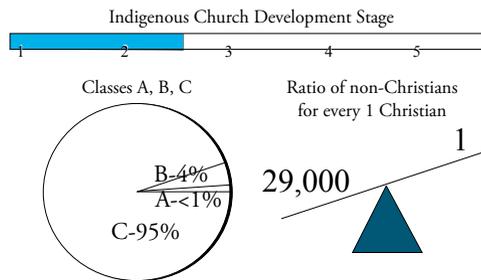


Tamil Muslims



Quick Facts

Population: 5,600,000
 India: 4,000,000
 Sri Lanka: 1,200,000
 Malaysia: 100,000
 South Africa: 40,000
Religion: Islam-Sunni
Believers: 0.003%
Scriptures: NT, OT
Ministry Tools: JRGT
C Status: 2
M Status: 2
MS Subgroups: 10+



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 Tamil Muslims are known as the Labbai in India and the Moors in Sri Lanka. Along the Coromandel coast of India and the northern coast of Sri Lanka, the Tamil Muslims are of mixed Arab and Tamil descent, and were converted by Shafi Arab traders. In the interior of Tamil Nadu, the Tamil Muslims were converted by non-Arabs and follow the Hanafi school of Islam.

Lifestyle: Tamil Muslims are known to be shrewd shopkeepers and traders in Tamil Nadu, and their livelihood is primarily non-agricultural. Their urbanization rate is twice that of Tamil Hindus, as well as their percentage of overseas diaspora, which is perhaps the highest for any group in India. In Sri Lanka, the Moors dominate the gem trading business and profit from the import of scarce manufactured goods.

Customs: Although business endeavors have dispersed the Tamil Muslims,

each family maintains a “kin center” which they consider home. During annual festivals they will return here with their extended family, and live in their ancestral houses, which are usually large and unoccupied throughout the year. Families will use the occasion to re-connect with other traders, discuss business ideas and plans, hire new employees and make marriage arrangements.

Religion: Though Muslim in name, the Labbai have always maintained a close affinity with Tamil Hindus, including participation in historic Tamil festivals. However, the last century has seen an increased Islamization of the Labbai, associated with a desire to identify with the larger Muslim movement in India. The result has been a greater differentiation with Hindu practices and the adoption of Urdu as a second language, and even as a mother tongue by some.

Christian Outreach: There are a few

missionaries working among the Labbai in Tamil Nadu, and two fellowships have been established. In Sri Lanka, despite the difficulties faced by the Tamil separatist movement there, one indigenous ministry has seen a breakthrough among them, and there is increased interest in the Sri Lankan church to reach them with Christ’s love.

How to Pray:

☞ Praise God for how he has used the civil war in Sri Lanka as a wake-up call to the Church. Pray that many more laborers would be thrust out to reach the Moors, and that a similar movement might begin among churches in Tamil Nadu to reach the Labbai.

☞ Pray for the production of a Muslim-sensitive translation of the Bible into Tamil and Urdu.

☞ Pray for wisdom for those indigenous ministries working among the Tamil Muslims that they might discover the best way to keep new believers within their families and communities. Pray for a true “insider movement” to be birthed in every family and clan.

☞ Many Tamil Muslims practice *purdah*, or wife seclusion. Pray for specialized

**Every year 50,000
 Tamil Muslims
 die without Christ.**