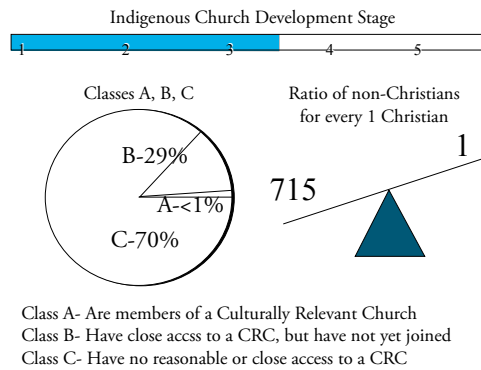


Gujarati Caste Hindus



Quick Facts

Population: 50,000,000
 India: 49,000,000
 Africa: 500,000
 United States: 240,000
 United Kingdom: 140,000
Religion: Hinduism
Believers: 0.14%
Scriptures: NT, OT
Ministry Tools: JRGT
Church Status: 3
Mission Status: 2
MS Subgroups: 200+



Identity: Over 150 Hindu peoples use the Gujarati language as their mother-tongue. They are concentrated in the northwestern state of Gujarat. The majority peoples that speak Gujarati are the Koli (6.4m), Kunbi (6.2m) and Brahman (2.6m). The Gujarati language is of the Indo-Aryan family, related to Hindi and Marathi.

Lifestyle: The state of Gujarat is heavily industrialized, allowing the Gujarati peoples to enjoy a standard of living two and half times greater than most of India. Diamond mining, petroleum refining and dairy production provide a great deal of revenue. Major agricultural crops include cotton, peanuts and sugarcane.

Customs: Among the Koli, villages are led by community councils and headed by a *patel* (head councilman). The patel is elected democratically through an oral vote. The council is the legal and judicial authority on the village

level, deciding disputes and punishing offenders. Members of these councils are sent to higher clan-level councils called *Samaj*, which maintain tribal cohesion.

Religion: The Gujarati peoples are famous for their devotion to Lord Krishna, who is said to be an *avatar* (incarnation) of Vishnu (the third member of the Hindu trinity). Krishna is the principle deity in the Bhagavad Gita, a devotional Hindu scripture extolling the virtues of *yogic* meditation. In the villages, ancestor images are often placed alongside household deities to show respect, bring good fortune, and ward off malevolent spirits.

Christian Outreach: There are significant breakthroughs among 6 lower caste Gujarati peoples, and minor breakthroughs among 19 others. All of the middle and upper caste peoples remain without an indigenous disciple-making movement. The state of Gujarat has become a great spiritual battleground with

the highest levels of Christian persecution in India. Anti-Christian legislation, harrasment, and coercion by local authorities make for an increasingly hostile environment for public evangelism.

How to Pray:

✞ Pray for the continued expansion of the gospel among the lower-caste peoples, and at the same time ask God to keep the upper-caste peoples from becoming prejudiced against the Christian faith.

✞ Pray for the 700,000 Gujarati diaspora in Christian lands that God would burden believers and churches to lovingly reach out to them.

✞ Pray for boldness to be given to every believer and evangelist to proclaim the uniqueness of Christ in the midst of persecution.

✞ Ask God to change the perception of Gujaratis so they see the gospel as a gift from God, and not as a foreign invasion of their culture and tradition.

✞ Pray that God would raise up Christian leaders among the influential Brahman and Rajput castes.

✞ Ask God to protect religious freedom and to

Every year 450,000 Gujarati Hindus die without Christ.

Gujarati Caste Hindus (cont.)

30 Least-Evangelized Gujarati Hindu Peoples

People, Population, % Evangelical, Caste Type

Koli	6,400,000	0.02%	ST	Nai	400,000	0.00%	BC
Kunbi	6,150,000	0.01%	BC	Darzi	365,000	0.00%	BC
Brahman	2,700,000	0.00%	FC	Baria	325,000	0.00%	BC
Rajput	2,200,000	0.00%	FC	Bairagi	320,000	0.00%	BC
Bania	3,450,000	0.00%	FC	Lohar	320,000	0.00%	SC
Mahyavanshi	1,550,000	0.03%	SC	Rabari	290,000	0.00%	ST
Dhangar	1,400,000	0.00%	BC	Megh	285,000	0.00%	SC
Chamar	1,000,000	0.02%	SC	Machhi	270,000	0.00%	BC
Kumhar	850,000	0.00%	SC	Talabda	260,000	0.00%	BC
Talvia	820,000	0.00%	BC	Sonar	245,000	0.00%	BC
Dubla	750,000	0.03%	ST	Bhangi	215,000	0.01%	SC
Ahir	560,000	0.00%	BC	Mavchi	170,000	0.00%	BC
Lohana	490,000	0.00%	BC	Mochi	170,000	0.00%	BC
Rathawa	460,000	0.01%	ST	Charan	160,000	0.00%	ST
Badhai	450,000	0.00%	BC	Teli	150,000	0.00%	BC
Ravalia	420,000	0.00%	BC	Kasar	145,000	0.01%	BC

KOLI

The origins of the Koli people is unknown, though the two predominate theories among anthropologists is that they either are immigrants from the Sindh province (possibly related to the White Huns which invaded from this region) or that they are a break-away from the Munda people cluster. What is clear is that they have retained their tribal social structure while adopting the languages and religion of the predominate peoples around which they have settled. They speak predominantly Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi. They have two major subdivisions, the Son Koli and the Hill Koli. The Son Koli are predominately a fishing community. The Hill Koli have various hereditary occupations depending on their clan and family. Though their social status is low, they are not necessarily untouchables as many higher castes such as the Rajput, Kunbi, and Gujars will accept water from them (an important indication in Hindu society of a people's level of purity). Though they are non-vegetarian, they abstain from beef due to Hindu influence. The goddess Bhawani is their chief deity, and almost every family owns a silver image of her. A small portion of the tribe has converted to Islam.

BANIA

The word Bania comes from the Sanskrit word “vanij,” meaning merchant. The Banias likely originate from various occupational castes of moneylenders, bankers and traders which claimed “Vaisya” status in the Hindu ranking system due to their success in business. There are over seventy recognized subgroups with varying social status within the Bania community. Some are considered “degraded” by others, and intermarriage is forbidden. They worship principally Ganesh and Lakshmi, deities which represent prosperity and wealth.

DHANGAR

The Dhangar are a caste of shepherds, closely related to the Rabari, and perhaps the Mahar. They are known for their woven wool blankets, which they sell or trade to supplement their income. They have a high regard for themselves, and are a tightly knit community. There are over 80 clans among them, some of which claim Kshatriya and Vaisya status. The name Dhangar literally means “one who is wealthy.”