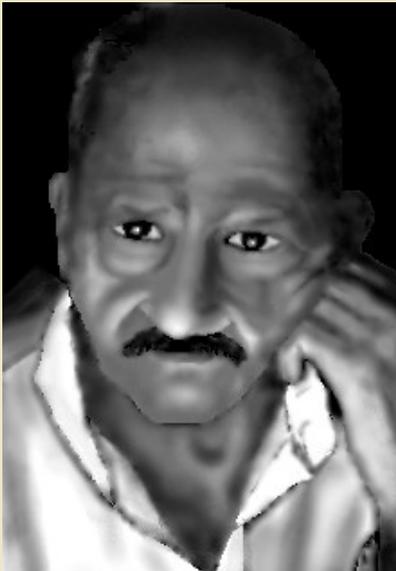


The Deaf Community of India

The Indian Sign Language Community



There are about 12.3 million people in India with moderate to complete hearing loss. Only four and a half million of these would not be able to succeed in a school for hearing but could obtain an education in a school for the deaf if available. These deaf would then be exposed to sign language and might become part of the Deaf community.

The Indian Sign Language (ISL) is a language of broader communication in most metropolitan areas in India and may be the mother tongue among the Deaf in several of these metropolitan areas. Previously it has been thought that the Deaf of India speak various dialects of ISL. But current research among Bengali and other Deaf communities shows that in many places the Deaf use a completely different language. Those who can, try to use ISL with researchers because it is more prestigious, but most in these communities do not know ISL at all.

There are 478 schools receiving government funding and approximately 372 private schools for the deaf scattered throughout India. Most of these schools use the “oral approach” in the classroom. It is a rare school that uses signs in the classroom. Rural Indian Deaf often do not receive an education due the distance that must be traveled to go to school and to being needed as laborers at home.

Most of the major organizations, gatherings, and schools for the Deaf are in the larger urban areas. Many migrate to the cities for education and jobs. Jobs are likely to be either unskilled or a manual trade. Male Indian Deaf are more likely to go to school and to stay in school longer than females. There are about sixty-five evangelical Deaf churches or Christian fellowships in India, but they are mostly in the larger cities. The Deaf would benefit from a Bible training program that is geared to their needs. One organization has started such a training program in India.

There is a need for qualified interpreters in medical fields, businesses and offices. CODAs (Children of Deaf Adults) serve as interpreters in most parts of the world. In India, however, CODA's usually are unqualified or unwilling to be interpreters. Deaf parents tend to give hearing children to their grandparents to raise and many CODA's do not admit to having deaf parents.

Primary Religion:
Hinduism

Disciples (Matt 28:19):
0.01%

Churches:
80

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):
No Scripture

Population (date):
Potentially 4,500,000 (2012)



The Deaf Community of India

Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian	0.01%
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior	0.01%
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son	0.1%
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion	95%
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is	98%
Number Of Pastors	5
Comment	Approximately 5 ordained pastors
Number Of Missionaries Working	30
Comment	Expatriate missionaries-approximately 10
Total national missionaries	Total 30; Expatriate 10. National workers 20
Total local workers	300; very few missionaries
Response To The Gospel	The Indian Deaf generally have the same values and religious practices as their families.
Comment (Number Communities)	The 1991 census estimated 630,000 cities, towns and villages in India (Babu 2001). Over 50% of these should have some form of a Deaf community.
Number Of Churches	80
Comment	Approximately 65 Evangelical, 10 Catholic, 8 Mormon and 5 other.
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Sign Language is a visual language, and most deaf struggle with written languages. To date there are no translations in Indian Sign Language.
Translation Medium	Signed DVD or other visual medium
Any Hindrance To Scripture Distribution?	Among deaf children, only 2% attend school and of them only a few attain adequate reading skills. Thus the majority of the Indian deaf could not read a written Bible, even if they had one. Like the culture at large, most Indian Deaf live in extended family households. Since most of their families would disown any member who claims Christ, many deaf Christians are secretly so at home. Any open display such as Scripture reading at home could mean personal persecution and sacrifice of their whole structure of support and living.
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available	Recordings: No, Literature: No, Films/videos: No, Radio: N/A Literature is not available in sign language but is available in the major spoken languages. Some films may have a translator signing on the film, but this is very rare in India. Around 2000, the Jesus film was interpreted into the dialect of Indian Sign Language used in Hyderabad and inserted as an inset onto the film.

The Deaf Community of India

What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?

Evangelism: A few Indian Deaf Christians are quite motivated, but the numbers to be reached are astronomical.

Church Planting: Of 3,768 urban centers (1991 census) only 50 - 70 of these have a church or Christian fellowship for the Deaf.

Discipleship training of Deaf leaders with the goal of some becoming pastors of Deaf congregations

Teachers of the local sign language to unexposed deaf

Interpreters: Pastors and lay leaders who are qualified to work with the Deaf are often called to act as interpreters. That can be very time consuming and tiring for them.

Media: Currently, there is one 10-minute weekly news program interpreted into the Delhi regional sign language.

Bible translators

Audiologists are needed in most cities to test for hearing loss and do preventative teaching.

Education on AIDS, sex and how to say "no" is needed (Patil and Gopinath 1998). A few deaf teams have been educated about the dangers of AIDS and been trained to educate other Indian Deaf.

Most deaf children attending schools are provided with hearing aids, either by parents, government subsidies, or local Lion's Clubs, etc. Only 2% of deaf children attend school. Most often the Deaf are fitted with a generic, soft plastic "one size fits all" ear mold. Hearing aids are needed with custom ear molds

Further survey of metropolitan areas with schools for the Deaf to assess local sign language use and whether or not the local language is a dialect or different language from ISL. Bible translators are needed.

The Deaf Community of India

Group Description

Population All Countries

World Population (Urban Percent)
Comment

41% urban (Government of India, Ministry of Social Welfare 1981). 4.5 million Deaf potentially that would be considered part of the Deaf community and know or learn ISL if given the chance throughout India both urban and rural.

Geography & Environment

Ecosystem Type

Upland plain (Deccan Plateau) in south, flat to rolling plain along the Ganges, deserts in west, Himalayan Mountains in north. (Johnstone, et. al. 2001) 45,000 different flora and 75,000 different fauna (Babu 2001est.) irrigated land: 480,000 sq. km (1993 est.)

Elevation

Lowest point Indian Ocean 0 m. Highest point: Kanchen junga 8,598 m (Johnstone, et. al. 2001)

Climate

Varies from tropical monsoon in spring and summer to temperate in the winter. Higher elevations may have snow or very harsh, cold winters, depending upon the altitude.

Comments

Being that the Deaf are not isolated to any single group, they span the entire country.

Comments

Natural resources: coal (fourth-largest reserves in the world), iron ore, manganese, mica, bauxite, titanium ore, chromate, natural gas, diamonds, petroleum, limestone, arable land: 56%, permanent crops: 1%, permanent pastures: 4%, forests and woodland: 23% other: 16% (1993)

Language & Linguistics

Primary Language

Comment

INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE

A 1991 survey identified 4,635 distinct people groups (Johnstone, et. al. 2001). Deafness would be found in any and all of these people groups; however, from an evangelical point of view, the deaf should be considered separate people groups as the majority cannot be reached with their parent's mother tongue. The vast majority of the Indian Deaf (about 76-89%) have limited signing ability. Many only have a gesture system. 11-24% of the Indian Deaf use urban sign which has been classified by Vasishtha, et.al. (1979) as the Indian Sign Language (ISL). Of those that receive an education (2%), some would become fairly proficient at reading and writing in the language taught in their classroom. Recent research and observations show ISL to be a language of broader communication among the Indian Deaf.

writing

observations

Indian

Comment (Alternate Names)

Indo-Pakistani Sign Language (Zeshan 2000a), Urban ISL (Jepson 1991)

Dialects

Mumbai/Delhi, Chennai/Hyderabad. Calcutta (Kolkata) has since been classified as a dialect of a separate language.

Comments

According to Vasishtha, et al (1979), there are four regional varieties of Indian Sign language. Johnosn and Johnson (2008) suggests that there are at least three varieties (Mumbai/Delhi, Chennai/Hyderabad, and Calcutta (Kolkata) among the five cities they surveyed. The Kolkata variety has since been classified as a dialect of a separate language (Bengali Sign Language). Most likely, there are different varieties or languages in the northeastern states (i.e., Nagaland, Assam, etc.) and the northwestern state (i.e. Jammu and Kashmir) of India. Survey in other Indian cities could yield more varieties. Great sign language diversity was observed in the city of Bangalore. Individual language use ranged from only American Sign Language to only a Bangalore dialect of ISL and different combinations thereof.

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The Deaf Community of India

Attitude Towards Mother Tongue

Very receptive

Percent Monolingual

If an Indian deaf person has the opportunity to go to school or a club, then they will learn sign from their peers. Nearly all of the educated deaf are bilingual in a wider community language to some degree. A small percentage of the uneducated deaf are monolingual in the local dialect or language with varying levels of fluency. Most of the uneducated deaf have a gesture system ("home signs") that only a few immediate family members and co-workers may understand. Monolingual, bilingual and some uneducated miming Deaf are all intermingled in urban areas. The rest of the uneducated rural deaf may have separate monolingual Deaf communities in their own villages.

Second Languages

English and 18 other scheduled languages

Comment

Any spoken language in a surrounding community is a second language for a deaf person. Most parents want their children to receive speech training hence the emphasis on "oral" skills at the cost of low comprehension. Spoken languages in India include: Hindi (language of Union, 40% of total population, 1991 census); English (legislative and judicial language and language of wider communication, 19% of the total population) and eighteen scheduled languages. All languages number 1,652 (1971 census, Johnstone, et. al. 2001). The Ethnologue lists 407 living languages. Most Deaf do not learn spoken languages well.

Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)

There are possibly different languages or dialects in the Northeastern and Northwestern states of India (i.e. Assam, Nagaland, etc. and Jammu Kashmir, respectively). Other people groups speaking this language as their mother tongue may include some groups in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and/or Nepal.

Linguistically Related Languages

Pakistan Sign Language, Nepali Sign Language, Bengali Sign Language. Zeshan believes the sign varieties used in many large cities in India and Pakistan to be the same language, Indo-Pakistani Sign Language (2000a). Woodward (1993) states that Nepali Sign Language and Pakistani Sign Language are closely related to Indian Sign Language. The Ethnologue also states that the Bangladeshi Deaf use the Indian Sign Language; however, this has been proven incorrect and should be the Bangla Sign Language dialect of the Bengali Sign Language (current research paper in progress). Bhutanese Sign Language may also be closely related, but no reports or research on this sign language have been found.

Comments

Literacy

Since 76-89% of the Indian Deaf have no language, either signed or spoken/written, the question of literacy takes two forms, sign language ability and spoken/written language knowledge. These two categories are shown separately below.

Adult Literacy (ISL Fluency)

11-24%

Comment (Attitude to literacy)

Since many deaf would need to learn sign language before they could understand any visual-medium, signed materials, acquiring sign language takes the traditional place of the need for literacy.

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either
family and a
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Deaf learn the signed language or not, depending upon their exposure to Deaf community and their acceptance thereof. Many unexposed deaf go through life using only limited "home sign" gestures with few friends or band together with a small group of deaf, making own "street sign".

Active ISL Literacy Program

Sign language is taught by the Deaf in many of the Christian fellowships. In 2001, interpretive training courses were initiated in Mumbai by the Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped. Branches of

The Deaf Community of India

this interpreter training course have been established in four cities across the country. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) campus in New Delhi established the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Center in 2011.

Publications in ISL

A word list (dictionary) of 1800+ words of signs from across the country was published in 2001 (Mani et. al 2001). Videotaped vocabulary in ISL (Delhi variety and south India variety) have been published on the internet.

Adult Literacy (Spoken/written)
Comment (Attitude to literacy)

Less than 2%
Some Indian Deaf are motivated to learn the skills of reading and writing a spoken language, and they may learn well enough to help in necessary community communication. A few Indian Deaf are motivated to attain a literacy level that passes secondary standardized tests with the hopes of employment.

Active Literacy Program

Literacy of the regional languages is taught in the schools for the Deaf; however, few Indian Deaf become literate in these languages.

Publications In Vernacular
Comment (Literacy)

unlimited, same as surrounding hearing culture
Spoken/written language literacy among the Indian Deaf is extremely low. Only 2% receive any education and even less succeed in reading. This situation is largely due to a primarily oral educational system in spoken second languages for the Indian Deaf. Men have a higher literacy rate than females because they are deemed more worthy to send to school. This attitude is magnified for the Deaf population.

Economics

Subsistence Type

Agriculturalists

Average Annual Income

Approximately 80% of the total population earns roughly \$250(USD) per year.

Occupation

Mostly menial jobs for the rural and lower caste. Occupations include manual labor, skilled labor / trade, technician, and professional. Products / Crafts Batik, textiles, embroidery, leather craft, stuffed animals, watches, electrical equipment, metal work, wood work

Modernization / Utilities

Telephones - main lines in use: 18.95 million (total population, 1999, Babu 2001). Few telephone communication devices (TTY's) for Deaf in India. Telephones - mobile cellular: 1.9 million SMS (Short Messaging Service) in use throughout Indian population. A few upper class Indian Deaf who can afford to pay for the service have them. Demand for communication services among the total population is growing rapidly (Babu 2001).

Television broadcast stations

562 (1997, Babu 2001) Yet, there is no closed captioning available. The signed news program for the Deaf is only 10 minutes per week. Further more, 72% of 249 deaf persons from various regions that were interviewed in the years 2001 and 2002 reported that they did not like this program and did not understand it (authors' research 2003).

Televisions

63 million (1997, Babu 2001)

Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

3 (1999, Johnstone, et. al. 2001)

Internet Usage

All internet users is 5 million. Weekly internet users total 1.6 million (Babu 2001).

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Economy

Comment

Independent research on employment was performed. The study attempted to survey all the women that were found, so there is a disproportionately high number of females surveyed -more than one would normally find in clubs, schools, and workshops. Note, that this survey interviewed predominately higher status Deaf so the percentage unemployed and the percentage manual labor would be higher if all deaf were included in the survey.

Types of Employment

FEMALE

Unemployed (not including students) 20 (14.3%)

Student 66 (47.1%)

Employed 54 (38.6%)

Total 140 (100.0%)

Manual labor 9 (16.4%)

Skilled labor/trade 29 (52.7%)

Technician 3 (5.5%)

Professional 14 (25.5%)

Sum 55 (100.0%)

MALE

Unemployed (not including students) 19 (7.9%)

Student 107 (44.4%)

Employed 115 (47.7%)

Total 241 (100.0%)

Manual labor 13 (11.5%)

Skilled labor /trade 41 (36.3%)

Technician 27(23.9%)

Professional 32 (28.3%)

Sum 113 (100.0%)

TOTAL FEMALE / MALE

Unemployed (not including students) 39 (10.2%)

Student 173 (45.4%)

Employed 169 (44.4%)

Total 381 (100.0%)

Manual labor 22 (13.1%)

Skilled labor /trade 70 (41.7%)

Technician 30 (17.9%)

Professional 46 (27.4%)

Sum 168 (100.0%)

Comment

Without adequate education most Deaf lack good communication skills to be employed; thus, many Deaf are without work. Microcredit enterprises should be initiated to employ Deaf. The 250 million middle class would benefit most from the market reforms and liberalization being instituted. Over 600 million live in deep poverty, and 300 million live below the bread-line. India's widespread use of English gives the country a major advantage as its economy opens up to the world (Johnstone et. al 2001). A growing number of Indian Deaf communicate through the internet. Although this is limited to those who can write some English, have had

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some computer orientation and can afford access. Probably <0.2 % of the Indian Deaf can take advantage of this means of communication because of lack of education and poor reading and writing skills. Of those that access the internet, most do not own their own computers, but go to cyber cafes that are common in larger cities, or to computer training centers for the Deaf.

Subsistence type

India's economy encompasses traditional village farming, modern agriculture, handicrafts, multiple modern industries, and many support services. More than a third of the population is too poor to be able to afford an adequate diet (Johnstone, et. al. 2001).

Avg. Annual Income

Approximately 80% of the total population earns the equivalent of about \$250 (USD) per year. Market surveys indicate that fewer than 5% of all households had an annual income equivalent to \$2,300 (USD) or more in 1995-96 (Johnstone et. al 2001). 1993-1994: 224 million (37.3%) live below the poverty level in rural areas. 1993-1994: 76 million (32.4%) live below the poverty level in urban areas. A total of 320 million live within the poverty level (Babu 2001).

Community Development

Comment (Health Care)

Health care is poor in rural areas and fair/good in urban areas, if one can pay for it. Persons per physician were listed as 2439:1 in 1997 . Medications are inexpensive. Medical treatment is inexpensive compared to the Western world although still unaffordable to some. In general, people only seek medical help for serious symptoms and do not go for any preventative care. This lack of health awareness and practice leads to serious health problems. For the Indian Deaf, this lack of proactive treatment leads to more deafness due to the increase in ear infections and late treatment. Further health problems for the Indian Deaf are compounded by poor communication between hearing and deaf persons. Most Indian Deaf receive very little education on general health care.

Comment (Diet)

Within the urban slum areas, malnutrition of 3-year-old and younger children results in 42% of them being stunted (Bhandari et. al 2002).

Comment (Water)

There is water pollution from raw sewage and runoff of agricultural pesticides. Water is often high in arsenic and other chemicals and low in iodine which contributed to high occurrence of deafness in many locations. Tap water is not potable throughout the country. Of the 8.5 billion gallons of water needed/day in Delhi, only 6 billion gallons are available through the water piping system. Throughout the country, water needs to be carried in by tankers and trucks (Times of India April 2002).

Shelter Description

Most cities have a slum area, which is very poor. In Calcutta, 1 million out of 11 million people live on the streets (Lonely Planet 1999).

Electricity

Electricity is variable. Villages have poor to none. In urban areas, it depends upon one's ability to pay. Power outages are common across the country but vary in number and length in different regions and cities. Many rural and slum areas use animal dung and wood for a source of heat and cooking. Urban areas are more modern using bottled gas and kerosene for cooking. Electricity/battery inverters and generators are used by affluent urbanites or fans, lights and some appliances. In elevations where it snows, coal and/or wood are used for heating.

Comment (Energy)

Clothing

Few Indians lack clothing. But many of the poor lack shoes or sandals.

Transportation

In urban settings transportation is good. In the rural areas, it is fair to poor to nonexistent. Indian Deaf who have a government issued disability i.d. card are given free bus rides and 1/2 fare train.

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Infant Mortality Rate	Seven percent die at birth (1998, Babu 2001).
Life Expectancy	Men: 62, Women: 64 (Babu 2001)
Leading Cause Of Death	For babies and young children, the leading cause of death is dehydration from diarrhea diseases. Approximately three million babies and children under the age of five, die annually in India. Twenty-eight percent of these deaths result from dehydration due to diarrhea diseases The leading cause of death for adults is cardiovascular disease.
Comment	The death rate is 11.4 per 1,000 while the birth rate is 32.5 per 1000 (Babu 2001).

Society & Culture

Family Structures	This depends upon religion and caste. The vast majority has patriarchal, Monogamous family structures. Some exceptional family structures, including matriarchal and/or polygamous structures, exist in a few more isolated, rural communities.. Families often play a major role in decision making in an individual's life.
Neighbor Relations	Not applicable
Authority / Rule	Country-wide, democracy is patterned after the United Kingdom. Within local social circles, it depends upon religion and caste.
Social Habits/Groupings	In general, the caste system has been declared unconstitutional and officially obsolete. But social practices and attitudes still reflect much of the stratified caste system. This is seen particularly in marriage arrangements, education and occupations. More specifically for the Indian Deaf, middle to upper class deaf people tend to congregate in clubs and private schools. Government only funded schools are few but do target lower class and some rural Indian Deaf. There seems to be a trend towards Deaf marrying other Deaf in India nowadays; whereas the last generation, now in their mid-thirties or older, tended to marry hearing people whenever possible. They saw greater advantages of a hearing spouse in community functioning versus advantages of communication and a closer relationship with a deaf spouse. Indian Deaf individuals can be found desiring either a deaf or hearing spouse.
Comment (Cultural Change Pace)	The change of pace is slow in rural communities and medium in urban areas.
Identification With National Culture	Integrated
Comment	Depending upon the family, the Indian Deaf are isolated or integrated as much as possible with the hearing population. Thus they identify with the national culture as much as possible. Yet, even the most exposed Indian Deaf frequently feel disadvantaged compared to the hearing population at large. Based on personal experience, it is next to impossible for a deaf person to get a bank account. They report problems communicating with any type of official or in much official business.
Comment (Self Image)	Deaf Pride is gradually growing .The above marriage trend of Deaf to Deaf now points to an increased self-image and assertiveness on the part of the Deaf as marriages are still almost solely arranged by parents.
Judicial / Punishment System	Same as the population at large. Also any laws pertaining to the "disabled" are applied to the Deaf. It is illegal for the Deaf to hold a driver's license.
Celebrations	Celebrations are quite variable in India according to religion and ethnic groups. For the Indian Deaf themselves, many of the clubs and Deaf associations sponsor events in the Fall corresponding with International Day of the Deaf

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Recreations

Indian Deaf organization meetings are a social time and lead to other recreational times. There are also sports and chess clubs for the Deaf in about seven major cities that compete with each other nationally. Sports include: cricket, soccer, badminton, swimming and table tennis. In 2001, a badminton team representing five cities in India went to the Deaf Olympics in Rome.

Art Forms

Indian dance, painting, photography, handicrafts, drama, mime

Media

Television, newspapers, magazines, and books are available in a locally spoken language/dialect.

Local Language Broadcasting

Less than 20 minutes daily

Comment

Only the Delhi sign dialect is broadcast once a week for ten minutes.

Attitude To Outsiders

Somewhat receptive

Comment

The Indian Deaf are very receptive to other Deaf. Often they are receptive to hearing people who take an interest in them.

Comment (Attitude To Change)

Group consensus to change eases individual change.

Comment (Culture)

Since the Deaf are born to any ethnic group and economic status, they participate in the society of their families as much as possible. Yet, as a Deaf community, they do have some distinguishing features as noted. Social factors vary because deafness crosses all religions, castes, ethnic groups, economic status, etc.

Youth

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)

Deaf children who are not in schools tend to be helpers in the home and fields, or they are beggars in the streets for their families.

Youth Problems (Teens)

With a low literacy rate, advancement in school is extremely difficult. Only a few qualified interpreters are available in a few schools. When the education is primarily "oral", comprehension is much lower. A pool of trained interpreters does not exist. Interpreter training courses began in the year 2001 through the central government organization, Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for Hearing Handicapped. Even if interpreters were available, the cost of hiring one would likely be prohibitive for either parents or the schools.

Youth Greatest Needs (teens)

They need a better educational system with teachers and administrators trained in sign language. They need sign language to be used in classrooms along with oral methods. A change of attitude in the society would help, especially parents' attitudes toward their deaf children and the use of signed language. More schools could be developed for the Indian Deaf in cities that lack them. Indian Deaf teachers are needed. The Deaf may be trained as teachers of the Deaf, and few deaf teachers may be designated in each school for the Deaf. This would provide good adult Deaf role models as well as motivated and committed teachers. Adult deaf role models are needed. Deaf associations generally do not allow members under the age of 18. Christian fellowships are an exception to this, welcoming both teenagers and families. About 110 of the estimated 800 schools for the Indian Deaf were started or are funded by foreign churches; however, the school staff are Indian and most likely not Christian. Bible teaching is currently limited to churches – thus a great need. With discipleship and a Bible in sign language, Deaf can continue to learn and become pastors of their own Deaf church.

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Education

Primary Schools	850
Primary School Enrollment	34,500
Secondary Schools	50
Secondary School Enrollment	1,500
Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	2%
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	Approximately 1:11 for Class I - VII; 1:5 for Class IX - XII (Nambikkai Foundation 2000)
Comment (Language Of Instruction)	55% Oral (English, Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, etc. depending upon the state language) 23% Total Communication 22% other (Deshmukh 1994)
Comment (Language Of Textbook)	This varies from state to state, depending upon the spoken language and class mediums offered. Most schools offer classes either in the spoken state language and/or English. In some areas, a third option of Hindi may be offered as a class medium. Usually, parents pick which language class for their children and are keen on them acquiring oral skills.
Comment (Education)	The estimate of number of private schools is only based on the ratio of government schools to private schools in Tamil Nadu (Nambikkai Foundation 2000), and it may not be representative across India. Middle school and secondary school grades for the Deaf are generally on the same property as the primary school grades for the Deaf. The data was collected during the authors' research in 2000 through 2002 and AYJNIHH (2000). Figures shown approximates. Most schools and clubs for the Deaf are located in cities; thus, the majority of the Indian Deaf in rural areas (59%) have no access to education.
Comment (Education)	Preschool - grade 6: As many as 500 schools have at least preschool - 6th grade. Preschool - grade 6 Enrollment: Approximately 34,500 deaf children. Preschool - grade 8: Approximately 200 schools have at least preschool - 8th grade Grade 7 - 8 Enrollment: Approximately 10,000 deaf children. Preschool - grade 12: Approximately 100 schools have at least preschool - 10th grade; approximately 50 schools with grades 11 - 12. (Note: 11th - 12th grades are considered "college" in India)
Secondary School Enrollment:	Approximately 4,000 deaf children grades 9th - 10th; 1500 grades 11th - 12th.(data collected during the authors' research in 2000 through 2002 and AYJNIHH (2000))
Comment (Education)	Fifty-nine percent of the Indian Deaf live in rural areas without access to schools or deaf clubs (Government of India, Ministry of Social Welfare 1981). Schooling is not mandatory in India and in most cases the family must pay for school. Thus, males are more likely to receive an education before females. In the state of Maharashtra (Mumbai is the capital), both men and women can go to school for free provided that they are not needed at home for housework, fieldwork, childcare, etc.
Comment (Education)	Some mainstreaming of younger deaf students into hearing schools is being done, but the researchers did not have much information on this. Some schools for the Deaf provide off-hour tutoring to some of these mainstreamed pupils (authors' personal interviews).The Indian Deaf population is not well connected or informed, and many deaf people do not even know the names of all the schools, clubs or fellowships for the Deaf within their own city.

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Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Reached Classification Comment (Reached Status)	Unreached About 65 evangelical churches or Christian fellowships exist for the Deaf among millions of Deaf in India.
Total Baptized	Fewer than 300
Lay Leaders	80
Bible Schools Comment (Christian Clinics/Hospitals) Comment (Christian Literacy Center)	0 1 or 2 per large city (for Deaf and hearing) 2-10 literacy centers exist in major cities for Deaf and hearing together. Only 3 are specifically for the Deaf, as far as the researchers know.
Comment (Church Growth)	There is a growing heart among the deaf Christians, especially the leaders, to reach out to other Indian Deaf. They want to minister to other Deaf within their cities, neighboring cities, and their surrounding rural communities. Concerning the rural Deaf, their initial goal is to teach Sign Language. Missionaries are working as tentmakers, and full time Pastors are rare. Deaf pastors are extremely rare. All of the information in this “Church Growth” section is based on personal interviews and observations. Specific names of churches and missions were omitted from this profile due to a promise of confidentiality. Christians are persecuted in India.

Religion & Response

Attitude To Christianity Comment	Very resistant Many Indian Deaf are very receptive to the Gospel’s hope and love message. However, Deaf are members of their hearing families and the risk of converting is subject to intense family pressure to keep the “traditional” religious values whether it be Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, etc.
Attitude To Religious Change Comment	Very resistant Some Indian Deaf in some cities are strongly opposed to religious change, and they have stirred up contentions in some cities. Many families will not tolerate Religious change in their deaf children.
Resistance / Receptivity	Many of the Christian fellowships provide other valuable social and personal needs (i.e. social, academic education), so some parents allow their deaf children to attend Christian fellowships even though they do not want their children to become Christians. Some parents have also noticed very positive changes in their deaf children after becoming Christians, and they are grateful.
Religious Analogies & Bridges	Some aspects of a Hindu wedding are similar to a Jewish wedding enabling a greater understanding of Scriptural parables on weddings.
Spiritual Climate And Openness Comment (Religion)	Many Deaf are very receptive to the Gospel’s hope and love message. Those that have responded to the Gospel are very motivated to witness to other Indian Deaf, and they have even done some organized campaigns at Christmas time to share with the hearing population at large. Strong attitude lines for or against Christianity among the Indian Deaf are in evidence.

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There has been some persecution from militant Hindu or Muslim Deaf against Christian Deaf. Attempts to shut down some of the deaf Christian fellowships/churches by influential, opposed Deaf Community leaders have been made in some cities.

Recommended Approaches

Many Indian Deaf are being reached with “friendship” and “educational” groups, which teach the Bible, life and job skills. Any outreach method which touches a “felt need” such as improving job skills, learning web technology, and offering social opportunities with other Indian Deaf is welcomed. Most Indian Deaf fellowships cut across caste and religious barriers. A stronger identity is found in the Deaf community. Christian fellowships have a tremendous outreach possibility in the Indian Deaf community especially when education in health, computers, job skills and academics is offered. This requires a strong church infrastructure which does not currently exist in most cities.

Current Needs

Bible training. An effective worldwide trend is using Chronological Bible Storying.

In rural areas, they need more medical care, health education, and schools for the Deaf and exposure to the regional sign language.

They need acceptance by parents, schools for the Deaf and government officials of sign language as a viable, fully functional language for the Deaf.

Bible in Indian Sign Language

More active/creative job placement

Public education as to the capabilities of the Deaf to encourage employment and reduce prejudices.

Addition of sign language as a school medium of instruction.

Deaf teachers and role models

Interpreter services developed for community and official use (medical, courts, etc.)

Also see greatest needs under Education/Youth.

Evangelism of the Indian Deaf and formation of Christian fellowships in cities and areas that lack one.

Hindrances to independent community function need to be removed (i.e., bank accounts, driver's license made legal, etc.).

History Of Christianity

Year Began

1896

By Whom

Church of England, Zenana Missionary Society

Significant Events

Deaf Christian fellowships have begun to grow and spread to other cities in the last twenty years. A few fellowships have annual camps and training seminars that have greatly united deaf Christians across the country.

Comments

The first documented church service for the Deaf was in 1896 in southern India. Church services were held for the Deaf at Palamcottah, Tamil Nadu (Swainson 1906).

From 1896 to the early 1980's, a few more Christian organizations formed churches for the Deaf. The greatest expansion of church growth occurred in the 1980's to present. Now there are about 65 evangelical churches/fellowships, mostly in the larger cities.

The Deaf Community of India

Scripture

Form Of Scripture Available
Comment

None

Hindi plus all official state languages (All 2nd languages to the Indian Deaf) have Scriptures. None exists in ISL. Due to low literacy, the second languages' (Hindi, Tamil etc.) translations have limited use among the Indian Deaf.

Currently, the Deaf Christian leaders tend to congregate at Deaf couples' houses who do not live with other family in order to fellowship in between official fellowship/church times and/or to watch teaching videos during the week. Among deaf children, only 2% attend school (9 : 3 male to female) (Patil & Gopinath 2000). Of the educated Indian Deaf, only a few attain adequate reading skills due to barriers to any spoken language even beyond being a second language. Even in the United States, only 10% of the Deaf read of the Indian Deaf would not read a written Bible, even if they had one. Use of Scripture in the home would be a problem for many Indian Deaf whose families are of another religion. Of the 4.5 million Indian Deaf, approximately 1.4 million use a more widespread sign language as their primary means of communication. Because sign language is not in written form, as of yet, none in India have literacy in their mother tongue. The remaining 7.15 million Deaf communicate with their own home or small community sign that is only local.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available:

Literature—No

Recordings—Not Applicable

Film/Videos—The JESUS Film Project distributed "JESUS," a two-hour docudrama based on the Gospel of Luke.

Television—A Catholic priest working among the Deaf in Bangalore was planning on developing a television station for the Deaf of India and Asia. in 2000. (not sure of the status as of 2012)

Radio—Not Applicable

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