

Bihari Caste Hindu



Quick Facts

Pop. in India: 50,000,000

India: 45,000,000

Nepal: 4,500,000

Mauritius: 330,000

Fiji: 20,000

Religion: Hindu

Believers: 0.4%

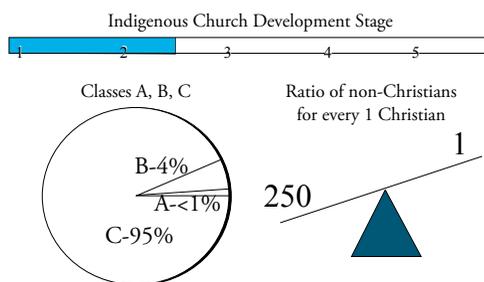
Scriptures: NT

Ministry Tools: GT

Church Status: 2

Mission Status: 2

MS Subgroups: 100+



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 Bihari are a complex cluster of many related eastern Hindi dialects including Bhojpuri, Magahi, Maithili and Angika. The language is spoken primarily in the Indian states of West Bihar and East Uttar Pradesh, as well as in Southern Nepal. Among the fifty Hindu peoples that speak Bhojpuri, there is a high percentage of Forward Castes, such as the Rajput, Brahman, and Bania.

Lifestyle: Occupying the fertile Gangetic plain, the Biharis were once a major agricultural powerhouse in South Asia. Though the region is generally dry and cool, intense flooding over the last decade has caused severe hardship for Bihar's economy. The struggle for power between Bihari upper castes has made Bihar one of the poorest states in India.

Customs: Among the Biharis, it is very important for a father to find a match for his daughter from a clan

or caste that is equal or higher than his own. Large amounts of money are paid to match-makers, and large dowries are offered to seal the deal. Unfortunately, this practice has led to a high degree of female infanticide, and many educated Bihari women are renouncing it.

Religion: The goddess Devi is worshipped by the Rajput in her form as the goddess of war. The Rajputs believe they have descended from the shoulders and arms of Brahma, the chief Hindu deity. Second only to the Brahmins in reincarnated position, they insist on having a divine mandate to rule and defend India. Traditionally, when a Rajput died in battle, his wife would join him in death through self-immolation. This practice which is called *sati* was outlawed by the British.

Christian Outreach: The last ten years has witnessed an explosion of house churches among the Bhojpuri, an incredible breakthrough which has

cut across caste lines to impact both Brahmins and Dalits alike. This breakthrough came about in direct answer to a concerted prayer campaign to bind the strongholds over the Bhojpuri people, one of the least-reached groups in India at that time.

How to Pray:

✞ The state of Bihar was once regarded as the graveyard of mission in India. Praise God this has changed! Intercede now for greater impact beyond the Bihari.

✞ Over 99% of the Christians in Bihar are from a non-Hindu background (tribal and Dalit). Pray for grace and wisdom for those believers who seek to reach out to their Hindu neighbors and employers.

✞ Pray for deliverance from the principalities of war and violence that keep the Rajput in bondage.

✞ Ask God to bless the distribution of the Bhojpuri New Testament and to hasten the production of the full Bible in their language.

✞ Pray for the influential Patna University in Bihar that a discipleship group would grow on this campus to impact the entire student body and Bihar's future.

Every year 450,000 Bihari Hindus die without Christ.

Bihari Caste Hindus (cont.)

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

Rajput	12,000,000	0.02%	FC	Bania	1,400,000	0.01%	FC
Ahir	10,000,000	0.01%	BC	Lohar	1,300,000	0.00%	SC
Brahman	7,000,000	0.00%	FC	Mallah	1,300,000	0.00%	SC
Kurmi	4,000,000	0.00%	BC	Bhuiya	1,200,000	0.00%	SC
Koiri	3,900,000	0.00%	BC	Kalwar	1,200,000	0.00%	BC
Dosadh	3,200,000	0.00%	BC	Bharbhunjaegu	1,180,000	0.00%	BC
Kahar	2,600,000	0.00%	BC	Mal	1,120,000	0.00%	SC
Teli	2,600,000	0.00%	BC	Dhanuk	1,090,000	0.00%	SC
Kumhar	1,800,000	0.00%	SC	Kayastha	1,000,000	0.00%	FC
Koiri	1,800,000	0.00%	BC	Kandu	990,000	0.00%	BC
Pasi	1,700,000	0.00%	SC	Sonar	955,000	0.00%	BC
Bhar	1,700,000	0.00%	BC	Lunia	940,000	0.00%	BC
Badhai	1,600,000	0.00%	SC	Dhobi	920,000	0.01%	SC
Nai	1,600,000	0.00%	BC	Ghatwar	660,000	0.00%	BC

Major Linguistic Sub-groups

Maithili- The Maithili have a rich cultural and literary history dating back to the first millenium kingdom of Mathila. A strong Brahman community has kept the Maithili language and culture alive, in spite of efforts by the majority Hindi to absorb it as a dialect. Like the Bhojpuri and Magahi, population statistics for the Maithili in India vary widely from 7-40 million. This is due to the fact that Bihari is a dialect continuum, with its dialects blending with one another in such a way as to make hard and fast differentiation next to impossible. In Nepal they number 2.85 million, the largest of the Bihari dialects. The Brahman dialect of Maithili is regarded as the standard for magazines, newspapers, radio and TV broadcasting. In 2003 Maithili was given official status as a language by the Indian government, due in no small part to the influence of powerful Maithili Brahmins. There is yet no Bible translation in Maithili.

Magahi- The Magahi dialect is regarded to be the most ancient of the Bihari dialects from which Maithili and Bhojpuri evolved, though it itself has changed significantly. Magahi is thought to be the original language of Jainism and Buddhism, the founders of which both originated from this area of Bihar. The original Jain Scriptures in the Ardhamagadhi language and the Theravada Buddhist Scriptures in the Pali language, both closely resemble modern Magahi. The name Magahi derives from the Kingdom of Magadha which ruled the Gangetic plain for centuries and reached its height under King Asoka in the 4th century B.C. There is no modern translation of the Bible in Magahi, though an attempt was made to translate the New Testament in the early 19th century. It is believed that the Magahi will be able to use the Bhojpuri NT, though this has yet to be tested. There are an estimated 13 million Magahi speakers.

Bhojpuri- The Bhojpuri are the largest of the Bihari ethno-linguistic clusters, their numbers varying widely from 23 to 80 million in India. In Nepal they number 1.79 million. The Bhojpuri strongly resist being labeled as a Hindi dialect, and claim that many of those classified as Hindi speakers are in fact Bhojpuri. Of course, both groups have political motivations to inflate their numbers. Though the Bhojpuri have made great efforts to preserve their language through extensive literature and broadcasting, the influence of standard Hindi on the language is growing and this is likely to continue. The New Testament was completed in 1999.