

Rajasthani Caste Hindus



Quick Facts

Population: 30,000,000

Major Dialects in India:

Marwari: 14,000,000

Dhundari: 9,000,000

Shekhawati: 3,000,000

Mewari: 1,100,000

Religion: Hinduism

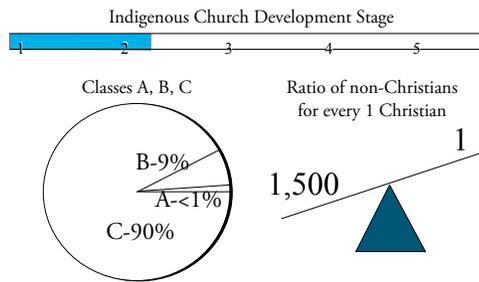
Believers: 0.05%

Scriptures: Portions

Ministry Tools: None

C Status: 3 **M Status:** 2

MS Subgroups: 150+



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: Rajasthani is a cluster of closely related Central Aryan dialects, spoken by over 150 peoples in North West India. Central Aryan languages include Hindi and Urdu, and there is a high level of intelligibility between them. The major Rajasthani people are the Marwadi (10m), a name which is often used interchangeably with Rajasthani.

Lifestyle: The Rajasthani's have one of the highest percentages of Forward Caste populations in India (70%), affording them a traditionally better lifestyle than most Indians. The Banias and Marwadis make up the majority of the *Vaisyas* caste group in Hindu society. The *Vaisyas* were the traders, businessmen and moneylenders, and this is principally what the Bania and Marwadi do today as well.

Customs: Rajasthani Brahmins fix the date for marriage ceremonies, and perform the ritual of anointing the

bride and groom with oil and turmeric. A dying person is given water from the sacred river Ganges, and after death is laid on a pyre and cremated. Widows are taken care of by the entire community through a common fund.

Religion: The Marwadis and Bania are fond of the Hindu god Ganesh, who is the patron deity of good fortune and prosperity. Couples who are engaged are required to worship Ganesh before they are married to obtain his blessing. Gauria is the mother of Ganesh, and she is also worshiped, along with the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. The latter goddess is worshipped during the Diwali festival, at which time the Bania and Marwadi close their account books and begin new ones.

Christian Outreach: There has yet to be a disciple-making movement among the Rajasthani Hindus, and there are only a few small fellowships of Rajasthani believers from a caste Hindu

background. The response to evangelistic efforts is on the increase, but no strong indigenous leadership has yet emerged to move the Rajasthani church forward into more contextualized worship and discipleship that could lead to a mass movement to Christ among the high caste groups (Brahman, Rajput, Bania and Mawadi).

How to Pray:

☞ Pray against the stronghold of money and wealth that keep the Rajasthani Hindus away from salvation in Christ, and laying up treasure in heaven.

☞ Pray for the few beginning Hindu background fellowships in the strategic city of Jaipur (2m residents) that they would be a light to the entire community.

☞ Ninety percent of Rajasthani Hindu communities are without any missionary or evangelistic presence. Pray that God would raise up and thrust out laborers into this vast harvestfield.

☞ Pray for the development of a truly relevant and contextual Bible translation for each of the four major Rajasthani dialects (Marwari, Dhundari, Shekhawati, and Mewari).

Every year 270,000 Rajasthani Hindus die without Christ.

Rajasthani Caste Hindus (cont.)

30 Least-Evangelized Rajasthani Hindu Peoples

People, Population, % Evangelical, Caste Type

Marwadi	10,200,000	0.00%	FC	Koli	600,000	0.00%	SC
Bania	8,800,000	0.00%	FC	Thori	570,000	0.00%	SC
Brahman	4,600,000	0.00%	FC	Rabari	540,000	0.00%	ST
Rajput	3,400,000	0.00%	FC	Teli	460,000	0.00%	BC
Chamar	3,400,000	0.00%	SC	Sonar	430,000	0.00%	BC
Gujar	2,800,000	0.00%	BC	Jogi	400,000	0.00%	SC
Kumhar	1,700,000	0.00%	SC	Rawat	380,000	0.00%	SC
Mali	1,600,000	0.00%	BC	Bishnoi	370,000	0.00%	BC
Megh	1,400,000	0.00%	SC	Sadhu	340,000	0.00%	BC
Khati	960,000	0.00%	BC	Mina	330,000	0.00%	ST
Balai	920,000	0.00%	SC	Bhat	300,000	0.00%	BC
Daroga	840,000	0.00%	BC	Kunbi	270,000	0.00%	BC
Ahir	760,000	0.00%	SC	Sirvi	245,000	0.00%	BC
Bhangi	740,000	0.05%	SC	Beldar	240,000	0.00%	SC
Nai	740,000	0.00%	BC	Dangi	230,000	0.00%	BC
Raigar	740,000	0.00%	BC	Dhanuk	220,000	0.00%	SC

MARWADI

The Marwadi are believed to be Banias that immigrated from Rajputana to Marwar. They are primarily money-lenders by occupation, though they also engage in extensive trading, brokering (especially acting as middlemen in the grain industry through their network of mills), cloth dealing and shop keeping. Their caste has become so closely associated with money lending, that the term Marwari has become synonymous with this traditional occupation. They frequently lend money mostly to lower caste poor families at high interest, and have thus gained a reputation for being greedy and dishonest. The poorer castes believe the Marwadis objective is to keep them perpetually in debt, though they continue to borrow from them just the same. Marwadis are considered a closely knit society, and each family contributes to a common fund to help Marwadi widows, orphans, and needy families.

CHAMAR

The Chamars are the largest least-reached low-caste people group in India. Their name is Sanskrit in origin and means "one who works in leather." Today, a large number of the Chamar continue their traditional occupation as tanners and leather workers. Others engage in basket making, sweeping, or other menial labor. Chamar women are often employed as mid-wives. They are known for their condoning of promiscuity in which adultery is accepted and considered the norm. Sharing wives between close friends is common. They are also known to destroy or abandon the dwelling in which a death occurs to keep the spirit of the person from haunting the place.

GUJAR

The Gujars are around 68% Hindu and 31% Muslim (the Muslim Gujars are treated separately in this volume as many of these speak their original language). The Hindu Gujars speak primarily Marwadi Rajasthani and Hindi. They are a widely dispersed group. In the past they engaged primarily in nomadic pastoralism, raising cattle and buffalo, and subsisting mostly from dairy products which they either consumed or sold. Their nomadism earned them the mistrust of nearby peoples, and they were once branded as raiders and cattle stealers. Today they have become settled cultivators, though they have a reputation for being lazy and unproductive in this occupation.