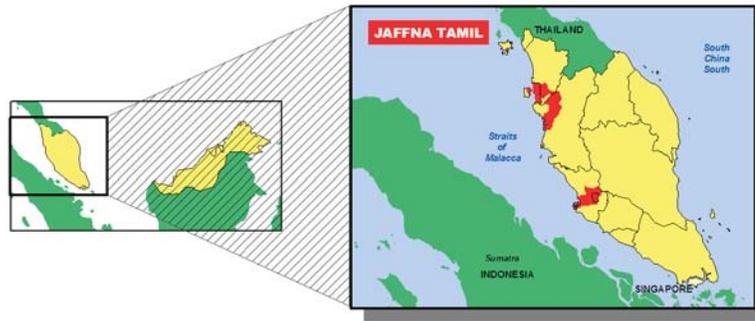


# JAFFNA TAMIL



| Population | Major Religion | Language |
|------------|----------------|----------|
| 25,000     | Hinduism       | Tamil    |

## Who are the Jaffna Tamil?

As early as 6th century BC, South Indian Tamils migrated to Jaffna and other northern provinces of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). In the late 19th century, Jaffna Tamil migrated to Malaysia in order to assist the colonial bureaucracy in clerical work. They previously served under British officers, who were posted to Ceylon prior to Malaysia. Jaffna Tamil excelled in mathematics, accounting, and English due to strong missionary schooling. They worked in almost every branch of public administration and in plantation and industrial sectors. Many rose to command senior positions in government services. Many friends and family members from Jaffna soon followed by migrating to Malaysia to find work. They found careers in the railway, postal service, and civil service to name a few.

## What are their lives like?

Today, there are approximately twenty-five thousand Jaffna Tamil living in Malaysia. They continue to thrive in Malaysia as professionals in medicine, law, accounting, engineering, computer science, and many other fields. Thriftiness and education has been the key to their success. However, in their pursuit of advanced education to maintaining a high social and cultural status in Malaysia, Jaffna Tamil have neglected to maintain their Tamil Language. They prefer to use English at home and social gatherings. Today's younger generation of professionals are losing some of their cultural identity in Malaysia.

Jaffna Tamil refuse to identify themselves with the wider Tamil community. In attempt to express their own identity in Malaysia, Jaffna Tamil have sought to distance themselves from Malaysia's Indian Tamil community (one and a half million Tamil Indians from Southern India) along class lines. The Indians

detest the Jaffna Tamil's onetime close association with the British colonizers.

Jaffna Tamil traditionally gave away dowry with their daughters at marriage. The moment a girl is born families will naturally begin saving for her dowry. Though not as prevalent as in previous generations, dowry is still prevalent among some conservatives. The caste system is dying out with each new generation of Malaysian Jaffna Tamil.

## What do they believe?

Traditionally, Jaffna Tamil have always been considered devout Hindus. However, there is a small minority of Christians who converted after the arrival of Portuguese, Dutch and British in Ceylon. Religion has always played a crucial role in the Jaffna Tamil identity. They have built Hindu temples and institutions in Malaysia. The Jaffna Tamil are very strict and ritualistic in their Hindu practices, which can be observed in their complex burial and marriage ceremonies.

## What are their needs?

Despite the fact Jaffna Tamil played an important role in development of modern Malaysia, they are frequently overlooked as a people group in Malaysia. They are often viewed as part of the larger Tamil community, whose values and cultures are similar. The Jaffna Tamil's culture and beliefs are beginning to transform with the influence of new ideals on each generation through intermarriages and seeking higher education from other countries. Pray for believers who can relate to the needs of the Jaffna Tamil and minister to them in a way to show them the path to the Prince of Peace.