

GLOBAL PEOPLE PROFILE: The Kashmiris of India

—Alim Jabbar Khan

The Kashmiri people are found in the Kashmir Valley of the Outer Himalayan region primarily in the State of Jammu & Kashmir, India and Azad Kashmir, Pakistan. This is the northern area of the Indian subcontinent of South Asia. They are descendants of Indo-Aryans who immigrated into the area. Some have theorized that aborigines settled in the Kashmir Valley and later mixed with the Aryans forming one people. The Kashmiris have a rich tradition including interesting cultural and social aspects. Due to the large mountain ranges in the Himalayan area and the network of rivers and streams, ethnic and cultural traditions have remained somewhat intact throughout the centuries. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into three districts: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. A majority of the Kashmiri people live in the Kashmir district, the heart of which is the Vale of Kashmir.

Location: The Kashmiri primarily are located in the Kashmir Valley, in northern India. The valley is approximately 84 miles long and 20-25 miles wide and has an average elevation of 6000 feet above sea level. Due to political turmoil and changing boundaries, some of the Kashmiris live in Pakistan. Due to migration, many Kashmiris live in the United Kingdom.

Primary Language: Kashmiri (Kashtawari).

Primary Religion: Sunni Islam (95% of population) A majority are Sunni Muslims with strong evidence of folk Islam.

Alternative Names: Keshur, Kaschemiri, Cashmiri, Cashmeeree, Kacmiri.

Dialects: Bakawali, Bunjwali, Kishtwari, Miraski, Poguli, Rambani, Riasi, Shah-Mansuri, Siraji of Doda, Siraji-Kashmiri, Zayoli, Zirak-Boli.

Location: Valley of Kashmir in North India/Azad Kashmir, Pakistan.

Country: India/Pakistan

POPULATION

Total People: 3,770,000 (Kashmiri in India, Barrett) ~4,500,000 (1990), ESCAP Projections

Other Countries: ~100,000 in Pakistan (World Evang. Database) ~115,000 in UK (World Evang. Database)

Urban Percent: 20% live in urban areas.

Adult Literacy: Jammu & Kashmir: Men-36.29%; Women-15.88%; Rural-21.63%; Urban-45.56% (1981 Census of

India).

SOCIO - ECONOMIC

Occupations: Farming, craftsmen (weaving, carving), agriculture.

Products: Rice, wheat, corn, carpets, furniture, papier mache.

Trade Partners: Mainly neighboring states within India.

Basic Diet: Rice, wheat, corn & milk products.

Recreation: Folk dances & singing.

Art Forms: Dance, music, wood carvings, paintings & papier mache.

Festivals: Religious festivals such as Shivratri, Sont (Spring Festival) and Nav varih (New Year's day) are celebrated by Hindus. Muslims celebrate Id Ramazan, Id Qurban, Miraj Sharif, and Urs Nabi as holy days along with special festivals at weddings and birth.

General Description

Kashmiri people are physically strong, tall, and fair-skinned. The Kashmiris are lively, intelligent and enjoy amusement. They have a great sense of humor. Those of the Valley of Kashmir primarily adhere to the Islamic faith. Most are Sunni Muslims. There are some Hindus also. Contrasted to other parts of India, an extremely large percentage of Hindus are high caste Hindu Pandits. During the recent peoples revolt, many Hindus have elected to leave the area.

Kashmiri Language

The Kashmiri language is a part of the Dardic branch of the Indo-Aryan group which has been somewhat influenced by Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic. Kashmiri literature can be traced back to the 1400's. Poetry is particularly significant to the language. The script which is used is based on the Persian script, although other scripts are sometimes used in writing.

History

History records that Muslim traders were influential in the introduction of Islam into Kashmir. In the early 1300's Bulbul Shah is known as the first missionary of Islam in Kashmir. Early records show that Hindu-Muslim alliances were often made through marriage. It has been speculated that some Muslims may have hoped to overthrow Hindu dynasties through such marriages. Hinduism also suffered severely

from 1000-1400 A.D. during invasions of groups from Central Asia. More recently when Pakistan was formed from India, the area of Kashmir has been in constant dispute. There is presently a freedom movement by Kashmiri radicals.

Neighbor Relations

Jammu and Kashmir is located in an area claimed by both India and Pakistan. The section claimed by Pakistan is known as Azad (Free) Kashmir. Pakistan did not favor Jammu and Kashmir joining India after autonomy from the British in 1947. Although India agreed to designate Kashmir as a plebiscite, the concept was never implemented. The United Nations intervened and a "temporary" border was established which is the *de facto* border forty years later. Jammu and Kashmir is the only Indian state with its own constitution. Azad Kashmir is protected by Pakistan and economically and administratively linked to Pakistan. Essentially all the Kashmiri people who are in Asia live in this area of India and Pakistan. The relationship of India and China is also strained because of a border dispute. In the early 1960's the Chinese built a road in the mountains on land which was claimed by the Indians.

Rule-Authority

Article 370 of the Constitution of India sets up a special relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and the national government. Jammu and Kashmir adopted a constitution in 1956. The national government legislates defense, external affairs and communications. The national government has indirect relationships with citizens. Recently the national government (Hindu) dismissed the Chief Minister (Muslim) and caused much unrest among the people. There is a large segment of the population of Kashmir who, apparently with the support of outside groups, are seeking an independent state or alignment with Pakistan.

Judicial System

The influence of Islamic law as well as Indian Constitutional law have both impacted the Kashmiris. Often these are in conflict with one another.

Modernization/Utilities

Along with other states, Jammu and

Kashmir is a part of the Seventh Five Year Plan launched in 1985. Five Year Plans are attempts by India to deal with poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and health care. Kashmir has the highest increase in literacy rate of all the states of India during the past ten years. Although lack of drinking water is a problem throughout India, Kashmir has made great strides in improving the quality of water. Several hydroelectric projects are complete in this area providing hydroelectricity as well as water for irrigation to a large number of citizens.

Art Forms

The strict teachings of Islam have restricted dance and the theater. Nadim is a poet known for his writings for the stage. Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Language has worked at promoting the theater in Kashmiri and Dogri language.

STATUS OF CHRISTIANITY

Christian missionaries from outside the country first went to the Vale of Kashmir many years ago but none remain there today. Initially schools and medical clinics were emphasized. While Kashmiri Muslims are becoming more and more militant for their faith, several groups of nationals from South India consider themselves missionaries to the Kashmiris. There is one protestant church in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, maintaining fellowship with the Church of North India. Catholics still have some work in Jammu and Kashmir also. While the Church is alive, assistance in training Christians and mobilizing them to evangelistic outreach is needed.

Media

There is no regular Christian broadcasting in Kashmiri. Religious broadcasting from within the country is illegal. At this time there is no religious broadcast in Kashmiri from outside the country but this would be a good ministry possibility. A few times in the past, a special program at Easter and Christmas has been allowed.

Bridges

The Ahmadiyah Movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad may be one bridge from Christianity to Islam. The followers of Ahmad claim that the tomb of Jesus is located near Srinagar, where Jesus went after hanging from the cross for a few hours and lived until the age of 120. During the early 1900's this sect

often attacked Christianity with references to the historical-critical methods of Bible study. Recognizing that critical methods of study during the past 100 years have not destroyed the Bible, Muslim scholars may reconsider the question. (Titus, 207-230).

A second bridge is the Kashmiris in Pakistan and United Kingdom. Christians outside India are a potential source of evangelizing those in the primary target area.

PEOPLE GROUP DESCRIPTION

Location / Environment Information

The Kashmir area is located in South Asia bordering, Pakistan & China. The valley has an average elevation of 6000 feet above sea level.

General Description

Kashmiri people are physically strong, tall and fair-skinned. As an Aryan group coming from the Middle East, some have theorized that aborigines settled in the Kashmir Valley and later mixed with the Aryans forming one people. In any case, Kashmiris are lively, intelligent and enjoy amusement. Those of the Kashmir Valley are primarily adherents to the Islamic faith with a significant number of Hindus.

Language/literacy Information

Adult Literacy %: men-36.29%, women-15.88%.

Primary Language: Kashmiri* % Speakers : 73.9%.

Second Language: Urdu % Speakers : ~70%.

Tertiary Languages :Punjabi % Speakers : 4.8%; Hindi: Many speakers.

Essentially 100% of the educated people speak, read and write Urdu, the official state language of Jammu and Kashmir and the national language of Pakistan.

*Based on records for state of Jammu & Kashmir.

ECONOMICS

Occupations: The primary occupation of Kashmiris is agriculture. The main crops are rice, wheat, corn and barley. Silk, shawl, and carpet weaving along with paper mache and wood-carving also provide jobs for the people.

Income Sources: The sale of agriculture products, cottage crafts such as carpets, furniture, and paper mache are important income which provide income for the people and government.

Products/Crafts: Products include wool garments, carpets, handloom fabrics,

furniture, fruit which includes apples, peaches, pears, grapes, walnuts, almonds and saffron.

Trade Partners: Trade occurs primarily with neighboring states. Crafts from the region are sold throughout India and are exported to other countries.

Modernization/Utilities: Along with other states Jammu and Kashmir is a part of the Seventh Five Year Plan launched in 1985. Five Year Plans are attempts by India to deal with poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and health care. Kashmir has the highest increase in literacy rate during the past 10 years.

LIVING CONDITIONS/ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STATUS

Food: Rice is the main staple food. Wheat, barley, & corn are also a part of the diet. Vegetables include cucumbers, cabbage, turnips, radishes, lettuce, & spinach. Stem of the lotus has also been eaten. Meats include fish, lamb, and goat.

Shelter: The style of houses varies with the elevation. In areas where there is much snow the roofs are triangular. Stone, bricks, thatch, & timber are used for building materials. Houses in the rural areas of the valley often have storage areas for grain, fodder, fuel, wood, tree leaves, charcoal, & dried dung which are necessary for severe winter conditions. In 1971, it was reported that 50% of the houses in the area were substandard.

Clothing: The traditional dress include the *pheran* and *poch* which are a long loose outer garment and an inner garment of cotton. Earrings, nose rings, & wooden clogs were also a part of the dress at one time. Western education has had a significant effect on the style of dress.

Health Care: Significant strides have been made during the past 20 years in health care in this state. There are more than 100 primary health care centers with approximately 3000 doctors in the area. Eighty percent of the villagers have medical facilities within five kilometers of their houses. During recent unrest, many doctors have been on strike in protest due to a lack of proper food and medical supplies and the lack of adequate government assistance.

Water (Domestic/Agricultural): Approximately one-third of the population

has tap water. More than 90 percent of urban dwellers have access to tap water while less than 20 percent of the villagers have tap water. Although lack of drinking water is a problem throughout India, Kashmir has made great strides in improving the quality of water. Several hydroelectric projects are complete in this area providing hydroelectricity as well as water for irrigation to a large number of citizens.

Energy/Fuel: Wood, dung, & kerosene are the main sources of energy for cooking. Wood supplies are dwindling, and kerosene is considered to be expensive on the limited income of the people.

SOCIETY

Family Structures: Extended families are the norm with the woman staying within the home a majority of the time. The people like entertaining and are very hospitable. Kashmiris enjoy serving tea to their guests.

Neighbor Relations: The state of Jammu and Kashmir is located in an area claimed by both India and Pakistan. The section claimed by Pakistan is known as Azad (Free) Kashmir. Pakistan did not favor Jammu and Kashmir joining India after autonomy from the British in 1947. Although India agreed to designate Kashmir as a plebiscite, the concept was never implemented. The United Nations intervened and a "temporary" border was established which is the *de facto* border forty years later. Jammu and Kashmir is the only Indian state with its own constitution. Azad Kashmir is protected by Pakistan and economically and administratively linked to Pakistan. Essentially all the Kashmiri people who are in Asia live in this area of India and Pakistan. The relationship of India and China is also strained because of a border dispute. In the early 1960's, the Chinese built a road in the mountains on land which was claimed by India.

Rule / Authority / Selection: Article 370 of the Constitution of India sets up a special relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and the national government. Jammu and Kashmir adopted a constitution in 1956. The national government legislates defense, external affairs and communications. The national government has indirect relationships with citizens. Recently, the national government (Hindu) dismissed the Chief Minister (Muslim) and caused much unrest among the people. There is a segment of the population of Kashmir

who, apparently with the support of outside groups, are seeking an independent state or alignment with Pakistan. Much violence has been associated with this.

Social Habits/Grouping: Until recent times, the Kashmiris had very little contact with people outside of their valley. Some of the areas are isolated for 6-8 months during the winter snows. Joining together around fires and sharing folk tales or ballads are favorite activities. The fact that much of the population is located in isolated rural areas impacts social habits. Kashmiris enjoy festivals and celebrate a number of festivals and pilgrimages to shrines which serve as a means of uniting communities. Men often gather during prayer times. Often people gather in the mosque (Mazjid) or on the tops of the homes during this time.

Judicial System/Trial Punishment: The influence of Islamic law as well as Indian Constitutional law have both impacted on the Kashmiris. Often these are in conflict with one another.

Crisis / Conflicts - History / Status: Since India became independent from England, this area has been a disputed area and is now divided between India and Pakistan.

Celebrations / Recreation: January 26 - Republic Day, August 15 - Indian Independence Day, & religious holidays and festivals of Muslims and Hindus throughout the year.

Art Forms: The strict teachings of Islam have restricted dance and theater. Nadim is a poet known for his writings for the state. Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Language has worked at promoting the theater and Kashmiri and Dogri language. Kashmir has its own style of classical music.

Media (Radio/TV/Newspapers/Films/Videos/Recording): In 1977 there were 18 daily newspapers and 24 weekly newspapers in various languages. Films are very popular in India, but only a few have ever been produced in Kashmiri. Videos are on the increase, but the average villager does not have access to videos. Radios are available, but due to lack of electricity, batteries are often required.

CHILDREN / YOUTH

Education/Type of Schooling: In 1981,

there were more than 10,000 government schools in the state. The area has a higher percentage of schools per capita than the rest of the country. Schooling is required for primary age students and is generally provided free by the government.

Labor/Tasks: Children assist families in agricultural work, helping care for animals, and making crafts.

Problems (Morality / Family / Insurrections / Etc.): There is a relatively high drop out rate from school. Some young people are joining radical religious and political groups.

Greatest Needs: Peace !!! Education which leads to income producing vocations as well as health care. Introduction to the Gospel.

RELIGION

Jammu & Kashmir*

Primary: Islam 2,830,000, 65.9%.

Secondary: Hinduism 1,300,000, 30.4%.

Tertiary: Sikhism 86,000, .02%.

Population approximated for 1989

*Of the Kashmiri Peoples, about 95% are Sunni Muslims.

Religious Practices / Ceremonies: Kashmir is noted for being the location of ziyarats which are places of religious pilgrimages. Some of these are tombs or sacred places with Hindu & Buddhist ties.

Redemptive Analogies / "Bridges": The Ahmadiyah Movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad may be one bridge from Christianity to Islam. The followers of Ahmad claim that the tomb of Jesus is located in Srinagar, where Jesus went after hanging from the cross for a few hours and lived in Kashmir until the age of 120. During the early 1900's, this sect often attacked Christianity with references to the historical-critical methods of Bible study. Recognizing that critical methods of study during the past 100 years have not destroyed the Bible, Muslim scholars may reconsider the question. It may also be possible to reach the Kashmiris of India through those living outside of the area in Pakistan and England. A pocket of 10,000 Kashmiris live in Birmingham, England. Some may be good sources of contact for relatives in Jammu & Kashmir State.

Spiritual Climate / Openness: Social pressures such as war and poverty often provide an open door for evangelistic

opportunities. Although several Hindus and military personnel have accepted the Gospel, others have been openly rebellious to the Gospel. One church in Srinagar was burned in 1967 and again in 1979 by violent mobs.

RECOMMENDED APPROACHES FOR THE GOSPEL

1. Oral Communication including radio broadcasts, movies, videos, and tapes.
2. Written Communication including translating Scriptures into modern more readable script and publishing tracts and other religious education materials.

ITEMS FOR PRAYER

1. Pray for Indian nationals who are attempting to evangelize the Kashmiris.
2. Pray for a peaceful solution to the continued violence in Jammu and Kashmir.
3. Pray for medical and educational work among the Kashmiris.
4. Pray that the Lord may open ways for future ministries in Kashmir.
5. Pray for the broadcast which has been planned in the Kashmiri Language.

STATUS OF CHRISTIANITY

Church Growth

Total Believers : ~500

Worship Centers : U

Total Baptized : U

Preaching Points : U

Pastors : U

Schools : <=4

Lay Leaders : U

Clinics/Hospitals: 2

Average Attendance: U

Literacy Centers : 0

* U = Uncertain

History Of Christianity In Group

Year Began: 1859 First permanent work:

1854 First missionaries entered

By Whom: Church Missionary Society, London.

Significant Events : Missionaries threatened by mob of 1000-1500.

Scripture / Literature / Media Status

Scripture : New Testament 1821 in Sarada script which is now obsolete. Entire Bible translated by 1899 using Arabic script. Portions have been transliterated into Roman script. Gospels and Acts translated into idiomatic Kashmiri.

Literature : Somewhat limited in Jammu and Kashmir. Outside the area more is available.

Recordings: Some made by Gospel Recordings.

Films: The Jesus film has not yet been translated into Kashmiri. Only two films have previously been made in Kashmiri.

Radio: From within the country religious broadcasts are illegal but often allowed at Easter and Christmas. There are some programs in Urdu, but there are none in Kashmiri.

Video: Extremely limited at this time.

A/V: Some printed materials are available, but translation and printing of new materials are needed.

Organizations Working Among

Due to continued strife in the area, there are no organizations openly working in the Kashmir Valley. Several groups continue to work outside the area, primarily among other people groups.

RESPONSIVENESS

Attitude To Christianity: Generally resistant.

Openness to Religious Change: Somewhat resistant

Ministries Responsive To: Media, strong church programs, plays, etc.

Specific Ways To Reach This People

Bible studies, evangelistic crusades, drama, music, literacy training materials, broadcasting, etc.

Current Needs Health, education, nutritional training, Bible translations, agricultural programs, employment, etc.

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