

Chhattisgarhi Caste Hindu



Quick Facts

Pop. in India: 11,500,000

State Populations:

Chhattisgarh: 11,300,000

Madhya Pradesh: 100,000

Orissa: 40,000

Jharkand: 15,000

Religion:

Hindu

Believers:

0.21%

Scriptures:

Yes—Portions

Ministry Tools:

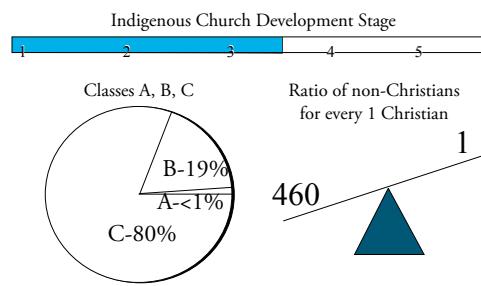
JRGTC

C Status:

3 M Status:

MS Subgroups:

50+



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church
Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined
Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

Identity: The Chhattisgarhi are a cluster of over fifty castes and tribes which speak an eastern dialect of Hindi related to Awadhi and Bagheli. Among them is a high percentage of lower caste peoples, the highest of any Indian society. The Chhattisgarhi have been peacefully demanding their own state since the 1920s, and it was finally granted to them in the year 2000.

Lifestyle: Chhattisgarh is one of the poorest states in India, with annual per capita income less than \$250. About 80% of the population is rural and engaged in subsistence farming. Rice is the chief agricultural crop. Though the state is rich in minerals and forests, only an elite few benefit. This has led to the growth of a revolutionary communist movement known as the Naxalites. Their violent activities threaten to destabilize the entire region.

Customs: The Chhattisgarhi are famous for their hand-woven silk cloth

known as Kosa. The cloth is exported to Europe and the United States, as well as used for making expensive Sarees and Salwar suits. Kusa silk is often used in marriage and religious ceremonies. Its natural golden shade has been a symbol of luxury for centuries.

Religion: Historically, the Chhattisgarhi have put up fierce resistance to the imposition of caste-based Hinduism. The adoption of Hinduism and the Chhattisgarhi language by many tribal peoples has given rise to many syncretistic Hindu-related sects that are quite distinct from other Hindu movements in India. One large group among the Dalits (low castes) is the Satnamis which denounce the caste system and the Hindu pantheon, and worship only one deity called Satnam, or the "true name." Unlike most dalits, they are vegetarian.

Christian Outreach: Chhattisgarh is controlled by a radical Hindu party known as the BJP. They have passed leg-

islation requiring everyone to report to the government if they convert from one religion to another. This is entirely for the purpose of hindering Christian growth, which is seeing rapid progress among the lower caste peoples and tribal Hindu groups.

How to Pray:

❖ The social tensions in Chhattisgarh threaten to explode into full scale civil war. Pray that this situation will not hinder the growth of the Church in rural areas; rather may it cause many to find lasting peace in Christ.

❖ Chhattisgarhi women are believed to have access to supernatural power. Female spiritual energy is both the cause of worship (Saivism) and persecution (when evil comes through sorcery). Pray that these strongholds of female witchcraft will be demolished in Jesus' name.

❖ Intercede for the government leaders of Chhattisgarh that God would grant the Christian faith favor in their eyes and change their hearts toward the gospel.

❖ Pray for successive dialogue with Chhattisgarhi Dalit leaders and that the next mass movement among them will be to Christ.

Every year 105,000 Chhattisgarhi Hindus die without Christ.

Chhattisgarhi Caste Hindus (cont.)

30 Least-Evangelized Chhattisgarhi Peoples

People, Population, % Evangelical, Caste Type

Teli	2,600,000	0.01%	BC	Ghasi	100,000	0.01%	SC
Chamar	1,850,000	0.01%	SC	Kayastha	85,000	0.00%	FC
Panika	1,150,000	0.05%	ST	Binjhia	80,000	0.01%	ST
Kawar	950,000	0.08%	ST	Sonr	75,000	0.00%	ST
Barhai	560,000	0.00%	BC	Sauntia	75,000	0.00%	SC
Dhimar	500,000	0.00%	BC	Dom	70,000	0.00%	SC
Lohar	400,000	0.01%	SC	Gosain	70,000	0.00%	BC
Ganda	330,000	0.35%	SC	Kahar	63,000	0.00%	BC
Koshti	280,000	0.00%	BC	Tamboli	40,000	0.00%	BC
Brahman	250,000	0.00%	FC	Lunia	37,000	0.00%	BC
Nai	240,000	0.00%	BC	Mallah	37,000	0.00%	SC
Dhanwar	165,000	0.00%	ST	Kamar	28,000	0.00%	ST
Bhaina	135,000	0.01%	ST	Khairwar	27,000	0.00%	ST
Agaria	100,000	0.01%	ST	Korwa	27,000	0.00%	ST

Teli- The Teli are one of the largest caste groups in India, numbering over 17 million. They can be found in every state, although they are concentrated mostly in the North East. They make up the largest segment of Chhattisgarhi Hindu society. Traditionally, the Teli were oil pressers. The name Teli derives from the Sanskrit word Taila, which refers to Sesame and Mustard seed oil. The Teli generally regard themselves as Vaisyas, or the third highest ranking caste grouping in South Asian society. It is possible that at some point in ancient history they held a high social standing, as the oil they produced was used not only for cooking but also for ceremonial purposes, which must be regarded as pure. With the advent of modern commercially produced oil, they were forced to change their lifestyle. They have become entrepreneurs, land owners, and cultivators. There are 145 segments or clans among them.

Kawar- The Kawar have at least 12 endogamous subdivisions among them, which regulate marriage and have different social standing. Though the Kawar are regarded as untouchables by other Hindus, and on the same social level as a tribal group, some of their clans follow Hindu practices (such as cremation of the dead) and celebrating Hindu festivals. One Kawar subgroup, the Tanwar, claim descent from the Tomar, a Kshatriya clan, second highest in Hindu society. Their may be some validity to the claim, as the Kawar are believed to be the descendants of defeated soldiers in the epic battle of Kurukshetra. The word Kawar derives from Kaurava, the designation of soldiers who served under the Haihaibansi chiefs of Ratanpur. These defeated soldiers and their families may have fled to the hills and intermarried with tribal and Dalit peoples in modern-day Chhattisgarh, thus explaining their low social status today.

Barhai- The Barhai number over 5 million and can be found all throughout central and northeast India. They are an occupational artisan caste of carpenters, and are regarded highly by high caste Hindus, including Brahmins. Though wood working has been their traditional occupation, they have also become builders of homes in towns and cities. In rural areas they manufacture agricultural tools, furniture, and other items such as the wedding post, which is the central artifact in most Hindu marriage ceremonies. The Barhai are believed to be responsible for introducing the wheel in Chhattisgarh. They worship Viswakarma, who is believed to be the architect of the universe, and the tools of their trade are considered sacred.