

The Kanauji of India



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[India](#) is a complex mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and social groupings. Because of this diversity, it is extremely difficult to adequately describe any single people group. Ranking second only to [China](#) among the world's most populous countries, India has a population of more than 935,000,000. The overall population density is about 762 people per square mile.

India may be divided into four main regions: the Himalayas, the northern river-plains region, the Deccan, and the Eastern and Western Ghats Mountains. Because of its numerous geographical features, climatic conditions are also widely diversified on both a seasonal and regional basis, ranging from tropical to temperate extremes.

The 8.7 million Kanauji (also known as the Western Hindi) are located mainly in the state of Uttar Pradesh. They speak an Indo-Aryan language called Braj Kanauji. Little is known about their specific lifestyle and culture.

What are their lives like?

About 73% of India's population lives in rural areas and is engaged in some form of agriculture. Many are farmers who barely grow enough to survive. Their farms are extremely small and often very fragmented. The raising of livestock, particularly horned cattle, buffalo, horses, and mules, is a central feature of the economy. Because of Hindu influence, however, these animals are used almost exclusively as beasts of burden rather than sources of meat.

Indian culture is primarily Hindu-oriented. Many Hindu institutions, including the rigid *caste* (social class) system, have wide-ranging effects on Indian society. The word "caste" basically means breed, race, or kind. Indian society is divided into hierarchical castes that are usually *endogamous* (marriage only within the caste). Castes may be defined by occupation or by kinship and lineage, although there are some exceptions. Nevertheless, caste is so fundamental to the social organization of India that it prevails in all parts, except some of the tribal populations. Not enough is known about the Kanauji to accurately place them in the caste system; thus, their particular lifestyle cannot be adequately described.

Uttar Pradesh, where many of the Kanauji live, contains four of the seven holy cities of Hinduism: Haridwar, Mathura, Varanasi, and Ayodhya. Ayodhya is believed by many Hindus to be the birthplace of *Rama*, the seventh incarnation of the god *Vishnu* (preserver of the universe). Muslims also regard the city as sacred because the Babri Mosque was built there in the early 1500's.

What are their beliefs?

The Kanauji are 99.5% [Hindu](#) and follow the basic Hindu customs and traditions. The term "Hinduism" came into use about A.D.1200, but clearly identifying what Hindus believe is difficult. The religion has no founder, no prophet, and no instructional structure. It is a way of life much more than a theology; it is a philosophy more than a religion. Contrary to popular belief in the West, Hinduism is not an ancient, fixed set of beliefs. Rather, it is a body of customs, practices, and beliefs that go through major changes every few hundred years.

The majority, though not all, of Hindus believe in a supreme being. Some respect all life and eat only vegetables, while others will gladly eat meat from sacrifices in the temple. To some, their religion is highly personal; to others, it is impersonal. While most Hindus worship *Brahman* (the

creator), *Shiva* (the destroyer), *Vishnu* (the preserver), and the goddess *Shaktri*, they also worship a pantheon of other minor gods, their incarnations, spouses, or offspring. A belief in reincarnation (continual cycle of death and rebirth) is one of the few unifying features of Hinduism.

What are their needs?

Because of the significant size of their population, the Kanauji do have the New Testament available in their own language. Although there are more than 40,000 Kanauji believers, this represents less than 1% of their total population. These Christians need materials to strengthen them in their walk with the Lord. Intercession and continued missions efforts are still necessities to see the Kanauji won to Christ.

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord to call additional laborers to join the few who are already working among the Kanauji of India.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give creative ideas for evangelism to the missions agency that is targeting the Kanauji.
- Pray that Christian radio broadcasts, evangelical literature, and the Jesus film will be made available to the Kanauji.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the Kanauji so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- Pray that God will give the Kanauji believers many opportunities to share Christ.
- Take authority over the spiritual principalities and powers that are keeping the Kanauji bound.
- Ask God to raise up intercessors who will daily stand in the gap for the Kanauji.
- Ask the Lord to bring forth a triumphant Kanauji church for the glory of His name!



Statistics

Latest estimates from the World Evangelization Research Center.

THE PEOPLE

- **People name:** Kanauji
- **Country:** India
- **Their language:** Braj Kanauji
- **Population:**

(1990) 7,876,700

(1995) 8,664,800

(2000) 9,463,700

- **Largest religion:**

Hindu 99.5%

- **Christians:** <1%
- **Church members:** 43,324
- **Scriptures in their own language:** New Testament
- **Jesus Film in their own language:** None
- **Christian broadcasts in their own language:** None
- **Mission agencies working among this people:** 1

- **Persons who have heard the Gospel:** 2,556,100 (30%)

Those evangelized by local Christians: 476,600 (6%)

Those evangelized from the outside: 2,079,500 (24%)

- **Persons who have never heard the Gospel:** 6,108,700 (70%)

THEIR COUNTRY

- **Country:** India
- **Population:**

(1990) 850,638,100

(1995) 935,744,300

(2000) 1,022,021,300

- **Major peoples in size order:**

Hindi (High Hindi) 9.5%

Telegu 7.8%

Maratha 7.4%

Bengali 6.4%

Hindi (Bazaar, Popular) 5.5%

- **Major religions:**

Hindus 78.2%

Muslims 12%

Christians 4.3%

- **Number of denominations:** 163

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