

Maratha of Western India

The **Maratha** (ma-RA-ta) are a Marathi speaking people group. They belong to the ruling class known as the Kshatriya caste. Their homeland is Maharashtra state in eastern India. Shivaji, a Maratha warrior and king, freed the Marathas from the Muslim Mughals and brought the Marathi people together as a "nation" in the 17th century.

The Marathas, including the Kunbi-Maratha, number around 45 million people. This is half the present population (96,752,247) of the State of Maharashtra.

Of the 96 million people in Maharashtra, less than five percent claim to be Christians. Included in this five percent are all the "Christian" sects such as Catholicism, as well as the "nominal" Christians who claim their Christianity as their birthright. Thus a more accurate estimate of born-again believers would not even total one percent of the total population.

Statistics

- **People Group:** Maratha
- **Country:** India
- **State:** Maharashtra
- **Language:** Marathi
- **Population :** 45,000,000
- **Population of India:** 1,022,021,300



Caste System:

- ◆ Abolished by law in 1949, it remains a significant force throughout India.
- ◆ Each follower of Hinduism belonged to one of the thousands of Jats (communities) that existed in India.
- ◆ The Rigveda defined four castes. In decreasing status, they are normally:
 - Brahmins (priests & academics)
 - Kshatriyas (rulers, military)
 - Vaishyas (farmers, landlords, merchants)
 - Sudras (peasants, servants, and workers in non-polluting jobs).
- ◆ The Dalit were outcasts who did not belong to one of the castes.



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INTERNATIONAL

The **Maratha** of Western India



Country

The Republic of **India**, consists of 25 union states and 7 union territories, and the nation dominates South Asia and the Indian Ocean. This nearly 16% of the world's population lives on 2.4% of the world's land surface.

State

Maharashtra is a coastal state, with the Arabian Sea on the west. It is an economically important state, with the modern cities of Mumbai and Pune offering a cosmopolitan lifestyle. In contrast to the modern and overpopulated cities are the villages and smaller towns where it would not be uncommon to see bullock carts alongside auto-rickshaws. However, these modern cities together with the rural villages are still bound together by a Hindu culture, pagan history and superstitious traditions.

Their Lives

Rural Maratha range from landlords to farmers of the land. The head of the village is usually a Maratha. Many also serve as politicians at the state and national levels. Urban Marathas are very progressive. They engage in a wide spectrum of modern professions. About 40% of their urban women work outside the home. The Marathas have a tightly knit society. Most of their marriages are arranged according to caste and economic lines. Many of their celebrations revolve around the Hindu deities. One celebration unique to the Maratha is the remembrance of Shivaji in their history. The Marathas do have indigenous forms of music but in general they do not dance - as members of the ruling caste others dance for them.

Beliefs

The Maratha worship some traditional Hindu gods. They also worship certain people, certain animals, and certain trees. They believe in evil spirits. They fear the evil eye and practice witchcraft.



Beliefs cont'd...

They believe in a cycle of birth -death-rebirth. After death, they believe you are reborn to a higher or lower life form or class depending on your works. A person's incarnation continues until he or she achieves spiritual perfection through devotion, meditation, good works and knowledge. The soul then merges back into an impersonal being with the result that the individual eventually disappears.