

# Bishnupriya

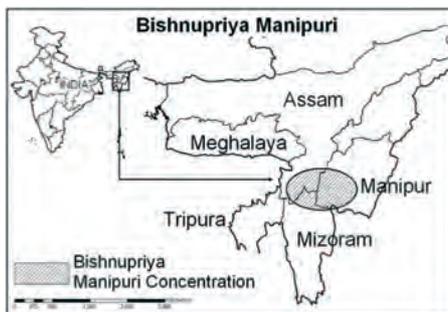


Population: 75,000

Literacy: 80 % in second language

Scripture Status: New Testament translation is in progress.

'Bishnupur' or 'the land of dancing deer', is a beautiful area situated at a distance of 27 km from Imphal, the capital of Manipur. The area is home to the Bishnupriya, otherwise known as the Bishnupriya Manipuris. It lies



Manipur, with its exotic landscape of high mountains, emerald green valleys, blue lakes and dense forests, was fondly called 'the Switzerland of India' by Lord Irwin.

at the foot of a hill which is renowned for the artistic Vishnu temple built during the reign of King Kiyamba in the 15th century. The Bishnupriya are members of the Kshatriyas (the second highest of the four castes of traditional Indian society). They are a fine stalwart race descended from Aryan blood with some admixture of Mongoloid stock.

Bishnupriya speakers are also found in the states of Assam and Tripura in India and in the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh and Myanmar. The main occupation and source of income of the people is agriculture and cottage industries, along with handloom weaving and handicrafts. They are reputed to be a highly conservative race devoted to strict Vedic culture and tradition and they have retained Hinduism without the least deviation to other religions like Islam, Buddhism or Christianity. However, the Bishnupriya lifestyle,

technology and food patterns are changing at a rapid pace due to modern influence. It is interesting to note that Indian customs like Sati, dowry culture or the devdasi system were never practiced in Bishnupriya Manipuri community. After the propagation of Vaishnavism, women enjoy even higher status, displayed through the honour shown to them in religious rites.

There are many primary schools in this region and as a result, the literacy rate is high. The Bishnupriya have also established Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Sabha, Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Singlup, Pouri, Manipuri Theatre and many other organizations to encourage literary activities among the people. There is also a good stock of folk literature among the Bishnupriya, which continues to be handed down through oral tradition, represented by folk stories, folk-songs, folk-poems, rhymes and proverbs. There are also songs which are sung by women as they work in the fields.

Bishnupriyas are very keen to follow their Hindu traditions and customs. One cannot see much evidence of Christian witness among them. Christian converts number just around one hundred. However, God's Word is being translated into Bishnupriya, with some portions of it being ready for use. It is hoped that the written Word of God will easily penetrate this community. Much prayer is needed that the Lord of the harvest would send more labourers to go among them.

Pray for:

1. The few Bishnupriya Christians to be strong in the Lord and to be effective witnesses in their community.
2. The New Testament to be available soon in the Bishnupriya language.
3. The Lord to send more missionaries to work among this closed community.