



<p><i>The Bania of India</i> May 2006</p> <p>Part 06, Ch. 31 CRF Media Chronicles</p>	<p>Final: 07/29/13 Time: 7:43</p> <p>© 2006, 2013 CRF Media</p>
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Carl: The Bania are a merchant class of people who live throughout India. About one million claim the State of Karnotoka (kar-NOT-a-ka) in southern India as their home. A large portion lives in Bangalore, the capital city.

On this May 2006 trip, I traveled with three others from our church in Rogers, Arkansas.

The Bania, an unreached people group, was selected as a major mission focus. The objective of this trip was to learn about their culture, lifestyle, religious beliefs and how to reach them with the Gospel. My specific responsibility, as I understood, was to document the visit and produce a video to share with our church body.

Several mission teams were already located in Bangalore and other places in the State of Karnotoka (kar-NOT-a-ka). However, their primary focus was on the lower castes. The Bania are considered to be in the upper middle caste;... a virtually unreached group and with very few Christian believers. The Bania consider themselves Hindu but, in reality, their god is money. To them everything depends on acquiring wealth.

During the ten-day visit, most of our time was spent in a classroom setting, ... along with several missionaries, ... learning about the concept of Training for Trainers – T4T. This material was presented as a new concept but Arline and I observed T4T work in action on our mission trips during the past six years. For me, this unnecessary classroom confinement limited my time for videoing the people and places in and around Bangalore. Still, I was able to obtain about three hours of video along with two hundred still photos. The subject matter of this material covered a wide spectrum of environments, lifestyles, cultures and religious practices.

Interaction with other believers was an important part of the training activity. Our group was assigned the city of Mysore, about three hours southwest of Bangalore. We spent a good part of the day at a small church located on the outskirts of this city of about 1.5 million people. Each of us took our turn in addressing the church group followed by small group discussions.

While in Mysore, there was sufficient time to visit some of the city and, in particular, the palace built in 1861 for the Maharaja. Today this is a prime tourist attraction.

Overlay: Jagannmohan Palace

Returning home we produced a nine-minute video about the Bania People plus a short chapter on the geographics and

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demographics of India.

Several copies of the completed DVD were distributed to those interested. The video was also posted on our CRF Media web site.

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The Bania of India *Merchants: Empty and Unreached* Ch. 32 (9:04) Filmed May 2006

India is a country one-third the size of the United States, but the home of over one billion people. It is the largest democracy of the world.

For the very few, India is a land of riches that goes beyond belief. Yet, it is a place where others toil in the depths of poverty while the growing middle class is continually challenged to just travel to work.

India ... a land of contrasts without end ... is also a land of millions of gods and hundreds, if not thousands, of religious beliefs. There are the Hindus, the Muslims, the **Jains**, the

Sikhs, and the Christians ... all with their varied and often conflicting religious systems. Nevertheless, people work and live side by side in some of the most concentrated masses of humanity on earth. However, India is not a melting pot where diverse lifestyles mix to form a composite structure. Instead, each people group clings tenaciously to their own beliefs, language, customs, dress, and food. It is like each is in a cocoon separating one group from another. They socialize only within their group, their caste, and their beliefs.

Among these groups is the **Bania**; ... a merchant class of people who live throughout India. Most of these 22 million people are in the northern part of the country. However, about one million claim the state of **Karnataka** in southern India as their home. A large portion lives in **Bangalore**, the capital city, with a population exceeding 6.5 million.

Nearly all of the **Bania** claim Hindu as their religion but, as merchants, they have chosen gods that reflect their profession. In particular, they worship **Laxmi**, the god of wealth, and **Ganesh**, the god of good fortune, but many have chosen another god – the god of money. This is a god that they worship; a god that drives their lives ... **a god that leaves them with an empty heart**. Everything depends on acquiring wealth. Their businesses are profitable but spartan. They could afford a car and chauffeur or a bigger house but prefer to make their home in their place of business to save money. Making money supersedes honesty and integrity in the business. It is all focused on acquiring wealth in any way they can.

Bania places of business are identified by their family names. **Gupta, Jain, Garg** and **Agarwal** are just a few of the popular surnames of the **Bania**. Most are business owners but, ... among this people group, ... there are doctors, lawyers, teachers, scientists and other professions. While the **Bania** focus on acquiring wealth, they also give to hospitals, temples, and other charities, which they consider worthy.

Their social interaction and their close personal relationships revolve around the extended family and seldom go beyond that of fellow **Bania**. This closed community environment presents a great challenge for outsiders as they attempt to share God's Word. To the **Bania**, sharing the Good News of Jesus often appears as the manikins seen **at** a clothing store – something Western ... and interesting ... and perhaps profitable ... but not of their culture. They, like many Hindus, will embrace Jesus as one of many ways but not as the only "WAY AND TRUTH AND LIFE."

The **Bania** will listen to people. They are courteous and hospitable and are often receptive to hearing God's Word through personal stories. They will listen to how one's life changed after becoming a follower of Jesus. They follow the story intently ... they seek to understand ... but it is difficult for them to grasp. They have no concept of sin and, of course, no feeling of guilt or the need for forgiveness. **Their hearts and lives remain empty. The Gospel has not reached them.**

It is most often too much for them upon the first hearing. Some turn away, some seek more information on follow-up visits

and, ... eventually, ... they may accept Jesus as their Lord and reject their false gods. However, usually, ... in keeping with Hinduism, ... they will claim Jesus and keep their favorite Hindu gods; gods that have been part of their culture for more than 3000 years.

The challenge of sharing God's Word to the **Bania** can be overcome by **Bania** reaching **Bania** but there are only a few followers of Jesus among them. However, it is these followers who can best share Jesus with those who are of like language and culture. Pray for the enlistment of **Bania** believers as national partners committed to reaching their fellow **Bania** for Christ.

Overlay: Pray for National Partners

Training these believers to train others to share God's Word is an essential part of developing a Church Planting Movement. The **Bania** believers are taught to share their story ... and, ... in turn, ... the process multiplies, as new believers become trainers for trainers.

Overlay: Pray for Trainers for Trainers

Strong family ties are part of the **Bania** culture. It is these bonds that can be used to facilitate rapidly reproducing churches among the **Bania**. Pray that entire families come to know Christ and reach out to others to establish new churches.

Overlay: Pray for a Church Planting Movement to Begin

India is a country that is becoming a major political and economic world power. Many of the leaders within this country are **Bania**. Pray that as India increases its influence in the world, the **Bania** believers will remain strong in their faith.

Overlay: Pray for the Salvation of India

As Americans, we appear out of place in this culture. We wait in line to take a short ride with those we don't know and by methods that are strange. In God's time, the journey is only for a moment, long enough to facilitate the development of rapidly reproducing churches among the **Bania**. We can then leave knowing that the glory of the Lord will soon reign among the **Bania**.

Join us in fervent prayer claiming the promise found in Habakkuk 2:14: "For the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord, as the waters of the sea".

On camera: Don praying with people

Overlay: Earnestly PRAY

Earnestly pray that it would be so among the **Bania** People of India **as their hearts and lives are filled with the love, joy, and peace of knowing Jesus personally.**

On camera: Singing of group in Mysore

Scroll scripture verse:

**For the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord,
as the waters of the sea. ... *Habakkuk 2:14***



India Maps

Ch. 33 (2:09) Edited June 2006

India is a country about one-third the size of the United States but with a population of over one billion people.

To the north is the Himalayan Mountain Range and China. To the West is Pakistan and Afghanistan. To the East is Mymar, formerly known as Burma.

New Delhi, with a population of 12 million, is the capital of the country. The greatest population density is in the northern part of this country.

Mumbai, ... formerly Bombay, ... is the largest city with a population of 17 million. Mumbai is also considered the

financial capital of India.

Bangalore to the South, with a population in excess of 6 ½ million, is among the fastest growing cities of Asia. Known as the garden city of India it is also referred to as the “Silicon Valley” of India indicating its leadership in the technological revolution sweeping the country.

Hindus dominate the **Religious Beliefs of India** as indicated by the orange bars. Approximately 80% or over 800 million people of India claim to be Hindu. The pink bar signifies that Sikhs are strong around the capital. The prime minister of India is a Sikh.

The Population Profile changes some throughout the country with Muslims ... the green bar ... making up about 15% of the population. In the South around Kerala, Muslim as well as Christianity ... the blue bar ... is strong. In the state of Karnonka and in the state capital, Bangalore the Hinduism is, ... by far, ... the dominant religion.