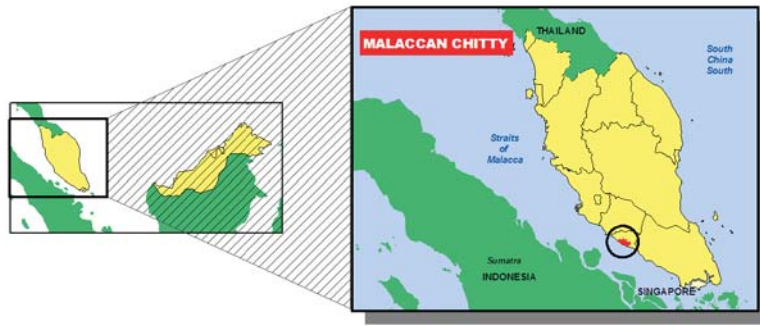


# MALACCAN CHITTY



Population	Major Religion	Language
1,000	Hinduism	Bahasa Malaysia

## Who are the Malaccan Chitty?

There are less than one thousand Malaccan Chitty in Malaysia, with approximately sixty Chitty families still living in Gajah Burang (commonly referred to as Kampong Chitty). The Chitty are believed to be descendants of wealthy Indian traders from the Coromandel Coast of Kalingapatnam in Southern India. They traveled to the Malay Peninsula during the time of the Malaccan Sultanate in the early 15th century. They began settling in Malacca and marrying local Malay and Chinese women. Some Chitty even take wives from among the Javanese and Batak people of present-day Indonesia. They also adopted the local customs and traditions.

## What are their lives like?

Today, the Chitty community is no longer as involved in trade as their ancestors were. The majority are professionals such as nurses and teachers while others own small businesses. The Malaccan Chitty have adopted Malay food, language, dress, and other elements of Malay culture. The present Chitty community strictly upholds old traditions, especially pertaining to marriage and ancestral worship. Being a very close-knit community, the Chitty make every effort to congregate in Gajah Berang during cultural celebrations even though many are now living in other parts of Malaysia.

Just as the Chitty community underwent cultural assimilation from their beginning, they still continue to change. The Chitty do marry outside of their community. The Chitty community holds strictly to the requirement that a couple wanting to get married must both be Hindu. A person of another religious faith who wishes to marry a member of the community is required to convert to Hinduism before the marriage can take place.

## What do they believe?

As staunch believers of the Hindu faith, the Malaccan Chitty community still upholds their religious ceremonies and beliefs uniquely blended with ancestral worship practices. They observe Deepavali (festival of lights), Ponggol (the end of the harvest festival), the Hindu New Year, and other traditional Hindu festivals that are celebrated by Hindu groups in Malaysia. The Chitty do not participate in Thaipusam. However, during the month of May they have a similar festival in their local temple called Mengamay. One celebration that is unique to the Chitty community is the Parchu festival (with prayers, homemade Chitty style food, cigarettes, betel leaves, tobacco, and tea offered to the spirits of ancestors). It is celebrated twice a year with Parchu Ponggol (Bohgi) observed the day before Ponggol in January and Parchu Buah-buahan during the fruit season between June and July.

## What are their needs?

Though Malay language, food, and dress have become part of the Chitty culture and way of life, they are making efforts to learn Tamil since it is widely spoken among the Indians in Malaysia. The Malaccan Chitty feel isolated from other Indian communities. Pray that Indian believers will make an effort to reach out and become friends with the Chitty people and share the good news with them.