

## Muslims in Malegaon, India

Malegaon is a city of about a million people located in the hot, north eastern part of Maharashtra, India (140 miles northeast of Mumbai). Known for its textile industry, the city is divided both physically and socially by a river. On the western side of the river reside a large number of Hindus as well as a small number of Christians. On the eastern side is a vast Muslim community (well over half of the city's population). From the top of an old fortress near the fruit and vegetable market, the city's divide becomes clear. The skyline shows the minarets of almost 200 mosques on one side of the river and the cones of Buddhist and Hindu temples on the other side.

In the Muslim district, the narrow streets are lined with shops where men, children, animals and vehicles circulate along with veiled women shopping for daily essentials. Tea shops are filled with men discussing their day over cups of chai (Indian tea). Several large Qur'anic schools educate boys aged of 6-25 in Islamic faith and practice. Mufti Ismail, one of Malegaon's Muslim leaders, is part of the influential council that governs Qur'anic schools throughout the country.

Most local Muslims belong to the "Ansari" people group. Many Ansaris are employed in the city's textile factories – dark, hot warehouses where raw cotton and polyester is processed, spun into thread, dyed and woven into cloth. Traditional Indian clothing is then produced from this cloth, sold and sent nationwide. Though Hindu-Muslim relationships are quite strained throughout India - in this city the communities are interde-



pendent. Hindus from outside Malegaon provide the raw material to Muslim loom owners. Other Hindu businessmen buy the woven cloths produced by these looms. Each community relies on the other for the success of their businesses.

The only known Christian presence in the city consists of a very small, struggling Christian community. May God encourage and transform these believers to truly live out their faith and be a light across the whole city.

### Prayer Requests:

- ▶ *Muslims in Malegaon hold firmly to the traditions, teachings and counsel of their leaders. Even when tactfully presented with the Gospel, in 2008, many Muslims would not even consider the claims of Jesus Christ nor would they read the New Testament (Injil). Pray for the salvation of their community leaders like Mufti Ismail.*
- ▶ *The average Muslim on the street in Malegaon remains in ignorance concerning some of the basic questions of belief in God. May God give them enlightenment.*
- ▶ *Some are seeking for more understanding. One Ansari truck driver was asked what to do about his shame and guilt, knowing he has sinned against God. He paused, bowed his head and then looked up saying in a sincere tone, "I do not know." In 2008 some Muslims did ask for tracts and Bibles. Pray that this openness could be directed toward personal contact with God.*

**Note:** *There are possibly 145 million Muslims in India. God loves them all. India has more Muslims than all the following countries combined: Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and Egypt.*