

# Banjara



## Quick Facts

**Pop. in India:** 5,000,000

### State Populations:

Andhra Pradesh: 1,800,000

Maharashtra: 950,000

Karnataka: 870,000

Madhya Pradesh: 500,000

**Religion:** Hinduism, Islam

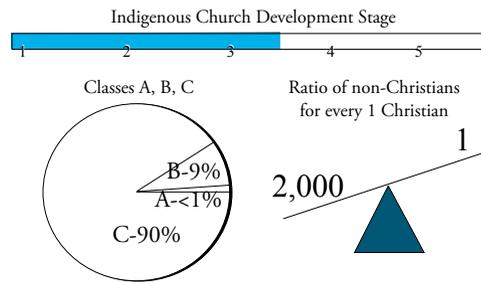
**Believers:** 0.05%

**Scriptures:** NT

**Ministry Tools:** JT

**C Status:** 3 **M Status:** 3

**MS Subgroups:** 40+



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:** There are many theories about the origin of the Banjara. What is known for certain is that they have been a nomadic people for centuries, and are the progenitors of the gypsies which are spread throughout the Middle East, Europe and North Africa. One theory is that they descend from mixed marriages between Brahmins and Rajputs many centuries ago.

**Lifestyle:** The Banjara have made their living primarily through commercial trading. Another name for the Banjara is the Lambadi, which means “carriers of salt.” Another sub-group, the Gormati, means “people of the cattle.” They may travel up to 15km a day with their livestock, and often camp in open fields at the request of farmers who use the dung for fuel and fertilizer. During encampment, young men will sleep outside with the herds.

**Customs:** Banjara are known for their brightly colored clothing and elaborate

ornaments, which makes them easily identifiable in a crowd. Banjara embroidery makes extensive use of mirrors, wood beads, cowrie shells and other assorted objects. These embroidered cloths have multiple uses, including clothing, wall hangings and tapestries.

**Religion:** The Banjara follow their own ethnic religion, though they have adopted elements of Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. They are essentially monotheists, and view the Hindu gods as saints. Their sacred specialists (*Bhagats*) are well-known for their powers of sorcery. They revere their pack-animals and set aside at least one ox as sacred. This ox is colorfully decorated and is placed at the head of the caravan. Vows are made to this sacred ox and prayers for healing. They are known for their many taboos and superstitions, which frequently dictate their decisions as a group.

**Christian Outreach:** Due to their nomadic tendencies, the Banjara have

traditionally been difficult to reach with the gospel. However, in the last fifteen years a number of agencies have taken active interest in seeing a disciple-making movement among them, including both expatriate and Indian groups. Progress has been mixed, with some areas experiencing a decline in Christian adherence.

## How to Pray:

☞ Pray for great wisdom in discipling a nomadic people to be given to the 30+ mission agencies committed to reaching the Banjara. Pray for effective partnership in following up with new believers and seekers.

☞ A recent training program for Banjara church leaders showed promising signs of a growing maturity among the Banjara believers. Pray for thousands of itinerant evangelists and disciple makers to be raised up among the Banjara.

☞ The Banjara are primarily an oral-based society. Pray for the development of an effective oral-training and discipleship program that will make the gospel relevant to their culture.

☞ Pray that the Indian church might reach out to the Banjara as they pass through their communities.

**Every year 45,000 Banjara die without Christ.**