

# The Kumbaran of India

*Making known the Gospel to an unreached people in India by means of a tentmaking strategy. The Potter's Wheel Project not only provides employment and training for the Kumbaran people but puts them in living "natural" contact with the messengers of the Gospel. Pray that this strategy may result in the conversion of the Kumbaran to Christ and the planting of His Church among them.*

**T**he Kumbaran of India are a sub-caste of the Chettiars, or the Adhi-andhra caste, one of the secluded castes of India, which includes all who work with mud or clay (tile makers, brick makers, potters). The Kumbaran are located throughout all states in peninsular India. The number of Kumbaran is not known, but is estimated at over 20,000. Telugu is the common caste language among all potters in addition to the language of the state in which they reside.

Mission to Unreached Peoples missionaries are working with the Kumbaran and operate a pottery factory in true tentmaking fashion. Several container loads of pottery have been shipped to and marketed in the United States.

This project has recently moved its location to an area where there are 600 potter families, of which only 15% are employed. This is a tremendous opportunity to plant seeds for a future harvest while uplifting the Kumbaran socially and economically.

## Religion

—Hinduism with some animistic undertones.

—Special rituals of worship include dancing before idols with pots full of flowers on their head.

—A few isolated instances of individual Kumbaran converting to Christianity, but not in any significant numbers. For any church planting to succeed it must be a community wide decision.

## Work and Employment

—The Kumbaran use a traditional wheel

powered by hand, although some use a kick powered wheel.

—Men are the potter wheel workers, training their sons to follow in their footsteps.

—Women help prepare the clay and often do the marketing by the roadside and in the village markets.

—Pots are baked in brick and mud kilns which are heated with coconut husks, leaves, and wood.

## Social Life

—Potters live in communities with other potters, sharing work, food, etc. —Marriages are usually arranged, often without the benefit of any type of ceremony.

—Alcoholism is a major problem. There are many instances of fathers deserting their families because of alcoholism.

## Education

—Most of the Kumbaran are unschooled, although some are now sending their children to school to get at least a primary education.

## Current Status

—Many Kumbaran have become "coolie" workers because of the loss of the traditional markets for their products due to the competition in plastic and aluminum goods. Coolie work is seasonal and very unreliable

—The so called "Potter's Wheel Project" provides employment and training, upgrading their products to meet export market standards.

Photo here of the front cover photo in black and white.

## Prayer Needs

—For workers to assist in the "Potter's Wheel" expanding project, managing the factory and training the Kumbaran to be able to handle the responsibility on their own.

—For the Kumbaran to be open to the Gospel as it is lived out by Mission to Unreached Peoples workers and helpers.

*For additional information and prayer needs on the Kumbaran contact: Mission To Unreached Peoples P.O. Box 45880 Seattle, WA 98145-0880*