Muslim Peoples of Nepal

A 30-Day Prayer Guide

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Understanding Islam and Its Beliefs and Practices

Islam: Arabic word “Islam” means “surrender” or “submission” (Acceptance of Allah’s commands) & obedience (putting Allah’s commands into practice). Islam is a complete roadmap (code) for life from birth to death & beyond (private, social, political, economic, moral and spiritual). It is guidance provided by Allah, the Creator of the universe, for all mankind. The follower of Islam is called “Muslim”, which means one who surrenders or submits & obey. Muhammad (means “The Praised One”) is the founder of Islam.

Qur’an: Quran is the holy book of Islam which means “the reciting” or “the reading”. It is believed as a collection of revelations and instructions received by Muhammad from Allah through the angel Gabriel during the period of 22 years (610-632 AD). It is the primary & final authority of all law & life; the final & superior revelation from the One Supreme God. It is four-fifths the size of the New Testament and it has 114 chapters (“surah”) & 6200 Ayah (verses). It was written in 652 AD (20 years after Muhammad’s death). Other revealed holy books in Quran are Zabur (Psalms of David), Tawrat (Torah of Musa) and Injil (Gospel of Isa).

Shari’a or Law: Sharia is an umbrella for guidance Islamic faith & practice. It is also the sum of Islamic guidance revealed to Muhammad & transmitted by him to humanity. Word “Shari’a” means “stream of water”. Just as water is the necessity for life, so is the Shari’a of Islam for the order & harmony of private & public life. There are four sources of authority for Shari’a – Qur’an (primary source), Hadith, Ijma & Qiyas.

Hadith: Hadith means “Tradition”; reported narratives, sayings, stories and deeds of Muhammad passed down by words of mouth & compiled 250 years after Muhammad’s death. It is second only to Qur’an in authority for Muslims and the actual tradition or custom practiced by the prophet. It provides the base for developing the Sunnah (guidelines of Muslim life, orthodoxy). Hadiths must never contradict Qur’an but complementary to Qur’an.

Beliefs (The Six Articles of Faith) These beliefs are the central in Islamic faith. These are the beliefs in:

1. Allah: Allah is Arabic name of God, i.e., al (the) + ilah (deity) = Allah (the god). God is one (monothemism) and he is neither plural nor triune. He is separate, distant and independent from creation. He has no associations with human beings (impersonal). He is transcendent and didn’t reveal himself but revealed his will. Muslims believe in 99 names or attributes of Allah.

2. Angels: Muslims believe in Archangel Gabriel to the Jinn, which are other spiritual beings. Jinn can be good and bad. They believe that two angels are assigned to each person for guidance to record deeds (obedience or disobedience to God). Angels are not to be worshipped. Satan disobeyed God as angels or jinn. Satan was created before humanity but rebellion against God happened at about same time as creation of man.

3. The Prophets: Adam is the first prophet and Muhammad is the last prophet. Prophets (Nabi or Rasul) were sent by God with divine teachings. Muhammad is the last prophet and final prophet in line with others including Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (father of
Muslims), Musa (Moses), Daud (David), Isa (Jesus), etc. Out of 25 prophets mentioned in Qur’an, 22 names are found in Bible. They believe in 124,000 prophets. A tradition states a prophet for each person. Isa is mentioned 97 times in Qur’an and has a unique status as a prophet. Some honorific titles given to Isa in Quran are Messiah, Word from God, Spirit of God & Speech of Truth.

4. The Books: Jews and Christians are called “People of the Book”. There are four well known books - Tawrat (given to Musa), Zabur (given to Daud), Injil (given to Isla) & Qur’an (given to Muhammed). Qur’an is the last & final book. Torah (Tawrat) and Injil are “mother of the Book”, but now they are changed and corrupted.

5. The judgment: God created all so God judges all. They believe in life after death. Life is preparation for bliss in heaven or damnation in hell. Muslims also believe in a day of resurrection, which is an end to this world and a time of judgment. Sunni tradition mentions that Isa will return as Messiah, break cross, kill pigs, live 40 days, and will be buried beside Muhammed. Heaven is believed to be a place of extreme beauty, sinless, no pain or sorrow and ample physical fulfilment and hell is a burning and odorous place, as boiling water, pus & roasting place.

6. Predestination (Qadar): Everything, good or evil, happens in the world in accordance with God’s foreknowledge, decree, will and wisdom. God is the sole decider of a man’s deeds and destiny. God is the creator of cause and effect relationship.

Practices (The Five Pillars of Islam):

1. The Creed or Testimony (Al-Shahada or Al-Kalima):
   “La Ilaha Illa Allah; Muhammad Rasul Allah.”
   These words are first whispered into a Muslim child’s ear at birth, and the last words of the Creed or Testimony (Al-Shahada or Al-Kalima).

2. Prayer (Salat):
   Muslims are required to pray five times a day at set times, individually or with others. All are expected to attend a service at the mosque on Friday at noon.

3. Almsgiving (Zakat):
   Usually 2.5% of annual income is given to the poor, needy, debtors, prisoners or wayfarers.

4. Fasting (Sawn):
   During the month of Ramadan (the ninth lunar month), all Muslims are expected to fast during daylight hours. They must abstain from food, drink, smoking and sexual relations. After sunset, these are permitted.

5. Pilgrimage (Hajj):
   Every Muslim is expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his/her lifetime.


Fasts & Feasts of Islam:

1. Sawn (Ramadan Fast): 30 Days of Fasting in the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset; abstaining from food, drink, smoking & sexual relations.

2. Eid al-Fitr (Feast of Breaking the Fast): A festive day celebrating the end of 30 days of Ramadan fast.

3. Eid al-Adha or al-Dahiya (Feast of Sacrifice): Festival marking the close of the hajj, which is celebrated with prayers, sacrifices of animals and exchange of gifts in Muslim communities everywhere.
**Hajam**

**Introduction / History**
The Hajam or Hajjam are also known as the Nai Muslims or Turuk Navid in India. There is a long-standing tradition of the Hajam being hair-cutters, barbers and manicurists. The Hajams are found in nearly every part of India and most of Pakistan. In Nepal they can be found in almost any part of the Terai region.

**What are their lives like?**
The Hajam remain a respected caste of hair-cutters (hajamat). In some areas the Hajam are the owners of barber shops and salons. In the Muslim community they can often be an active part of the community as hair-trimming for major family events like weddings and funerals can involve them. Even minor ritual surgeries like circumcision can be conducted by some Hajam. In some communities they can also be match-makers and some women assist with childbirth. Though they are Sunni Muslims, married women will often be distinguished by a nose-stud and the “bindi” dot on the forehead. They are not vegetarian and will eat beef with their rice, wheat or maize. In Nepal they speak Nepali as well as Bhojpuri, Urdu as well as Maithili.

**Ministry needs**
There is a little to no ministry among the Hajams although they are a fairly large Muslim group in Nepal. Even though their community can be slow to adopt new medicine and technology this group remains a strategic people to reach with the Gospel as they have far-reaching connection into the Muslim community socially.

**Sayyid**

**Introduction/History**
The Sayyid or Syed are among the largest of Muslim communities of India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. They are said to trace their lineage directly back to the daughter of the Prophet Mohammad himself, Syed-un-Nisa Fatima Zehra. The Sayyid in South Asia came to India by sea over 600 years ago. Today they number over 13 million with over 60,000 in Nepal.

**What is their life like?**
The Sayyid occupy the highest of social class among Muslims. They are traditionally the priests and religious teachers of the Muslim communities. More recently they can be found in a host of government service, teaching and business occupations. They marry mainly among their own clans and other Ashraf category Muslims. The Sayyid speak many languages in Nepal but the largest are Maithili, Nepali, Urdu and Bhojpuri. The Sayyid can be found in both major sect divisions of the Shia and the Sunni. Because of their position as religious teachers and priests they are considered 100% Muslim in each of the countries where their live.

**Ministry Need**
Because of the sheer religious and political weight that the Sayyid carry in their respective communities, a transformed Sayyid leader for Christ could have influence like that of “Paul” in his day. Whole districts could be converted to be followers of Isa if Sayyid leaders came to know and trust the Truth. Pray for dreams and visions among these people during this month.

**Population:**
- Nepal: 66,000
- Total: 13,703,000

**Language:** Maithili, Nepali, Urdu & Bhojpuri

**Believers:** 0

**Hajam**

**Population:**
- Nepal: 45,000
- Total: 4,040,000

**Language:** Nepali, Bhojpuri, Urdu & Maithili

**Believers:** 0
**Introduction / History**

The Darzis derive their name from the Persian word "to sew" or darzan. Sometimes the Darzi are known by the name Darji or Khayyat in India where most of their community live. An Indian legend says that the god Parasurama was pursuing two brothers to destroy them and they found haven in a temple. A priest hid them and gave one brother the task of sewing dresses and the other dying cloth. The Darzi are said to be the descendents of the first brother and therefore, Darzis are most commonly tailors. There are more than 3.5 million Darzi's in all and about one third of those are Muslims, the rest are Hindus.

**What are their lives like?**

A majority of the Darzi Muslim people live in the central Terai region of Nepal and speak Nepali and Urdu. They often occupy a middle ground of social status. As tailors they enjoy close relations with other Muslim traders. The Darzis are not vegetarian but tend to avoid beef. As a community they prefer adult marriages and offer children’s inheritance privileges to both sons and daughters. Men will sometimes wear a kurta-pyjama and woman a salwar-kameez.

**Ministry needs**

Because of the Darzis’ openness to business and upward social status, this is a great opportunity to offer outside assistance to educational or other development projects. Pray that the church can love the Darzi people like God does, enough to offer micro loans and other development programs as a means to sharing the gospel among them.

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**Ansari**

**Introduction / History**

Some Ansari trace their origin back to the time of Mohammad when the prophet was given help and support by Medinan residents during his first religious war. The name Ansari has an Arabic-origin and comes from Ansar, which means "those who support". Still another legend harkens back to the days of Adam and Eve themselves when their sons learned the earliest weaving trade. The Ansari are well-known as cotton and silk weavers. Over 12 million Ansaris live in a wide swath across Bangladesh, north and central India, southern Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

**What are their lives like?**

Although traditionally weavers and textile sellers, the Ansarism are now involved in a wide range of small businesses in towns like Janakpur or Lumbini. Predominantly in the Maithili language, though also in Nepali or Bhojpuri, these textile artisans trade with Darzi tailors and other Muslim merchants. The Ansaris are not vegetarian and widely accepting of drink and food from other communities. However, they tend to be rather clannish and guarded about marriage within the group. Bangles and beads are commonly worn and glass bangles are a symbol of married women in some communities. The Ansaris are Muslims who practice Islamic laws for life and living, though folk Islam practices are common.

**Ministry needs**

The friendliness of the Ansaris can open doors for believers to develop closeness with them and opportunities to share the gospel. In recent years numerous teams have begun working in north India among the Ansaris but almost no work has begun in Nepal. Pray for the expansion of country work into the Ansari communities of Narayani, Bheri and Lumbini Zones.

**Population:**

Nepal: 36,000  
Total: 14,949,000

**Language:** Maithili, Nepali, Bhojpuri & Urdu

**Believers:** 0

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**Muslim Darzi**

**Introduction / History**

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**What are their lives like?**

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**Ministry needs**

Because of the Darzi’s openness to business and upward social status, this is a great opportunity to offer outside assistance to educational or other development projects. Pray that the church can love the Darzi people like God does, enough to offer micro loans and other development programs as a means to sharing the gospel among them.

**Population:**

Nepal: 26,000  
Total: 1,296,000

**Language:** Nepali, Urdu, Bhojpuri & Maithili

**Believers:** 0
**Pinjara**

**Introduction/History**
The Pinjara (Pinja, Penja, Bahna or Dhunia) derive their name from the term pinjala meaning "cotton weaver." Their traditional occupation is naturally one of cleaning and reeling cotton to make pillows, quilts or even mattresses. The over 3 million Pinjara can be found either Muslim or Hindu. It is believed that the Muslim Pinjara converted to Islam about 500 years ago during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb.

**What is their life like?**
The Pinjara can today be found in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They live in over 500 districts of India and Nepal and speak more than a dozen different languages depending on their location. In Nepal the Pinjara speak primarily Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri and Urdu. Although they are well over 90% Muslim the Pinjara can be found to keep Hindu festivals, even making vows to Hindu gods. The Pinjara are not vegetarian though do not eat pork. They occupy a higher than unclean status and can be found as both skilled and unskilled workers.

**Ministry Need**
Very little ministry activity has been focused on the Pinjara. Many Urdu resources are available although there is a severe lack of workers to this sizable Muslim group in India and Nepal. Pinjara are sometimes looked down on religiously because of their mixture of Islam and Hinduism beliefs. Pray that the Truth could be known and celebrated in Nepal.

**Population:**
Nepal : 22,000
Total : 3,353,000

**Language:** Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri & Urdu

**Believers:** 0

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**Muslim Rajput**

**Introduction / History**
The Rajput Muslims get their name from the larger Rajput people who are one of the four main Hindu divisions of South Asia peoples. Over 60 million Rajput are a core of noble people. Rajput in Sanskrit means, “son of a ruler or king”. Rajput Muslims constitute about 25 percent of all Rajput peoples in Pakistan, India and Nepal and about 27 percent of all Rajput within Nepal. Legend has it that the Muslim community of Rajput is the descendant of Umrao Singh. Umrao had fought against a conquering Muslim ruler over the death of the ruler’s son. However after his release, Umrao was never restored to his Hindu Rajput community and as an outcast, formed his own Muslim Rajput community.

**What are their lives like?**
Today the Rajput Muslim people are primarily an agricultural community. The Rajputs are traditionally the landowners in Nepal. As land has been lost, a growing number have become employed in service and even wage labour jobs. Women can often be found in weaving, embroidery and the making of handkerchiefs. For women, toe-rings, nose-pins and glass bangles are common symbols for being married. They are non-vegetarian though avoid beef and enjoy foods like wheat, rice and pulses. They are Sunni Muslims but with much influence by Hindu traditions they retain a variety of Hindu practices.

**Ministry Needs**
As people of influence and social status, the Rajputs are a key people to reach with the Gospel. As converts to Islam they may be more open than many traditionally Muslim peoples to hear and receive of the love of Christ. Praise God that some Hindu Rajput have become believers but there are no known believers among the Muslim Rajput.

**Population:**
Nepal : 23,000
Total : 17,801,000

**Language:** Nepali, Urdu, Nepali & Awadhi

**Believers:** 0
Muslim Bhand

Introduction / History:
The Bhand or Bhanr people get their name from the term in Sanskrit for "jester" or bhanda. They are an occupational lower caste people who have been singers, dancers, actors and jesters since the days of feudal Kingdoms in India.

What are their lives like?
Today the Bhand are still known for their singing, dancing and story-telling in many areas of north and central India. The Damaleh Bhand in India are especially known for their folk-dance, folk-music and playing of the drum and flute. Most Bhand, however, can be found to have left their traditional occupation and moved into small business selling of household goods or toys. Being of a lower caste has forced some into rickshaw pulling and begging for subsistence. The Bhand are Sunni Muslim and speak Maithili as well as Nepali and Urdu. Literacy is very low and many children are not able to attend school though the boys often attend some Islamic instruction.

Ministry Needs:
Because of their prominent traditional position in the community in performing, the Bhand community ought to be more open to outside communication and likely the Gospel. Few have ever approached the Muslim Bhand in Nepal with the Gospel and consequently there are no known believers.

Population:
Nepal : 12,000
Total : 45,000
Language: Maithili, Nepali, Urdu & Bhojpuri
Believers: 0

Qazi

Introduction / History:
The Qazi community derive their name from the term qadi which means "judge." They have a tradition of being the religious leaders or imams among the Muslim groups. The majority of the Qazi live in Bihar, India but a good number in Nepal live in the Maithili speaking areas of Narayani and Janakpur zones.

What are their lives like?
The Qazi are skilled in art of Islamic religious rites and tend to perform the traditional ceremonies for the greater Muslim community. They perform the birth, purification, marriage, death and burial rites. The Qazi are Muslims of the Hanafi tradition and virtually 100% Muslim in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. In India Urdu is the mother tongue of the over 450,000 Qazi and they can speak other local languages in their context. In Nepal the Qazi primarily speak Maithili. They enjoy a higher than average social status because of the general and religious education.

What are their needs?
The Qazi are a very strategic community to bring to faith in Christ as they would be natural spiritual leaders as followers of Isa. Terrific influence among many Muslim groups could be made if a Qazi man were able to remain in the community and be a Christian Qazi leader. With Christ all things are possible!

Population:
Nepal : 14,000
Total : 507,000
Language: Maithili, Urdu, Nepali & Bhojpuri
Believers: 0

Population:
Nepal : 12,000
Total : 45,000
Language: Maithili, Nepali, Urdu & Bhojpuri
Believers: 0
Muslim Dhobi

Introduction/History
The Dhobi are a large collective community of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. They derive their name from the Sanskrit term dahv which means ‘wash’. The Dhobi are traditionally the clothes washers. They are a schedule caste in many of the states of India, where the majority of the over 12 million Dhobi live. A majority of the nearly 2 million Muslim Dhobi live in Pakistan.

What is their life like?
Today more than most South Asian communities the Dhobi have maintained their traditional occupation of washing clothes and running laundry services. In north India and Nepal some Muslim Dhobi are involved in government service jobs and agricultural labour. In Nepal most of the Dhobi are considered a depressed caste, but “touchable”. The Muslim Dhobi of Nepal mainly speak Nepali and Urdu are more numerous in Saptari district.

Ministry Need
Though some small success has come in ministry to the Hindu Dhobi, the Muslim Dhobi have no known work among them in Nepal. In general, the attitude of the Dhobi to education is quite good and literacy in some locations is higher than other Muslim communities. May the Lord use education as a means to bringing many Muslim Dhobi to faith.

Population:
Nepal: 9,300
Total: 1,951,000

Language: Nepali, Urdu, Bhojpuri & Maithili
Believers: 0

Northern Pashtun

Introduction / History
The Pushtun (Pashtun or Pathan), are a large and distinctive Muslim community living primarily in Afghanistan, Pakistan India and Nepal. The Pushtun cluster of peoples is near 50 million individuals. The Northern Pushtun number over 30 million and live primarily in Pakistan and India. They trace their heritage all the way back to King Saul, the first Hebrew king. In Afghanistan many Taliban come from this ethnic group. Some Pushtun settled in the mountains of India and Nepal during their years of Muslim conquest.

What are their lives like?
Many Pushtun today can be found as landowners across north India and Nepal. They have a mix of urban and rural ways of living; the rural being closer to their traditional nomadic and warrior-like ways. The Northern Pushtun keep to a long-held code of conduct called the Pathktunwail or “way of the Pushtun”. Courage, honour, risk-taking, assertiveness and hospitality are all key elements of the Pathktunwali. They are virtually 100% Sunni Muslim in Nepal and India. The men wear turbans, colourful vests over long-sleeved shirts and loose-fitting trousers. Women wear a salwar and a headcovering called a “chadar.” There are distinct clans and sub-clans within the Northern Pushtun and women are guarded closely against inter-marrying.

Ministry Needs
As devote Muslims and sometimes fanatical Muslims the Northern Pushtun represent a significant challenge to the Nepal church. Pray for the super-natural witness of miracles and dreams to be used for bringing key individuals Christ in this influential community. There are no known believers or workers among them in Nepal.

Population:
Nepal: 12,000
Total: 33,863,000

Language: Nepali, Bhojpuri, Urdu & Awadhi
Believers: 0
**Churaute**

**Introduction / History:**

The Churautes have been long known as the Hill Muslims of Nepal. They get their name from the term *chura* which means "glass bangle". The Churautes are of the lower artisan caste of the central Nepal hills.

**What is their life like?**

Today the small Churaute community can still be found in the hills of Gorkha, Tanahu and Syangja districts as sellers of glass bangles, hair ornaments and small items. They are referred to as "miyan" and are considered "untouchable". The Churautes speak Nepali and are Sunni Muslims.

**Ministry Needs:**

Pray that the Nepali church living in and among this depressed hill Muslim group would share the truth of Christ with them. Because of the religious isolation of this Muslim group in a very Hindu and Buddhist area, it ought to be easier to proclaim the Gospel of Good News to the Churaute. Praise God around half a dozen believers can be found among them. Pray for their witness and discipleship in Christ.

**Population:**

Nepal : 5,700
Total : 5,700

**Language:** Nepali, Kham (Western Parbate) & Newar

**Believers:** 5

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**Muslim Rayeen**

**Introduction / History:**

The Rayeen are also known as the Raysipotra. The Raysipotra are a large Indian Muslim people, referred to as the sons (potra) of Raysi. The Raysi are said to have descended from a Sindh community of Pakistan. The Rayeen are today referred to as a cow-herding and cattle-breeding community. Though India and Bangladesh have almost a million Rayeen, Nepal has a population that maybe around 4,500.

**What is their life like?**

The nomadic life of cow-herding is known to continue for many Rayeen even today, especially in India. In Nepal the Rayeen will likely be found in agriculture and other labour jobs. They live all over the Terai region of Nepal and tend to speak the Maithili and Urdu languages. They marry mainly among their clan cousins and follow closely the laws and rites of Islam. It is said that they usually name their child within a day of birth. Divorce is not allowed and they are not vegetarian. Their staple foods are bajra and wheat roti.

**Ministry Needs:**

Today the Rayeen are understood to be 100% Muslim virtually everywhere that they are found in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. Because they interact with nearly any other cattle-herding or breeding people any significant work among this group would move naturally throughout the Rayeen to other groups. Pray that the Gospel could be proclaimed among the Rayeen for the first time in many districts of Nepal and India.

**Population:**

Nepal : 4,500
Total : 962,000

**Language:** Maithili, Urdu, Bhojpuri & Nepali

**Believers:** 0
**Muslim Badhai**

**Introduction / History:**
The Badhai name comes from the Sanskrit *vardhna* which means “cutting”. The Badhais believe that their name comes from Lord Vishwakarma who created two people groups: the cutters of wood, or Badhai people and the workers of iron, or Lohar people. Of the more than 6 million Badhai in South Asia about 10 percent (or 600,000) are Muslims. Most of those Badhai Muslims live in Uttar Pradesh but others are scattered through north India, Nepal and Pakistan.

**What are their lives like?**
As mentioned above the Badhai are traditionally wood-cutters and carpenters. Today carpentry is still common though some have acquired land and are involved in agriculture. The men have a custom of wearing the dhoti, a baniyan shirt and a red cloth, or gamcha, over the shoulder. They are not vegetarian and prefer rice and wheat as staple grains. The small Badhai population in Nepal that are found mainly in Rapti, Bheri and Sagarmatha zones are primarily Nepali speaking but also use Urdu, Bhojpuri and Maithili. Though most Badhai are Hindus the smaller Nepali Badhai are nearly all Sunni Muslims.

**Ministry needs:**
From the carpentry origins, lets pray that Jesus, the prophet and carpenter, can be proclaimed in this lost community of Muslims. There are no known believers among this group. May woodworking Christians and other believers gain a burden for this group of people!

**Population:**
Nepal : 4,200
Total : 594,000

**Language:** Nepali, Bhojpuri, Maithili & Urdu

**Believers:** 0

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**Thakuria**

**Introduction / History:**
The Thakuria get their name from the Sanskrit term *thakkura* which means “idol or deity”. It is a general honorific title used by nobles. The Thakuria are a smaller community found in districts of south-central Nepal and mainly Bihar, India. It is said among the Thakuria that they are the ancestors of the great emperor Aurangzeb’s army of the 1600s. They claim to be descendents of the Rajput people of Rajasthan.

**What is their life like?**
The Thakuria have traditionally been landowners and have been known to manage property. They are 100% Muslim and hold to the traditions of the Sunni sect. They speak mainly Nepali in Nepal and Urdu in India. They practice the *chhatti* birth ceremony on the sixth day of the child and *shadi* marriage rituals. They eat meat and wheat is a staple grain for them.

**Ministry Need**
Pray for the Thakuria people, that their honorific name could be respected one day as warriors for the Lord who created their culture and died for each and everyone one of the less than 4000 Thakuria of Nepal.

**Population:**
Nepal : 3,500
Total : 13,000

**Language:** Nepali, Bhojpuri & Urdu

**Believers:** 0
Muslim Dom

Introduction / History:
The Doms (also known as the Doom, Dum or Dumar) have many different stories of their origin but most centre around their becoming an outcaste group because of a celebrated slaughtering of a sacred cow. The Dom is a Scheduled Caste in India and is counted among the depressed castes or “untouchable” community in Nepal. Numbering over 2 million they can be found in over 500 of the districts of India and Nepal.

What are their lives like?
The Doms are a colourful community of South Asia. There are so many different clans and sub-groupings that it is hard to generalise about their lives. They have been traditionally defined by the low occupations of alms collecting, grave digging, cremating, drum-beating, singing, dancing, as well as the making of bamboo baskets (sirki) and mats (chatai). Of the estimated 14,000 Doms in Nepal about 25% are Muslim Dom. In their Muslim communities some have today entered into other labour jobs such as plantation workers, rickshaw-pullers and construction. In Nepal they primarily speak Nepali and are non-vegetarian.

Ministry needs:
The ministry of Jesus among the poor and outcaste is a clear call to reach out to the Muslim Dom of Nepal. There are no known workers among the Muslim Dom. The Dom of India can benefit from the education programmes but in Nepal tuition programmes and community education can lift some of the children up socially and into traditional schools for the first time.

Population:
Nepal: 2,900
Total: 176,000

Language: Nepali, Bhojpuri, Urdu & Awadhi

Believers: 0

Muslim Teli

Introduction / History:
The Teli get their name from the Sanskrit word tailika, which means “oil pressed from a variety of seeds”. The Teli have long been known as an oil-pressing or oil-selling caste in India. Millions of Teli continue in the oil-presser occupation. One legend of the Teli says that one old man with three sons divided his property among the men. One son who gathered leaf produce became the Bharbhunja caste, one son who gathered flowers and distilled them became the Kalar community and the last son who gathered seeds and nuts to press them became the Teli community.

What are their lives like?
Today the over 20 million Teli people can be found in more than 600 of India’s districts, most of Pakistan and Bangladesh and the south Terai region of Nepal. About 20% of all Teli people are Sunni Muslim and the rest are Hindu. In Nepal and much of northern India the Teli Muslim are moving into oil-related businesses, agriculture and unskilled labour jobs. The modern oil industry has pushing many city and village Teli out of their customary occupation. In Nepal the Teli are positioned in the “unclean” but touchable caste category. The Teli Muslim in Nepal tend to speak primarily Nepali as well as Bhojpuri, Urdu and Awadhi.

Ministry needs:
There is a small handful of Nepali Teli who have come to Christ, praise God. These are only among the larger Hindu population however. No known workers or believers are present among the Teli Muslim in Nepal or India. Pray for the fledging Hindu-background church in Nepal to reach out to their Muslim community.

Population:
Nepal: 2,300
Total: 3,994,000

Language: Nepali, Bhojpuri, Urdu & Awadhi

Believers: 0
Muslim Bedia

Introduction / History:
The Bedias have an uncertain origin. They are known by other names in India such as; “wandering Kurmi”, Berai, Beria and Bedia Kudmi. The name Bedia is said to have come from the word behara meaning “jungle”. Older anthropological descriptions have equated the Bedia as a South Asia form of the European gypsies. Most of the over 500,000 Bedias are Hindus, but there are more than 25,000 that are Muslims and very much unreached in Bangladesh, Nepal and India.

What are their lives like?
The traditional occupation of many Bedias was agriculture. In more recent years in north India and Nepal they have taken up wage labour jobs, rickshaw-pulling and some clans have been involved in the oldest of occupations, as well as women dancers (mujra) and singers. The Bedias are not vegetarian and generally prefer to eat rice, maize, mandua and gondli. Because many live in rural communities education is not a priority and consequently literacy is low.

Ministry needs:
There has been a reported response to the Gospel among the Hindu Bedias in Bangladesh but among the Muslim Bedias there is no known believers. In central India poorer Bedias have been assisted with tracts of land which has raised their standard of living in recent years. Pray that the church might respond with workers and initiatives like land-ownership along with the Gospel message to bring a new hope to the Bedia Muslim people.

Population:
Nepal : 2,000
Total : 26,000

Language: Maithili, Bhojpuri, Urdu & Nepali

Believers: 0

Manihaar

Introduction / History:
The Manihar have a name derived from two Sanskrit words, mana and kara. Mana meaning “precious stone” and kara meaning “maker”. Therefore the Manihar have been known for their occupation of making and selling glass, lac or ivory bangles for many years. Over half of a million Manihar are spread over Pakistan, north India and Nepal. They can be found in nine different zones of Nepal.

What are their lives like?
The business of making and selling of bangles has long been the livelihood of Manihar communities. Due to the limited availability of elephant tusks for ivory, many bangles and beads now are manufactured in plastics. Today some Manihar take other jobs including tailoring. The literacy rate among the Manihar tends to be low. They speak primary Nepali and use Urdu and Bhojpuri in Nepal and mainly Urdu and Hindi in India. They are Sunni Muslims and tend to share foods with other Muslim families but traditionally do not allow marriage outside their community. Siddiqi can be a common surname.

Ministry needs:
In India workers are just beginning to work among the larger populations but in Nepal the work has yet to begin. Pray for individuals with a Muslim background that can begin work among them in this Hindu background nation.

Population:
Nepal : 2,000
Total : 581,000

Language: Nepali, Urdu, Bhojpuri & Awadhi

Believers: 0
**Gaddi**

Introduction / History:

The name Gaddi is said to have come from the word Gaderan which is a term used in Himachal Pradesh for the "local hilly regions". Traditionally the people trace their origin to the Muslim invasion of Pakistan and north India. They understand that they lived in the Punjab region and took refuge in the highlands ranges. Over 500,000 Gaddi today live across much of northern India, Nepal and Pakistan. Although the larger Gaddi populations in India used to be a scheduled tribe they are no longer.

What are their lives like?

The Gaddi have a strong tradition of living in mountainous areas and working in animal husbandry and selling dairy products. They also have a tradition of landowning and some as nomadic herdsmen. Today many still continue in milk selling, animal husbandry and agriculture, but in Nepal their smaller communities can be found in any number of labour jobs or small businesses. Fewer Gaddis are using the Gaddi language but appear to prefer Nepali and Urdu or Bhojpuri as a means of communication in Nepal. Some of the Gaddi traditional clothes and head covering like the khadi (cap) and chalu (robe) are much less common today. The Gaddi are Sunni Muslims in Nepal and follow the traditional rites and rituals of Islam.

Ministry needs:

As sellers and tradesmen the Gaddi could be an excellent bridge of the Gospel into many other Muslim groups. There are no known Christians in Nepal and few Christians have ever met a Gaddi Muslim!

Population:

- Nepal: 1,500
- Total: 624,000

Language:

- Nepali
- Bhojpuri, Urdu & Awadhi

Believers: 0

**Qassab**

Introduction / History:

The Qassab are a small community in Nepal however quite large in north and central India as well as Pakistan. In India they are commonly known as Khatik or Kasab. The term khattika in Sanskrit means “butcher” or “hunter”. The Qassab are traditionally known as a Muslim caste of butchers and meat sellers. Many Qassab today are working in small business or as daily labourers.

What is their life like?

Because of their profession of slaughtering animals they occupy a generally low status among the majority Hindu population. They speak Nepali and Urdu among themselves but also often understand Hindi. As a community they allow both child and adult marriages. The Qassab community can have a council known as Jamat, which constitutes of five chosen members, which handle disputes among the families. They follow Islamic laws in relation to marriage, divorce, remarriage and the inheritance of property. The Qassab people are Sunni Muslims. The Imam and Qazi give religious teachings and conduct religious rites. They are known to share their burial grounds and mosques with other Muslim groups.

Ministry needs:

May God send Christian workers to work among them and meet their spiritual and physical needs. That they would know that in Christ they are not lower than others but equal in God’s eyes to receive the Good News of Jesus.

Population:

- Nepal: 1,400
- Total: 1,974,000

Language:

- Nepali
- Urdu, Bhojpuri & Awadhi

Believers: 0
**Muslim Kalwar**

**Introduction / History:**
The Kalwar or Kalal (in India) are said to derive their name from the Sanskrit word for “distiller of alcohol” or kalyapala. This community is known as the Muslim distillers and sellers of liquor. Based on this tradition the Kalwar have a relatively low social status. Over 3 million Kalwar are Hindus in India and a total of only 50,000 are Muslims. In Nepal over 150,000 Kalwar are Hindus and there is a small community of Muslims in Nepal.

**What are their lives like?**
The Kalwar have often served in government and public service positions. They primarily speak Nepali with others and Urdu among themselves. The Kalwar families tend to only marry within their own cousin clans and give their daughters only to a select group of Muslim communities. Rings on finger, nose, toe or ear and wearing bangles are all part of identification of married women. Both sons and daughters receive inheritance. Common surnames among these communities are Mirza and Beg. The Kalwar are divided into both Shiite and Sunni sects.

**Ministry Needs:**
Some success in sharing Christ has borne fruit among the Hindu Kalwar but no known work has even begun among the Muslim community. Pray that workers might be found and that other believing Kalwar could bridge the gap into the Muslim community.

**Population:**
Nepal: 3,200
Total: 50,000

**Language:** Nepali, Bhojpuri & Urdu

**Believers:** 0

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**Moghal**

**Introduction / History:**
The Moghal or Mughals are a chief Muslim people of India. They have two main divisions; the Moghal of Persian and the Indian descent. Both are of relatively high social status as people from the conquering Muslim kingdoms. Because of their wide distribution across India and Pakistan they are well respected. In Nepal they can be found in nearly all the Terai districts.

**What are their lives like?**
The Moghals have often served in government and public service positions. They primarily speak Nepali with others and Urdu among themselves. The Moghal families tend to only marry within their own cousin clans and give their daughters only to a select group of Muslim communities. Rings on finger, nose, toe or ear and wearing bangles are all part of identification of married women. Both sons and daughters receive inheritance. Common surnames among these communities are Mirza and Beg. The Moghals are divided into both Shiite and Sunni sects.

**Ministry Needs:**
Mughals are known to be receptive to a variety of developmental programmes and have a positive attitude towards education. It is possible that they could be good managers of development projects that are introduced. Their families in parts of India are open to the use of modern medicines and have responded to family welfare programmes.

**Population:**
Nepal: 1,400
Total: 2,637,000

**Language:** Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Urdu & Nepali

**Believers:** 0

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**DAY 22**

**DAY 23**
Muslim Bahelia

Introduction / History:
The Bahelia are said to have come from a Rajput status and Hindu Bahelia have been known to refer to themselves as Chhetri jati. Legend says that they were once of an honoured social status, but after a key defeat as many soldiers retreated to the jungle and resorted to killing and eating wild animals. Since that time the Bahelia have been considered as low in status. As Bahelia they are known as Scheduled Caste in the states of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

What is their life like?
Today the Bahelia remain as a primarily Hindu group, especially in India. They can be found in all types of wage labour jobs and in some areas still involved in bird catching and selling. The Bahelia women in some parts of India have a tradition in the making of fans from peacock feathers. Based on their low position they tend to have low literacy. In Nepal the Muslim Bahelia speak Bhojpuri and Urdu.

Ministry Needs:
In India the Bahelia people have a reputation for working with government programmes for income generation and self-employment. Development projects have succeeded among some Bahelia that have improved the economy of the community. Pray that similar Christian projects could bring both economic and spiritual blessing to the Muslim Bahelia of Nepal as well. There are no known believers among the Muslim Bahelia in Nepal.

Population:
Nepal : 900
Total : 22,000

Language: Bhojpuri, Urdu, Nepali & Awadhi

Believers: 0

Abdul People

Introduction / History:
The Abduls in Nepal are said to have originated from the Abdul Muslims. The term "Abdal" means "lieutenant". Little other information is known of the origin of this group that has a strong tradition in the music, singing and particularly the playing of percussion instruments. In many parts of India they are known by the name Dafali. This majority of the over 50,000 Abduls are found in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal India as well as Bangladesh and Nepal.

What are their lives like?
Being of a lower social status has caused many Abdul families to survive on charity. In some communities they are alms gatherers while singing and drumming or selling perfume. It is said that during Ramadan some Abdul wake up early and go village to village playing their dafali (instrument) and singing the names of Allah. Traditions like this have given them the title "wandering singers" or "a class of wandering Muslim saints" in some places. They are Sunni Muslims in Nepal and are not vegetarians. They include wheat, rice and maize in their diet. Maithili is their primary language though most understand Urdu and Bhojpuri.

Ministry Needs:
Because of the Abduls tradition of being able to share food and water with most Hindu communities, this group is likely easier to reach than some Muslim people. Their community is small and hidden in many ways.

Population:
Nepal : 1,100
Total : 57,000

Language: Maithili, Bhojpuri, Urdu & Nepali

Believers: 0
Muslim Halwai

Introduction / History:
The Halwais get their name from the word halwa which is a "sweetmeat made from sugar, flour and butter". The Halwais are famous as a caste of confectioners and sweet shop owners. A large majority of Halwais are Hindus but about 10 percent in India and 1 percent in Nepal are Muslims.

What are their lives like?
The Halwais still maintain their occupation in many places of India and Nepal as sweet shop owners and sellers of sweets and sometimes tobacco. In Nepal the greater Halwai population is a part of the "clean castes". Because their halwa is often eaten at weddings and festivals they tend to have a relatively high social status. The smaller Muslim Halwai however can be found in any number of service or labour jobs. Whereas the Hindu Halwai community in Nepal tend to speak Maithili and Nepali, the Muslim Halwar speak Nepali, Urdu and Awadhi. The Halwai follow the birth, death and marriage traditions of the Sunni Muslim and the Maulvi is the name of the spiritual leader who performs those religious rites.

Ministry needs:
Once again ministry among the Hindu Kalwai population has had success in recent years but among the small number of Muslims no work exists. In India families have shown interest in school-based development programmes. Perhaps Muslim-friendly community development projects could benefit this and other Muslim communities.

Population:
Nepal: 800
Total: 175,000

Language: Nepali, Awadhi, Urdu & Bhojpuri

Believers: 0

Muslim Nat

Introduction / History:
The Nat or Nut peoples name is derived from the Sanskrit word nata which means "dancer". They are a traditional occupational caste known for dancing and singing. The Nat have a generally lower caste status or in some states of India they are a Scheduled Caste. The Nat Muslim can be found in north India by the names Nar, Naitak or Natak, though a large majority of over 500,000 Nat are Hindus. About 25% of Nat are Muslims.

What is their life like?
As traditional dancers and acrobats that are often semi-nomadic, the Nat Muslims can still be found in acrobatic events and as singers, dancers or unskilled labourers. Men and women are known to sing and play the flute or dholak. Tattooing is common for women especially on the forehead. The Nat Muslims of Nepal speak Bhojpuri and Nepali. The Nat follow Sunni Muslim traditions and are non-vegetarian. They can be given in child marriages and nuclear families can be more common than extended families among them. The Nat Muslims tend to have a very low literacy rate.

Ministry Needs:
It is possible that the Nat Muslim in the lower castes would be open to the Gospel but very few have ever tried and even fewer have worked with the Nat Muslim of Nepal! Small business development and micro loans could likely be a big encouragement to this entrepreneurial people group.

Population:
Nepal: 800
Total: 152,000

Language: Bhojpuri, Nepali, Urdu & Maithili

Believers: 0
**Kalu**

**Introduction/History:**
The Kalu people derive their name from the Hindi word *khalu*. Stories tell of the legendary Lord Shiva and how the first Kalu man came from the sweat off of Lord Shiva’s arm while bathing in oil. The Kalu have a long tradition of being sellers of oil and of being oil-pressers, a similar occupation to that of the Tell people.

**What is their life like?**
Today there are about 250,000 Kalu in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The Kalu can be found as landowners as well as farmers or plantation labourers. Their married women wear shell and iron bangles traditionally. They eat fish and other meats as well as wheat and ria and biri kalai. They speak Bengali in all three countries and can be found in both extended or nuclear families these days.

**Ministry Need**
Though the Kalu are found in well over 140 different districts in Nepal and India there is no record of even one believer among the group. Pray that agricultural initiatives could be a good platform for workers to bless the Kalu and share the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

**Population:**
Nepal: 700
Total: 279,000

**Language:** Bengali, Nepali & Bhojpuri

**Believers:** 0

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**Muslim Tamboli**

**Introduction / History:**
The Tamboli or Tambuli (also Barai) derive their name from the Sanskrit term for “betal leaves” (*tambula*). Tambul or betal leaf packing has commonly been the primary source of income for thousands of Tamboli as they bundle and sell the betalnut and betal leaf product. Nearly 2 million Tamboli live in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

**What are their lives like?**
Today the Tamboli can still be found in India in the tradition business of cultivating the piper betal plant or the areca nut or packaging the leaves in 200 leaf packs for sale and distribution, though not all remain in this profession. Scores of Tamboli, because of a higher or “clean” caste status, can be found in small business trading and as hardware shop owners. About 90% of Tamboli are Hindus but the other 10% are Muslims and trace this heritage back to conversion from Hinduism. It is believed that about a quarter of the Tamboli in Nepal are Muslims and they primarily speak the Maithili language.

**Ministry needs:**
Little to no ministry work has ever been done among the Tamboli and despite this large population there are no known Christians among them. Pray that the betal leaf and areca nut industry could be penetrated with the Gospel so that many Tamboli whether Muslims or Hindus could know the God who created them.

**Population:**
Nepal: 700
Total: 224,000

**Language:** Maithili, Bhojpuri, Urdu & Nepali

**Believers:** 0
Introduction/History
The Kahar or Kahal people have several stories about the deriving of their name. It is said, by some anthropologists, that the name comes from the combination of the words *kandh*, meaning “shoulder” and *ahar*, meaning “food.” Their traditional work has been as palanquin (a seat carried between poles on the shoulder) or water carriers. They are over 7 million strong in India and in some areas known as a Schedule caste.

What is their life like?
Today many of the Kahar can be found to have many occupations. Some are small businessman, shop keepers or food vendors. In the rural areas they can be found as cultivators, labourers or rickshaw-pullers. The majority of Kahar clans are Hindu but there are over 150,000 Muslim Kahar in Nepal and India. Their primary language in Nepal is Maithili and Bhojpuri. Prasad, Singh and Verma are common surnames.

Ministry Need
In general that Kahar are favourable to having their children attend school and this may be an avenue of ministry and assistance to the community. Pray that some from the Kahar would hear and come to know the name of Jesus. There are no known workers among this Muslim group in Nepal.

Population:
Nepal : 500
Total : 198,000

Language: Nepali,
Maithili, Bhojpuri & Urdu

Believers: 0

SOURCES:

“People-in-Country Profile”, see http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php.


### All Muslim Peoples of Nepal

(30 largest Nepal groups **in bold**)

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<th>Group</th>
<th>Region</th>
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