

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" **Matthew 28:19**

Unreached People Prayer Profile March & April 2005

The Sindhi People of Pakistan



The Sindhi are the second largest ethnic group in Pakistan. Most of them live in the Sind province, which lies in the southeastern portion of the country, bordering India and the Indian Ocean. The Sindhi, named after the Sindhu (Indus) River, are said to be one of the oldest people groups in Pakistan. Most of them have lived there for centuries and call themselves the *pukka*, or "real" Sindhi. Some have traced their origin back to the Arab invaders who introduced Islam to Pakistan in 711 A.D.

In 1947, many Muslim Sindhi immigrated from present-day India to Pakistan, where they are still referred to as *muhajireen* (refugees). Sindhi Muslims and Hindus lived together in the same region prior to 1947. Today, however, most of the Muslim Sindhi live in Pakistan, and most of the Hindu Sindhi live in India. Other Sindhi are scattered all over the world, from the oil fields of the Middle East to business centers, such as Hong Kong and Singapore.



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What Are Their Lives Like?

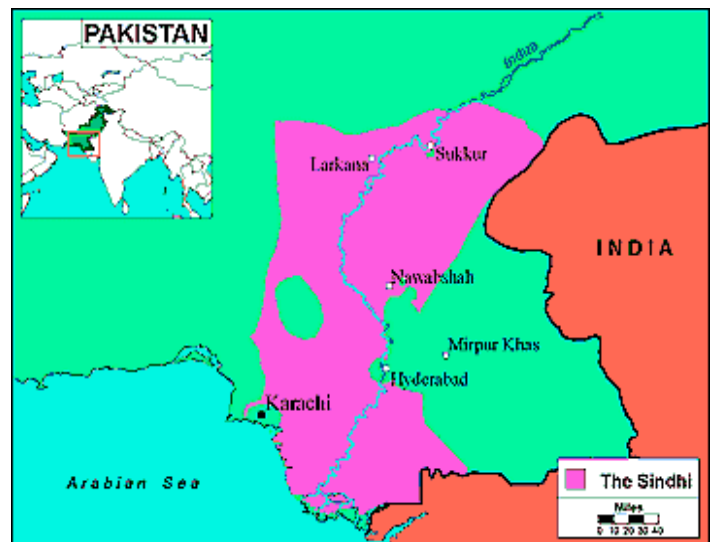
Before the partition of Pakistan and India, the Hindu Sindhi owned most of the land. They also monopolized the areas of trade, industry, and education. The Muslim Sindhi were primarily unskilled laborers and tenants. However, when the Hindu Sindhi moved to India in 1947, the Sindhi culture was greatly affected. The vacuum that had been created in the Sind province was soon filled up with well-educated Muslim Sindhi and Urdu from India. These Muslims quickly acquired a place of importance in their new country.

Today, a majority of the Sindhi are engaged in irrigation farming. Their principal crops include wheat, rice, cotton, sugarcane, various fruits, and oilseed. Some farmers also raise sheep, goats, and camels. The Sindhi living in cities often work as merchants, physicians, lawyers, and teachers. The Sindhi live in mud or baked brick houses that are generally built close together for security. Even very small homes are surrounded by high walls. The houses are designed so that male guests never see the women. Traditionally, Muslim Sindhi women stay at home, leaving only for special occasions such as visiting the temple or calling on relatives. They wear long black dresses and cover their faces with heavy veils.

The family is the basic unity of Sindhi society with the male head being the dominant authority. Unlike other Muslims, the Sindhi tend to organize in caste-like groups along hereditary and occupational lines.

The Sindhi traditionally do not marry outside of their own social classes (caste-like groups). Marriages between first cousins are preferred and long engagements are common. The wedding ceremony includes a reading from the Koran and is performed by a local Muslim teacher.

The major Sindhi festivals coincide with the death anniversaries of three important men. These celebrations include singing, dancing, and reading poetry.



What Are Their Beliefs?

Most Sindhi are Hanafite Muslims. The majority of the rural Sindhi, however, have no clear understanding of their faith and include a strong belief in "folk spirits." Before 1947, many Hindu and Muslim practices were combined. For example, it was not uncommon for both Hindus and Muslims to venerate the same saint. Today, the practice of saint worship persists. Two religious ceremonies are closely related to birth: naming the child and shaving its head. At the naming ceremony, the father whispers, "Allah is great" into the child's ear so that Allah's name is the first thing the child hears. The head-shaving ceremony seems to be a symbolic act of sacrifice. The young child's head is shaved and the hair is buried along with the bones of a sacrificed goat.

What Are Their Needs?

There are presently ten missions agencies targeting the Sindhi of Pakistan, yet less than 1% of their population knows Jesus. Prayer is the key to reaching them with the Gospel.

Prayer Points

- Ask the Holy Spirit to complete the work begun in the hearts of the Sindhi believers through adequate discipleship.
- Pray that God will grant wisdom and favor to the missions agencies that are targeting the Sindhi.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to anoint the Christian broadcasts that are being aired in the Sindhi language.
- Pray for the effectiveness of the Jesus film among the Sindhi.
- Ask the Lord to raise up prayer teams who will begin breaking up the soil through worship and intercession.
- Ask the Lord to bring forth a triumphant Sindhi church for the glory of His name!

Statistics (Latest estimates from the World Evangelization Research Center.)

THE PEOPLE

- **People name:** Sindhi
- **Country:** Pakistan
- **Their language:** Sindhi (Lari, Lasi)
- **Population:**
 - (1990) 14,227,400
 - (1995) 16,393,400
 - (2000) 18,882,300
- **Largest religion:**
 - Muslim (Hanafite) 97%
 - Muslim (Ismaili) 2%
 - Nonreligious 0.9%
- **Christians:** <1%
- **Church members:** 1,639
- **Scriptures in their own language:** Bible
- **Jesus Film in their own language:** Available
- **Christian broadcasts in their own language:** Available
- **Mission agencies working among this people:** 10
- **Persons who have heard the Gospel:** 7,214,700 (44%)
 - Those evangelized by local Christians:** 493,400 (3%)
 - Those evangelized from the outside:** 7,721,300 (41%)
- **Persons who have never heard the Gospel:** 9,178,700 (56%)

THE COUNTRY

- **Country:** Pakistan
- **Population:**
 - (1990) 121,933,300
 - (1995) 140,496,700
 - (2000) 161,827,400
- **Major peoples in size order:**
 - Western Punjabi 42.5%
 - Sindhi 11.6%
 - Southern Punjabi 9.8%
 - Eastern Pathan 7.9%
 - Urdu 7.4%
- **Major religions:**
 - Muslim 96.7%
 - Christian 1.8%
 - Hindu 1.5%
- **Number of denominations:** 37