

## **Additional material for Lesson 7: What do Christians believe about sharing their faith?**

(Taken from the BBC news website: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/7641247.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7641247.stm))

**Anti-Christian riots have rocked several parts of India over the past month. The BBC's Soutik Biswas travels to a remote region in the eastern Orissa state, where it all began, to explore the touchy issue of religious conversions.**

Sixty-year-old Indian farmer Kanduri Digal says he converted to Christianity a decade ago because he found "it a very useful religion".

For most of his life, Digal languished at the bottom of India's caste pyramid as a Hindu untouchable.

But he doesn't say he escaped Hinduism because the caste system gave him a raw deal.

Instead, he says, Christianity offered him a road to redemption. "When I was a Hindu I was stealing, doing bad to others. I have become a better man after I converted. Salvation is ensured in Christianity," he says.

Forty-year-old government messenger Ashok Kumar Behera, who converted to Christianity 18 years ago, says he changed faith to get some "peace of life and salvation".

"The Bible says when we die we go to heaven. The holy book also lays down the instructions about life in detail, unlike Hindu scriptures," he says. However, Digal and Behera have now discovered that in the Kandhamal district of Orissa state where they live their leap of faith has a darker side to it.

They are among the over 13,000 Hindu untouchables-turned-Christian converts who continue to live in 11 camps in the district a month after a wave of anti-Christian



Churches have been attacked in Orissa

violence convulsed the area. Most have fled their homes which were looted and torched by mobs shouting pro-Hindu slogans.

At the root of the confrontation is an age-old rivalry between the majority local Hindu-tribes people and the converted Christians over land, affirmative action benefits and identity rights.

### **Questions for discussion**

1. Why do you think there is conflict between the two groups?
2. Imagine that you were a new convert to Christianity. How would you feel about the situation? What temptations would there be to give up your faith? What would make you determined to continue as a Christian?

### **Activity**

Put yourself in the place of one of these new converts. Write a letter to a friend. Using information from the article and your own learning, explain:

- Your new found faith and how it has impacted your life
- The response of your community
- The effect this has upon your faith