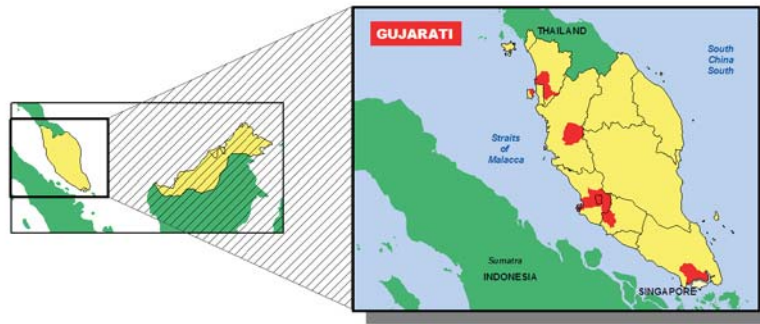


# GUJARATI



Population	Major Religion	Language
3,000	Jainism/Hinduism	Gujurati

## Who are the Gujarati?

It is believed that Gujarati missionaries from India introduced Islam to Malaysia prior to the establishment of the Malacca Sultanate in 1402. Gujarati traders from Cambay also frequently visited the port of Malacca but did not settle there. Only in the late 19th century did the Gujarati who are mostly businessmen in textile trade, travel to Malacca to settle in Malaysia. This new community grew as more Gujarati came after the 2nd World War.

## What are their lives like?

There are approximately three thousand Gujarati living in Malaysia. Their trading broadly covers textiles to tea, palm oil, tin, rubber, cocoa, timber, and coffee. They can be found in other professions as well.

The Gujarati remain community oriented and are interrelated through marriage and families. Marriages are still arranged by parents, with the consent of the potential couple. Marriages are often arranged with Gujarati from other countries.

## What do they believe?

The Gujarati of Malaysia are mainly adherents of Jainism and Hinduism with a small minority of Muslim. Jainism strives for realization of the highest perfection of man, free from all pain and the bondage of birth and death. They do not recognize a god or any being higher than the perfect man. Jainism teaches that souls are without beginning, endless and eternally individual. There are three broad categories of souls: not yet evolved, evolving, and liberated (free from rebirth). Jains live a monastic-ascetic lifestyle, show kindness to all, and display great reverence for all life (strict codes of vegetarianism, asceticism, nonviolence even in self-defense, and opposition to

war). Jainism is a religion of love and compassion. The ultimate goal is to become a Paramatman (a perfected soul). This is only accomplished when all layers of Karma (this law teaches that for every event that occurs, there will follow another event whose existence was caused by the first may it be pleasant or unpleasant) are removed. Once removed the soul will rise to the ceiling of the universe, where the soul will abide forever in the solitary bliss of Moksha (pure solitude and endless peace) fulfilling one's destiny as the man-god attainable in this world at the time of death. The nature of the soul is pure consciousness, power, bliss, and omniscience.

Though the Jain follow their spiritual teachings, Hinduism influences many of the social rituals. Hindus celebrate Navarathri (a nine day festival dedicated to the three main deities Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati). However, the Gujarati Jains have celebrated it every year since 1965. They also join the Punjabi and Sindhi communities who adhere to Hinduism in this grand celebration. Most Gujarati celebrate Deepavali (the festival of lights) in November. The day after Deepavali is the Gujarati New Year, where prayers are offered to Lakshmi or Saraswati (Hindu deity) to usher in prosperity for the New Year.

## What are their needs?

There are Gujarati who feel that they have to strive to do good works in their lives in order to attain Moksha (perfect peace and solitude). Some feel that there is no hope for them to get to Moksha. Pray for believers to encourage these people by being a friend and by showing them that there is a place of hope that is not dependent on their good works.