

Antioch Christian Fellowship

The Burmese (Myen, Bhama) People of India

Unreached Peoples Prayer Profile for January & February



The Burmese are originally from the hills of Tibet in western China. Today, they live mainly in Myanmar (formerly Burma) and in the mountains and steep river valleys of eastern India. They speak Bama (or Burmese), which is a Sino-Tibetan language.

The Burmese are the political, economic, and religious leaders of Myanmar. Myanmar has had a long history of coups, wars, and rebellions. Ethnic divisions and political unrest have been common since the first Burmese kingdom in the eleventh century. Many Burmese eventually fled to Bangladesh, Thailand, and India, in hopes of finding a more peaceful climate. Unfortunately, those who went to India placed an added strain on the country's already poor economy. In addition, India has had a number of problems due to racial prejudice. Presently, the economy is in shambles, and activists are terrorizing innocent tribal groups out of anger toward the immigrants. Sadly, the Burmese have lived in a constant state of instability, bitterness, and fear.

What Are Their Lives Like?

The thickly forested mountains of India provide valuable lumber for the Burmese, while the fertile valleys support intense rice cultivation. Industrial development is limited, however, due to East India's isolation from the rest of India, their poor transportation system, and small local markets. Therefore, the Burmese are limited to farming for survival.

The Burmese ideally grow rice in irrigated fields; however, they also resort to "slash and burn" cultivation. In this process, they first clear the plots by burning off the vegetation. Then they grow crops on it for one or two years before moving to new territory. As a result, many of the tropical forests have been replaced by areas of bare soil, and tangled bamboo now grows on the hillsides that were once covered by lush vegetation.

The Burmese live in villages that are clustered among trees, or along roads or river banks. Various types of houses can be found in the villages. The wealthier people often live in sturdy, mahogany homes that are raised off the ground and have plank floors and tile roofs. Those with lower incomes may live in thatched roof, bamboo houses that have dirt floors. All activities take place on the dirt floors, including eating and sleeping. Therefore, it is extremely impolite to enter a Burmese house wearing shoes. The single most important social institution in the village is the temple. It symbolizes unity among the villagers and provides a wide variety of activities for the people.

The Burmese do not recognize clans or lineages. Marriages are monogamous (one husband, one wife), and are rarely arranged by the parents. Newlyweds generally live with the brides' parents for the first two or three years after marriage. Then they will set up their own independent households.

What Are Their Beliefs?

The Burmese are predominantly Hinayana Buddhists. The traditional goal in Buddhism is to seek the middle path to nirvana, or ultimate peace. They believe that death is not a threat to one who has done good deeds. Instead, it is simply a "passing" from one life to another. They believe that those with less merit are reborn as demons, ghosts, animals, or inhabitants of hell.

Though the Burmese are predominantly Buddhist, they have mingled many animistic practices (based on the belief that non-human objects have spirits) with Buddhism. Their animistic beliefs center around inherently evil spirits called nats. Sadly, they spend their lives trying to appease the nats so that they will be protected from any other evil spirits that may seek to harm them. All of their homes have altars for the spirits, as well as a statue of Buddha.

What Are Their Needs?

The Burmese left their homeland, Myanmar, in search of peace. Unfortunately, the peace they desired has not been found in India. They are in need of loving Christians who will introduce them to the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. Although two missions agencies are currently targeting them, less than 1% of the Burmese community has come to Christ. Fervent prayer and increased evangelism efforts are the keys to seeing them reached with the Gospel.

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord to call people who are willing to go to India and share the love of Christ with the Burmese.
- Pray that Jesus will begin to reveal Himself to the Burmese through dreams and visions.
- Ask God to use the few Burmese believers to share the Gospel with their own people.
- Take authority over the spiritual principalities and powers that are keeping the Burmese bound.
- Ask God to raise up prayer teams who will be faithfully interceding for these precious people.
- Pray for the effectiveness of the Jesus film and Christian radio broadcasts among the Burmese.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the Burmese towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- Pray that strong local churches will be raised up among the Burmese of India by the year 2000.

Burmese People Group Information:

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| Country: | India |
| Language Spoken: | Burmese |
| Population of People in this Country: | 7,000 |
| Population of Language Speakers in the World: | 27,420,800 |
| Language Code: | BMS00 |
| % Christians of this People in this Country: | 0% |
| # of Evangelicals of this People in this Country: | 20 |
| % Evangelicals of this People in this Country: | 0% |
| Latitude, Longitude: | Unknown, Unknown |
| GMI Map Code: | BMS-IND-EPY |
| Affinity Block Name: | Thai/Dai Peoples and Others - SE Asia |
| People Cluster: | Burmese |
| Race Code: | MSY50b |
| 1995 Beginning Joshua Project List: | Yes |
| Active Original Joshua Project List: | No |

Additional People Group Information:

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| Complete Bible: | 1835 |
| New Testament: | 1832 |
| Bible Portions: | 1815 |
| Jesus Film: | Yes |
| Christian Radio Broadcast: | AWR, FEBC |
| Audio Recording of Gospel: | Yes |