



**Population:**  
 3,610 (2000)  
 4,200 (2010)  
 4,900 (2020)  
**Countries:** India  
**Buddhism:** Theravada  
**Christians:** 250

## Overview of the Man

### Other Names:

### Population Sources:

3,267 in India (1991 census)

**Language:** Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Eastern Zone, Bengali-Assamese. (Traditionally, Man was a Tai language.)

**Dialects:** 0

**Professing Buddhists:** 50%

**Practising Buddhists:** 30%

**Christians:** 6.9%

**Scripture:** none

**Jesus film:** none

**Gospel Recordings:** none

**Christian Broadcasting:** none

**ROPAL code:** none

Approximately 3,500 people belonging to the Man ethnic group live in north-east India.<sup>1</sup> According to the 1991 census, 2,582 Man people lived in Assam State, dispersed in the Karbi Arleng District<sup>2</sup> and North Cachar District.<sup>3</sup> A small number may live in Tinsuria. An additional 585 Man people live in the state of Meghalaya, primarily in the West Garo Hills.<sup>4</sup>

The name *Man* literally means 'a Burmese immigrant'. K S Singh says, 'Legend has it that they came to this part along with an invading army, and were afterwards recruited . . . as sepoys to fight the Garos in the second decade of the nineteenth century.

Those who settled down in the Garo hills after relinquishing their duty as sepoys took women from other communities as their wives and formed a separate community. They married Koch, Hajong, Assamese

and Bengali women, but they never encouraged marriage with the Muslims.'<sup>5</sup>

Over time, as a consequence of their mixing with other communities, the Man emerged as a distinct people group, and all links to their origins in Myanmar have long been forgotten. Their Tai language has also been lost. They have 'completely forgotten their original language and have adopted Assamese as their mother tongue and use the Assamese script. They sometimes use Bengali and Hindi to communicate with others. The Man have been Assamised to a large extent . . . into the greater Assamese culture.'<sup>6</sup>

Although the majority of Man people say they are Buddhists, Hinduism has influenced their religious belief system and is gradually taking over. 'The life cycle rituals they perform demonstrate much similarity with those of the neighboring caste Hindus of Assam and Meghalaya. The marriage, however, is solemnized by a Buddhist monk or *pathak* reciting hymns from the Pali scripture.'<sup>7</sup>

Despite growing Hindu influence, approximately half of the Man continue to profess Theravada Buddhism. In most of their families the goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati are venerated. The 1981 census

returned 92.04 per cent of the Man in Meghalaya as followers of Buddhism, 3.45 per cent Hindus, 2.55 per cent Christians, 1.05 per cent 'other religions' (i.e., animism), 0.6 per cent Muslims and 0.31 per cent did not state their religion. The 1991 census revealed the inroads Hinduism has made, with the majority of Man in Assam at that time professing Hinduism.

There are approximately 250 Man

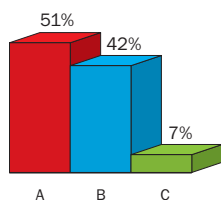


Myanmar: Faces and Places

Christians today in India, a remnant that does not have the resources or motivation to reach the rest of their ethnic group. The 1991 census returned 133 Man Christians living in the Karbi Arleng District and 97 Christians in the North Cachar District, both in Assam State.

Because they do not appear on most missionary lists of ethnolinguistic peoples from India, few Christians have ever heard of the Man and fewer still have tried to reach them with the gospel. About 50 per cent of Man have never heard the gospel in a clear way such that they could intelligently either accept or reject the claims of Christ.

## Status of Evangelization



**A** = Have never heard the gospel  
**B** = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians  
**C** = Are adherents to some form of Christianity