattisgarh in 2005, and Rajasthan in 2006. Tamil Nadu is in the process of repealing its law and only Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh actively enforce penalties. Read multiple stories at: www.aiccindia.org



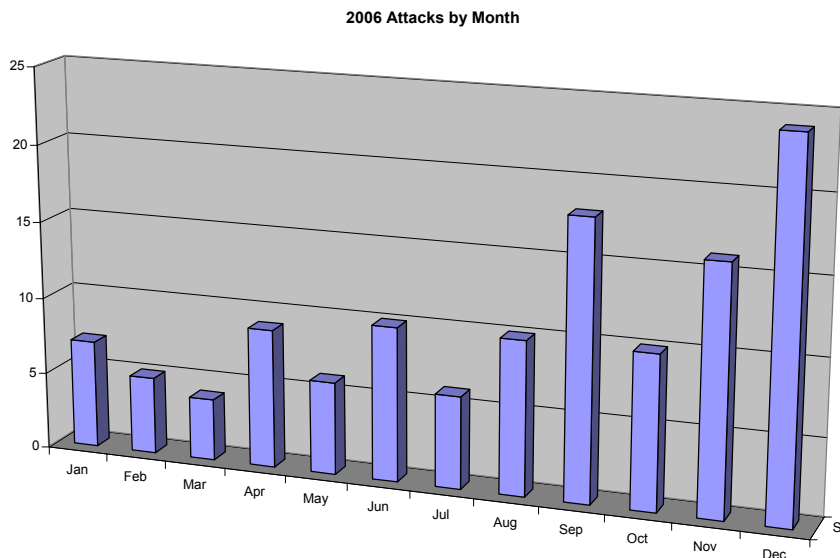
An average of 10 attacks were reported each month, and it is likely dozens



NewsNote: A new **FCRA bill**, Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, was introduced in India's national legislature on Dec. 18, 2006. The bill would update the 1976 version which regulates foreign contributions to organizations. Some Christians are worried new provisions could increase government harassment of faith-based NGOs.

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of others went unreported. The aicc helped those who were attacked by providing monetary assistance for legal and medical bills, interceded with police and courts, sent out almost a dozen fact finding teams, and issued press releases so that Christians worldwide could pray more effectively.



Around India, extremist Hindu groups continued to push for **“freedom of religion” laws**. Aicc monitored the situation and took proactive steps where possible such as traveling to the United Kingdom to lobby Indian and British authorities in July. In positive news, Tamil Nadu’s legislature introduced a bill on May 29 to revoke its anti-conversion law, originally passed in 2002. And, perhaps in response to public comments by the Pope, in mid-May federal officials asked the National Commission for Minorities to research attacks against Christians, especially in BJP-ruled states.

NewsNote: The aicc website is being revised. Already, a new Resources page contains helpful links to the best articles on aicc, background on the challenges for Dalits, and more. In 2007, we hope to make the website “dynamic” which means that readers will find helpful suggestions on similar articles when they read about a particular subject. Read [Aicc Resources](#)

However, the Rajasthan state government passed an anti-conversion law in April. Then the Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Gujarat assemblies amended their anti-conversion laws to be stricter (on July 25, August 3, and September 19, respectively). Lastly, the Himachal Pradesh state government passed an anti-conversion law in December.

Eight (of twenty-eight) **states now have anti-conversion bills**, although only Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh actively enforce penalties. Most laws threaten those accused of performing “conversion by force or allurements” with prison sentences or large fines and require people to appear before a judge before changing their faith.

Thankfully, several **aicc proactive efforts** were successful and prevented further violence bloodshed. These included major rallies and proactive initiatives in partnership with other organizations (see list below).

Aicc continued to publicize the **India Supreme Court case** demanding reservations (affirmative action) for Dalit Christians. The case, filed in Aug. 2005 by aicc friends, demands equal rights – which are now enjoyed



NewsNote: The **Association of Applied Videography Professionals** honored **Fr. Anand Muttungal** for his achievements as Public Relations Officer and spokesperson of the Regional Catholic Council of Bishops of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. He also serves as an aicc leader in Madhya Pradesh.

[Read more](#)

NewsNote: Justice KG Balakrishnan, will become **the first Dalit Chief Justice of India** on January 14, 2007. Currently, he is the only Dalit justice to ever sit on the highest court of the land and will become the 37th Chief Justice of India. There have been at least three Other Backward Caste (OBC) justices on the court in past years.

[Read more](#)

by Dalits who practice Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Aicc led a letter writing campaign to the Mishra commission, which has delayed the proceedings, and testified at several hearings. The commission's official name is the National Commission for Religious & Linguistic Minorities.

On October 14, the **World Religious Freedom Day** drew thousands to a rally in Nagpur, Maharashtra, celebrating Dr. Ambedkar's exit from Hinduism and the freedom of religious choice for all Indians. Over 50 stories appeared on TV broadcasts and in print publications from Australia to UK to Qatar. Most carried images of 528 people, many who traveled from states where anti-conversion laws are in force, being baptized.

Other **significant proactive events** in 2006 included:

- Aicc pressure on government and police forces, including a meeting with Union Human Resources Development Minister Arjun Singh, resulted in an absence of violence against tribal Christians during a massive Kumbh Mela on February 11-13 in the Dangs district, Gujarat.
- In partnership with Christian Solidarity Worldwide, aicc officers visited key foreign consulate officials in New Delhi on March 8 to present information on recent violence against Christians and Dalits.
- Aicc successfully asked the Orissa government to provide security for Christians when the RSS attempted to hold a massive "re-conversion ceremony" on April 8-10.
- In April, India's central government announced plans to expand college placements for Other Backward Castes (OBC). Protests erupted across the country and intensified in early May. Aicc took action to assist Dalit and OBC groups with media communication and rallies.
- aicc President, Dr. Joseph D'souza, spoke on June 20 at the first Religious Freedom Day on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.
- Transform World, an aicc co-sponsored conference for leaders involved in society-transformation, included 30+ focus groups, international facilitators, and an opening speech by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Y.S. Rajshekar Reddy.
- Aicc members continue to partner with the Dalit Freedom Network to run high-quality English-medium schools for Dalit-Bahujans. Currently, 54 are transforming communities around India.

The aicc began tracking **atrocities against Dalits** in 2006. By monitoring media reports, dozens of cases were recorded. Also, new studies and findings were publicized which reveal the unfair treatment of Dalits.

Finally, **aicc continued to develop**, and established several new chapters, notably in Bhopal. Two full-time employees opened a New Delhi office which coordinated several significant symposiums and protest rallies. The website also was revised and now offers a "news feed" and online videos.

As we face a New Year, we pray for God's strength and wisdom as, together with you, we continue to pursue justice for the oppressed in India.



aicc Past & Upcoming Events

NewsNote: Those who attack Dalits are often acquitted.

The conviction rate for cases booked under the "SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act" is about 16%. In contrast, the conviction rate is 40% for those who break normal laws. A study by the National Law School said the low conviction rate is largely due to a delay in charging the guilty. Also, the pendency ratio (the amount of pending or delayed trials) for Dalit cases is about 85%.

[Read more](#)

Attacks against Christians

aicc Past Events

December 2006

- 5th: An aicc-organized march and rally in Tenali, Andhra Pradesh, attracted 500 people from all castes to protest persecution of Christians.
- 11th: A day-long dharna (protest) at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi organized by aicc demanded Scheduled Caste status for Dalit Christians. About 800 attended and memo was sent to Prime Minister.
- 14th: In Orissa, the Sundergarh District Chapter of aicc was formed as leaders from almost all churches and missions in Rourkela united.
- 16th: At a public meeting, the aicc presented grants to the wives of three pastors martyred near Hyderabad. Each widow received 75,000 rupees: Mrs. Sathyaveni (late Pastor Isaac Raju), Mrs. Hepsiba (late Pastor Daniel), Mrs. Manohara (late Pastor Yesupadam).
- 22nd: The Orissa aicc Chapter wrote to local authorities to appeal for protection of Christian families and buildings in light of Hindu threats.
- 23rd: The Gujarat Chapter wrote to the Gujarat State and Home Affairs Ministries and police officials and successfully appealed for protection of Christians at Christmas, especially in rural Gujarat. The government refused to give the VHP/RSS permission for a rally on Christmas Day.

aicc Upcoming Events

- January 23-24: Aicc meeting in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh to mobilize the Christian response to recent attacks in the region.
- January 30-February 1: Conference on Theology of Persecution in Secunderabad, co-sponsored by aicc and Voice of the Martyrs Canada.
- March 18-31: Celebrating the anniversary of William Wilberforce's anti-slavery legislation in the UK. In partnership with Christian Solidarity Worldwide, aicc will participate in hearings before the European Union and British officials on the "modern slavery" of Dalits.
- April: India's Supreme Court to hear a long-pending case examining the rights of Dalit Christians.

Attacks reported

List of Violence Against Christians in India

Note: All care has been taken to crosscheck the reported cases with credible newspaper reports and police files. State governments don't collect information about violence against the Christian community.

December 2006

- 1st – Andhra Pradesh: A church burned down in Pedda Demili village of Srikakulam district. Pastor B Vijay Kumar built the church on government land about six years ago. Recently he'd been threatened by Hindu fanatics and arson is suspected. Aicc is advising the pastor. [Read more](#)
- 1st – Maharashtra: Hindu radicals stopped a healing service at Kalidas Theatre in Mulund, Mumbai, and another scheduled for the 3rd. Activists of Hindu Janajagruti Samiti accused the Christian missionaries of converting Hindus.



Executive Summary:

The aicc recorded 24 cases of harassment or outright violence against Christians in December 2006. Of the confirmed attacks listed, there were:

- 5 in Maharashtra
- 4 in Andhra Pradesh
- 4 in Chhattisgarh
- 3 in Karnataka
- 2 in Orissa
- 2 in Haryana
- 1 in Madhya Pradesh
- 1 in Tamil Nadu
- 1 in Jharkhand
- 1 in Manipur

NewsNote: Almost half of the Dalits in Gujarat change their surnames said a study by a senior government official. He found this only occurs among urban Dalits who want to avoid caste-based discrimination. About 23% choose a new name based on their village of origin, reported the Indian Express.

[Read more](#)

- 4th – Andhra Pradesh: A Christian media team member was slapped by a police officer at Malkapur village in Sangareddy while showing a film about Jesus. The team had permission from the village head but police forced them to stop the screening. The next morning, the team fled the village due to continuing threats. Aicc has asked for police to discipline the concerned officer. [Read more](#)

- 5th – Tamil Nadu: Hindu radicals stopped a Christian worship service and closed a prayer hall at Vellamody village in Kanyakumari district. BJP leaders demanded that police remove the church from the village. [Read more](#)

- 8th – Jharkhand: A Christian family chased out of their village had justice postponed amidst a new tragedy. A court hearing was delayed due to the death of the family's son. The boy drowned in a well. Recently, the family had all their possession stolen. Aicc is assisting. [Read more](#)

- 10th – Karnataka: A leading Hindu swami stated, "Conversion and terrorism are two major threats to the country." According to The Hindu newspaper, Sri Vishweshwara Tirtha Swamiji spoke at a gathering in Karnataka to celebrate one of the founders of the RSS. [Read more](#)

- 14th – Karnataka: Hindu extremists attacked three young women in Guruparahalli who converted to Christianity. They broke into the house of the sisters and beat them in an attempt to "reconvert" them. The victims attend the Assembly of God church, said Compass Direct. [Read more](#)

- 17th – Chhattisgarh: Members of Dharam Raksha Sena beat an independent pastor. The pastor, Philip Jagdalla, was attacked as he returned home after teaching Sunday School. The mob dragged him to a police station and accused him of forced conversions. Police filed an FIR against both sides and sent the pastor to the hospital for treatment, according to a statement released by the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum.

- 19th – Karnataka: Residents of Revadihal village, near Bangalore, pelted stones at a group of Christian missionaries and accused them of converting Hindus. The Christians took shelter in a van and then fled the village, said Indo-Asian News Service and Compass Direct report.

- 21st – Andhra Pradesh: A school held on the grounds of Christ Church of Ramkote, Hyderabad was vandalized, and the pastor and manager of the school was harassed by Ayappa devotees upset because a boy wasn't allowed to wear traditional devotee clothing during class. [Read more](#)

- 21st – Chhattisgarh: Police arrested a Christian schoolteacher for giving copies of the New Testament to 10th graders. They reportedly acted on a complaint from the members of Dharam Sena who demonstrated at the school and condemned the "conversion" of students. [Read more](#)

- 22nd – Orissa: Handbills distributed by VHP's Tihidi Branch called for a gathering on the afternoon of December 25th to protest the arrest of five people who allegedly tonsured and beat a young Christian man for [Read more](#)



NewsNote: Manual scavenging (defined as removing human excrement by hand) **continues in Orissa** despite a 1993 law banning the practice, according to The Pioneer. Practically all manual scavengers are Dalits.

[Read more](#)

his faith in Gopaldohora village. The scheduled speaker was a famous Swami known for making anti-Christian statements. Local aicc officials appealed to authorities to keep the peace between communities.

[Read more](#)

- 23rd – Orissa: Hindu extremists burned down a thatched church at Boriguma in Koraput district.
[Read more](#)
- 23rd – Haryana: Police summoned several Christians, including the pastor of a Good Shepherd Community Church, and interrogated them in Agroha, Hisar district. They were released after the village head intervened, and permitted to hold Christmas services only after the Christian Association of India spoke with local authorities.
[Read more](#)
- 23rd – Manipur: Villagers of Waithou Trongloubi threatened local Christians in a written document. They declared Christians would not be allowed to celebrate Christmas in the village. Police intervened and arrested troublemakers, according to an aicc report by Madhu Chandra.
- 24th – Chhattisgarh: Police arrested a pastor of the Church of God and other Christians in Dhamtari for caroling and distributing literature. Separately, members Bajrang Dal attacked about 20 Christians who had gathered in a church in Jalampur. They beat some of the Christians and destroyed hymn books and Bibles. Five Christians were injured in the attack, one of them suffering loss of hearing due to a blow on his head.
[Read more here and here](#)
- 24th – Maharashtra: Hindu extremists from Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad prevented tribal Christians in Tilonda village, Thane district, from holding a prayer service on Christmas Eve. Over 400 Christians had gathered for the event, but a large mob interrupted. Fearing violence, church officials cancelled the event. According to Dr. Abraham Mathai, aicc state leader, there were three other incidents of violence against tribal Christians in Thane district in the week before Christmas.
[Read more](#)
- 25th – Chhattisgarh: Many Christians didn't attend Christmas programs fearing harassment by right-wing Hindu groups. On Christmas Eve, jeeps full of Dharma Sena members drove around Raipur, the state capital, announcing they would halt church services held on Christmas Day, said Compass Direct. The BJP government cancelled the Christmas holiday for students and even conducted semi-annual examinations before and after Christmas. One BJP politician led a "re-conversion" ceremony on Christmas Eve, said the Indian Catholic.
[Read more here and here](#)
- 26th – Andhra Pradesh: A statue of Mother Mary and the Infant Jesus near Christ the King Church at Ramanthapur in Hyderabad was vandalized. No arrests have been made.
[Read more](#)
- 27th – Haryana: About 50 Bajrang Dal extremists attacked a Christian couple in their home at Lakarpur, Faridabad district. The attackers were upset at the couple for regularly allowing New Life Fellowship church to meet in their home for Sunday worship, reported aicc's Madhu

NewsNote: While opening the Dalit-Minority International Conference in New Delhi on December 27, 2006, **Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, "Dalits have faced a unique discrimination in our society that is fundamentally different from the problems of minority groups in general. Untouchability is not just social discrimination. It is a blot on humanity."**

[Read more](#)

Chandra. Police filed a complaint against the attackers.

- 31st – Madhya Pradesh: Franklin Masih and eight friends were beaten by VHP's Dharma Sena activists while visiting a Christian family at Devera village near Waidhan. Attackers invaded the house and accused the visitors of forced conversions. Police filed an FIR against the attackers, said an aicc report by Madhu Chandra.

Attacks against Dalits

Attacks reported

List of Discrimination Against Dalits in India

Note: All care has been taken to crosscheck the reported cases with credible newspaper reports and police files.

December 2006

- 2nd – Madhya Pradesh: More than two dozen people attacked and burned down a Dalit family home in Jhakhaura village. The attackers fired guns at Mr. Lallu Saket and family before pouring kerosene over the home. Police are investigating, said the Central Chronicle. [Read more](#)
- 2nd – Tamil Nadu: After ten years, a conflict between high caste and Dalit Catholics was resolved and a church reopened. The two groups went to court after disputing over parish administration and the language used in liturgies, said UCAN. [Read more](#)
- 5th – Maharashtra: After negative publicity and public protests, the state government set up a fast track court to look into the murder of four members of a Dalit family in Kherlanji, Bhandara district, on September 29, 2006. Only the father survived the attack, allegedly caused by the Dalit family's boldness in village disputes of land and honor. Several people were arrested and charges filed against eleven, but activists are angered by the mismanagement of the case by police. [Read multiple stories at www.aiccindia.org](#)
- 5th – New Delhi: A "Dalit Dignity March" sought social and political reforms for the emancipation of Dalits. Various politicians addressed the crowd. Dalits demanded implementation of a time-bound program for land distribution, and more. [Read more](#)
- 8th – New Delhi: Uttar Pradesh registered 4,397 alleged atrocities against Dalits last year, the highest in the country. A total of 26,127 cases were recorded in 2006 across the country said Fakirbhai Vaghela, vice-chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. [Read more](#)
- 12th – Karnataka: Dalits were ostracized for daring to fetch water from the village tank in Kadkol. The government began an assistance program to help the villagers. [Read more](#)
- 12th – Rajasthan: Hundreds of Dalits offered prayers amidst tight security in an ancient temple at Sulia. Two Dalits were beaten after entering the temple in early October. Public protests led to police protection and support from district officials, said the Statesman. [Read more](#)

NewsNote: A BBC four-part series called "Being Indian" was the most popular documentary among viewers in 2006 and won the BBC Documentary of the Year Award. The first broadcast featured Biru Mallik, a nine-year-old Dalit boy living in a remote village in Bihar whose family prepares funeral pyres to cremate bodies on the banks of the Ganges River. It was originally broadcast on March 4 & 5 and 11 & 12, 2006.

[Read more](#)



- 16th – Karnataka: In Kamanakerehundi, near Mysore, eight of twenty-two Dalit families were ostracized by upper caste people for over three years and barely survive. The families are denied access to water, shops, telephones, hospitals, sanitation and more. Most important, villagers are prohibited from employing members of these eight families, said the Deccan Herald.
[Read more](#)
- 15th – Orissa: In the days after hundreds of Dalits entered the Jagannath temple in Kendrapada, upper castes protested and a priest outlined the cleansing rituals needed to purify the premises. A court recently ruled Dalits could worship there. For decades, the community barred Dalits from entering the 18th century shrine dedicated to Lord Jagannath. Four Dalits were beaten in 2004 after entering the worship site.
[Read multiple stories at www.aiccindia.org](#)
- 17th – West Bengal: Eighteen Dalit homes in the Musahar community of Shahpur were burned down following a dispute over the right to fish in a government pond. Police were investigating.
[Read more](#)
- 23rd – Bihar: Basra Devi, in her mid 50s, was tonsured (head shaving) and paraded half-naked in Balua Basanta village in Vaishali district. Village leaders ordered the punishment for allegedly stealing a few bananas and then refusing to pay a fine.
[Read more](#)
- 27th – Bihar: The fingers of a 10-year old Dalit girl were cut off by an upper caste man in Phulwaria village because she plucked spinach from his field. Villagers found the girl unconscious and admitted her to a hospital. Police were searching for the attacker, said NDTV.
[Read more](#)

NewsNote: One of three “poster girls” selected by UNICEF is a Dalit girl from Uttar Pradesh, said the Hindustan Times. Anita Kushwaha, age 17, was chosen for overcoming gender bias. She is known in her village as the “queen bee” for starting a business to make honey. The annual income is more than 100,000rs.

[Read more](#)

Resources

1. *NDTV*, Dec. 6, 2006. On the anniversary of Ambedkar’s death, a special broadcast called “India’s Dalits: Pride and Prejudice” reported on the progress and challenges for Dalits. One of the success stories, a Dalit businessman who runs a hospital in Agra, appeared online.
[Read “New hopes: Dalit man crosses caste barrier”](#)
2. *Compass Direct*, “Another State Passes Anti-Conversion Bill,” Jan. 3, 2006. Good summary of India’s legislation in the eight states which have banned conversions that are “forced” or “fraudulent”.
[Read article](#)
3. *Frontline*, “At a crossroads”, by S. Viswanathan and Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, Vol. 23, Issue 25, Dec. 16-29, 2006. Comprehensive article on Dalit concerns. Looks at caste atrocities, poor conviction rates, divisions in Dalit leadership, and key hurdles like land reforms.
[Read article](#) (Note: similar articles on troubles within Dalit leadership appeared in the [Times of India](#), [CNN-IBN](#), and [The Hindu](#).)