

# Oriya Caste Hindus



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 30,000,000

India: 29,700,000

Myanmar: 100,000

Bangladesh: 30,000

United States: 10,000

**Religion:** Hinduism

**Believers:** 0.13%

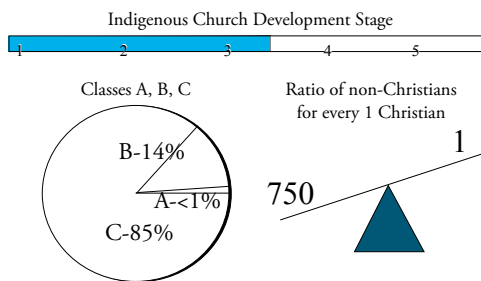
**Scriptures:** NT, OT

**Ministry Tools:** JRGT

**Church Status:** 3

**Mission Status:** 2

**MS Subgroups:** 220+



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:** Over 220 Hindu peoples use the Oriya language as their mother-tongue. They are concentrated in the east central states of Orissa and Chattisgarh. Oriya is an Indo-Aryan language, closely related to Bengali and Assamese. The Oriya peoples descend from a sea-faring Hindu empire that extended its influence from Sri Lanka to Myanmar, and all the way to Malaysia and Indonesia.

**Lifestyle:** Orissa has fallen behind most other states in India, with a 50% illiteracy rate and some of the highest levels of poverty. Over 60 percent of the state is without access to potable water. However, Orissa has an abundance of mineral wealth which has recently attracted large foreign investment in mining and manufacturing.

**Customs:** Centuries of blending between Hindu, Chinese and Arab influences, has made the Oriya culture very rich in music, dance, silk paint-

ing and silver craftsmanship, as well as other ancient practices which carry on even today through the occupational caste system. During the height of their power the Oriya could boast of the grandest architecture and temples in India. Influences of their architecture can be seen all throughout SE Asia.

**Religion:** The Oriya peoples have been strongly Hindu for several millenniums, with a rich religious literary history. They are the only known ethno-linguistic group in India to export Hinduism outside of India. The 3 million Indonesian Hindus in Bali are remnants of their evangelistic influence hundreds of years ago. The Sun Temple is the most famous Oriyan religious site, and dedicated to the worship of the sun, though the theme of the architecture is war and sensuality.

**Christian Outreach:** The Oriya Caste Hindus have remained strongly anti-Christian. Legislation has been passed

requiring all baptisms to receive government approval on a case by case basis. Most Oriya speaking believers are from a non-Hindu background, and the Church is growing rapidly among them. This has prompted a reaction from the Brahman establishment which seeks to spread Hinduism among the tribal and Dalit groups.

## How to Pray:

☞ Intercede against the strongholds of national pride and militancy which hold the Oriyan Hindu peoples in bondage.

☞ Pray for a reversal of the recent anti-Christian legislation which has led to an atmosphere of hate and intolerance among Hindus.

☞ Ask God to give grace to Christians as they reach out in love, despite the burning of many churches and frequent mob-attacks on believing homes and families.

☞ Pray for spiritual breakthrough among the influential Oriyan Brahmins, which number over 2 million.

☞ Pray for effective outreach to the millions of Hindu devotees which gather every year in Puri for the Ratha Jatra (Chariot

**Every year 270,000 Oriya Hindus die without Christ.**

# Oriya Caste Hindus (cont.)

## 30 Least-Evangelized Oriya Peoples People, Population, % Evangelical, Caste Type

|          |           |       |    |             |         |       |    |
|----------|-----------|-------|----|-------------|---------|-------|----|
| Ahir     | 2,300,000 | 0.00% | BC | Mali        | 450,000 | 0.01% | ST |
| Brahman  | 2,200,000 | 0.00% | FC | Karan       | 390,000 | 0.00% | SC |
| Mahishya | 2,000,000 | 0.00% | BC | Bauri       | 330,000 | 0.00% | SC |
| Gauda    | 1,500,000 | 0.00% | BC | Bhuiya      | 320,000 | 0.01% | ST |
| Khandait | 1,200,000 | 0.00% | FC | Rajput      | 265,000 | 0.00% | FC |
| Pan      | 1,200,000 | 0.00% | SC | Buna        | 235,000 | 0.00% | BC |
| Teli     | 980,000   | 0.01% | BC | Kalingi     | 215,000 | 0.00% | BC |
| Ganda    | 860,000   | 0.00% | SC | Bathudi     | 215,000 | 0.00% | ST |
| Kumhar   | 690,000   | 0.00% | SC | Hadi        | 190,000 | 0.00% | SC |
| Kolta    | 630,000   | 0.00% | BC | Sunri       | 175,000 | 0.00% | SC |
| Guria    | 600,000   | 0.00% | BC | Gokha       | 170,000 | 0.00% | SC |
| Lohar    | 550,000   | 0.00% | SC | Golla       | 170,000 | 0.00% | BC |
| Tanti    | 525,000   | 0.00% | BC | Sagarbanshi | 160,000 | 0.00% | BC |
| Bhandari | 500,000   | 0.00% | BC | Paik        | 145,000 | 0.00% | BC |
| Dhobi    | 490,000   | 0.00% | SC | Relli       | 130,000 | 0.00% | SC |
| Kandra   | 460,000   | 0.00% | SC | Bhulia      | 120,000 | 0.00% | BC |

### GAUDA

The Gauda are a landowning community, widely dispersed throughout Orissa. They trace their origins to the Magadh region in Bihar, from which almost all have now migrated. In addition to owning land, they also engage in cow-herding and supplying water. They worship primarily Krishna, though they also participate in most local festivals such as Dussehra (celebrating the victory of the goddess Durga) and Ganesh Puja. They have good relations with high caste Hindus, and allow Brahmins to perform their wedding ceremonies. However, unlike other Hindu groups they bury their dead instead of cremating them.

### KHANDAIT

The Khandait are the descendants of Kshatriya warriors, who formed a large part of the “landed militia” that served the ancient Oriyan rajas (princely rulers). They are fiercely proud of their heritage as valiant fighters, especially against the British, whom they drove out of the Khurda region. The name Khandait literally means “one who bears the sword.” Today, they are a wealthy land-owning community. Their lands are cultivated either by share-croppers or by day-laborers. They themselves consider it beneath their dignity to work a plow, though in the ancient past, farming was considered a noble profession. Many are expanding into the transport industry, poultry farming, and confectionary manufacturing. They worship the Hindu deities Kali, Shiva and Durga.

### PAN

The Pan are a low-caste community that traditionally worked as serfs to landholding communities such as the Gauda and Khandait. Today, they work not only as agricultural day-laborers, but in other service industries, and increasingly as musicians. A good number migrated to Tripura to work in the tea-gardens. These have fared better economically, and some have been able to acquire land of their own. They employ their own priests for worshipping their patron deities, such as Lakmi, Kali and Soni. However, for the sacred rites associated with birth, marriage and death they employ a Brahmin priest. They have numerous lineages that regulate marriage according to ancestry. Though a low caste group, they will not associate with other castes they consider beneath them.