

## MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

Asia

Republic of Maldives

(*Dhivehi Raajjeyge Jumhooriyyaa*)

### Basic Facts

Name: Republic of Maldives or *Dhivehi Raajjeyge Jumhooriyyaa*

Population: Population: 339,330 (July 2004 est.)

Age Structure: *0-14 years*: 44.4% (male 77,424; female 73,191)

*15-64 years*: 52.6% (male 91,045; female 87,331)

*65 years and over*: 3% (male 5,207; female 5,132) (2004 est.)

Population Growth Rate: 2.86% (2004 est)

Birth Rate: 36.06 births/1,000 population (2004 est.)

Death Rate: 7.44 deaths/1,000 population (2004 est.)

Life Expectancy at Birth: *total population*: 63.68 years

*male*: 62.41 years

*female*: 65.01 years (2004 est.)

Total Fertility rate: 5.14 children born/woman (2004 est.)

(<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mv.html>)

### Land and Climate:

The Maldives are a group of atolls, rings like coral islands, in the Indian Ocean just south west of India. The total land area is 300 sq Km. That is about 1.7 times the size of Washington D.C. The islands are low-lying and have only small tracts of arable land. Vegetation is dominated by coconut palms and breadfruit trees. The climate is tropical and humid. The average annual temperature is 26.7° C (80° F), with little seasonal variation. The average annual precipitation is 1,500 mm (60 in), most of which falls between May and November. The principal natural resource is the marine life of the surrounding seas.

Encarta

### Language:

The official and most used language is *Maldivian Dhivehi*, which is a dialect of *Sinhala*.

Their written script is derived from Arabic. Most government officials speak English.

(<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mv.html>)

### Society:

Fishing is a major source of income. "The number of islands a person leases or the number of boats they own is also crucial to their social standing. The boat owner takes about half the day's catch, while the skipper, *keyolhu*, earns about one fifth. The rest is divided equally among the fishermen. The men who make the boats "*Maavadi meehaa*" are respected craftsmen; on their skill depends the fishermen's lives and thus the well being of the community. The medicine man "*Hakeem*," stands on the same social rung.

Skilled tradesmen like blacksmiths and jewelers also command a great deal of respect. At the bottom of the social heap is the toddy-tapper, "*Raaveria*," who looks after the coconuts and taps sap for toddy and syrup."

(from <http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/people/>)

"The island community and the extended family act as a safety net for its members. Even in the capital, 'no one sleeps in the streets or goes to bed hungry'."

(from <http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/people/>)

As a Muslim society, men hold a higher position than women. Traditionally, men eat before the rest of the family and make all the major decisions, while the women remain at home and look after the family. The divorce rate among the Maldivian is the highest among United Nations countries. In 1974, there were 85 divorces for every 100 marriages. It is not hard to meet someone who has had 10 or more spouses. Families are often loosely structured. The children live with their mothers and get support from their fathers. Marriages are not arranged and have very little ceremony.

(from <http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/people/>) (from <http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=106169&rog3=MV>)

Their villages and houses are based on a closely maintained pattern. The government owns the land. Villages are laid out on a rectangular plan. Each family is granted an area known as a "*goathi*" measuring fifteen meters (49 feet) by thirty meters (98 feet).

Surrounded by small coral walls, within each *goathi* is a garden with several shady trees including mango, breadfruit, coconut, arecanut palm, banana, and papaya.

Most have several chair-like hammocks on wooden frames, or *Joali* fixed in the sand or hanging from a tree, and a swinging wooden bed, or *Udhoali*, an ideal place to relax on a hot, sultry day.

The main house in the centre of the compound has several rooms and is used for sleeping. Food is cooked in a separate, coral shack, *Badhige* with a thatched roof and no windows, and two or three hollows for stoves. Most families also have a deep well for water. The "bathroom" is behind an inner coral closure called a "*Gifili*" where a latrine is dug in the coral sand.

The rectangular houses were originally constructed from *cadjan* (woven palm fronds), but walls are now commonly made from coral fragments held together with lime made from burning coral slowly for a long time. Coral is mined in the adjoining reefs to a depth of a meter (three feet) or so. An even stronger "cement" can be made by mixing the lime with ash, charcoal, and "syrup" made from coconut sap. Although an iron roof is hotter, islanders prefer corrugated iron roofs to thatch because it does not have to be replaced every few years. Inside, the houses are very dark. The small windows are not placed to create a cross breeze. Flat wooden benches serve as beds at night and seats during the day, and there is invariably a swinging bed, *Udhoali* hanging from the rafters. Most families keep their valuables in a wooden trunk under a bed.

During the day, a great deal of time is spent in the shade of the veranda or under spreading breadfruit trees. Swings and hammocks attached to wooden frames are favorite lounging spots for grandparents and children. At night the doors and windows of many

houses are shut tightly to keep out any passing jinni.

<http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/people/>

A common diet for the islanders consists of grains or yams, fish broth, and coconut. Few vegetables are eaten.

(from [http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=106169&rog3=\)MV](http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=106169&rog3=)MV)

### **Government:**

The Republic of Maldives gained their independence from the UK July 26, 1965 and currently adheres to a constitution that was adopted January 1998. The legal system is based on Islamic law with some English common law influence in commercial matters. Political parties are not banned, but none exist. The capital of the Republic of Maldives is located in *Male* (pronounced “mar-lay”) on the atoll of the same name. This atoll is located on the east side in the middle of the atolls lengthwise.

Executive power is vested in a president, who serves a five-year term. Nominations for president are submitted to the *Majlis*, or Citizens' Council, which elects a single candidate. This candidate is then submitted to the people in a referendum in which all adults may vote. To become president, the candidate must win at least a 51-percent majority. The *Majlis*, a unicameral legislative body, consists of 40 members directly elected from the 20 administrative atolls, 2 members elected from Male, and 8 representatives appointed by the president. The president appoints a cabinet that is responsible to the *Majlis*.

Encarta, 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation.

Currently the President of the Maldives is *Maumoon Abdul GAYOOM*. He has been the President since November 11, 1978. The legislative branch, *Majilis*, consists of 50 seats, 42 are elected by popular vote and 8 are appointed by the president. Their High Court serves as the judicial branch.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mv.html>)

### **Economy:**

The Maldives have a GDP of \$1.25 Billion. That is \$3,900 per capita with a real growth rate of 2.3% (2002 est.). 20% of the GDP comes from tourism. Agriculture and manufacturing continue to play a lesser role in the economy, constrained by the limited availability of cultivable land and the shortage of domestic labor. Most staple foods must be imported. Industry, which consists mainly of garment production, boat building, and handicrafts, accounts for about 18% of GDP.” Fishing is a primary industry with the most valuable species being tuna. Corals and shells are also harvested. Their industries are fish processing, tourism, shipping, boat building, coconut processing, garments, woven mats, rope, handicrafts, and coral and sand mining. Their currency is the *rufiyaa* and has had a stable exchange rate. The exchange rate in 2003 was 12.8 and it was 11.77 in 1999. In 2003, their debt was estimated as \$281 million.

(<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mv.html>)  
(<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mv.html>) Encarta

### **Literacy:**

97.2% of the total population is considered literate. That is 97.1% of the males and 97.3% of the females. These literacy rates are from a 2003 est. with literacy being defined as those over 15 years old who can read and write.

(<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mv.html>)

(<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mv.html>)

### **Religion:**

99.41 % of the total population is Muslim, the majority of which are Sunni Muslim. The annual growth rate for Muslim's is 2.8%. With a growth rate of 1.9%, .45% are Buddhist. .10% are Christian with a growth rate of 7.5%. .01% are Hindu with a growth rate of 3.0%. And .03% are non-religious or some other faith. This last group has the highest growth rate at 11.5%.

(Operation World by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryck. Published in 2000)

The Maldivian seem to live in fear, often running at the sight of strangers. They fear the "evil eye" (curses caused by a fixed gaze) and evil spirits. The people also fear *jinnis*, which are—according to Muslim legend—spirits capable of assuming human or animal form and exercising supernatural influence over people. Most houses keep a lamp burning all night and have no windows in order to keep out these *jinnis*.

(<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=106169&rog3=MV>)

The islanders see no clash between their belief in Islam and in *Dhevi* (mysterious supernatural beings). Often they give long recitals from the *Qur'an* or other Arabic texts to ward off the evil eye and keep evil spirits at bay, but they do not rely completely on the power of the holy word. When extraordinary events occur, many islanders turn to the local wise man immersed in "*Fandita*," a special knowledge that is part science and part magic. If the rains fail, the fishing is poor, or a woman is barren, the *Fandita* is consulted. With his potions and charms he calls upon spirits to achieve his end. In an uncertain world where the unknown is feared, a belief in *Fandita* gives Maldivians a sense of control over their destiny.

Christianity is illegal according to the Maldivian Constitution. *Christianity Today* reported in September 1998 that around 19 foreign Christians were expelled and about 50 nationals arrested. Although Christianity is illegal and they face persecution, there are a small number of believers there. Operation World estimates that some 286 Christians live in the country.

(<http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/people/>); *Operation World*

## **HISTORY**

The origins of the Maldivians are lost in history. Archaeological finds indicate that the islands were inhabited as early as 1500 BC. Stories persist of a legendary people called the Redin, who may have been among the earliest of explorers. These early inhabitants may have been Hindu or Buddhist. Many Maldivians believe strongly in the existence of this ancient race of sun-worshipping people. Their beliefs and customs involved evil spirits, or *jinnis*, and these beliefs still influence Maldivian culture.

Some authorities contend that a people, the Dheyvis, preceded the Redin in this country. The Dheyvis came from "Kalbanja" of India, worshipped different types of things like sun, moon, stars, and first lived in Isduva of Isdುವಮ್ಮathi. These people gave the name "duva" to any island. The leader of the Dheyvis was known as Sawamia whom the people thought was an "agent" of God. Nothing is known of the language they used and when they actually came to this country. But it is understood that these people came here before the establishment of the kingdom of "Malik Aashooq" [King Asoka]. The Dheyvis were of olive color ("zaithoon") and medium height.

The third emperor of India's Mauryan dynasty and the first powerful monarch to embrace Buddhism, Asoka was born in about 304 BC and came to the throne in 270 BC after a short power struggle in which at least one of his brothers was killed. In 260 BC his armies attacked *Kalinga* (modern *Orissa*) in an attempt to expand the already huge Mauryan empire. The campaign was militarily successful but it led to horrific losses of both civilian and military lives and, moved by remorse, *Asoka* decided to renounce war forever. He converted to Buddhism and launched a campaign to bring about a moral, spiritual, and social renewal within his empire. The administrative and judicial systems were reformed, useful public works were initiated, the previously aggressive foreign policy was replaced by one of peaceful co-existence and wildlife reserves were established.

Aryans probably came to the Maldives from the Indian subcontinent around 500 BC. The islands are located along ancient marine trade routes and were influenced by sailors who stopped for supplies or because of shipwrecks. Many Arab traders came through and in 1153 they converted to Islam. "According to legend, a sea *jinni* called *Rannamaari* demanded regular sacrifices of young virgin girls in *Malé*. *Abu Al Barakat*, a visiting North African Arab, took the place of a sacrificial virgin, and drove the demon away by reading from the Koran, the Islamic holy book. The Maldivian king at the time was convinced to believe in Islam, and *Barakat* later became the first sultan."

The Maldives continued under the leadership of 84 Sultans and Sultanas until the Portuguese, led by Captain Andreas Andre, invaded and took control. Folktales from the period record that after encouragement and threats from the Portuguese garrison and Christian members of the *Malé* elite, almost the entire population of *Malé* converted to Christianity. Although it was a time of economic prosperity, Maldivian historians consider the Portuguese occupation as a period of servitude and brutality." The Portuguese ruled until 1573, when *Mohammed Thakurufaan*, an island chief, overthrew them.

The Maldives were under the protection of the Dutch and the British in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. However, neither of these established a colonial administration. The Maldives drew up their first constitution in 1932. At this time the position of sultanate became an elected position rather than hereditary. Then in 1953 a republic was proclaimed and the sultanate was done away with. However the republic was short lived and the sultanate was restored less than a year later.

The Maldives became independent in 1965 and then in 1968 the sultanate was abolished and a new republic was formed, led by Ibrahim Nasir. Recent years have been characterized by modernization, rapid economic growth, and improvement in most social indicators. The main contributors to this growth have been the fishing industry, tourism, and foreign aid. President *Maumoon Abdul Gayoom* was elected for a record sixth five-year term in 2003, the same year Amnesty International accused his government of human rights abuses.

*Xavier Romero-Frías* shares his perspective on the Maldivian history saying that when one reads books of Islamic history, a most common assertion declares that in a particular country "before Islam there was *Jahiliya*, the age of ignorance. According to this manner of interpreting facts, history is rewritten in a manner where truth and serious historical inquiry become irrelevant. The only crucial guideline is to make Islam appear victorious and beneficial for the country, tarnishing the non-Islamic past as much as possible. Lacking a balanced view of their own history and being provided only Islamic propaganda, Maldivian people are made to believe that the history of their nation is at its most glorious height during its Islamic period. This "glorious" period includes the present days and in which the Maldivian nation is portrayed as being constantly under the threat of foreign influences that are seen through the narrow prism of Islamic religious obsession. As a consequence, the well being of this island country is attached to its ability to preserve Islam. The men and women of the Maldives are put on guard against any influence that may upset the "triumphant Islamic period the nation is enjoying." This atmosphere and thinking prevent openness of mind. Therefore, the display of hostility against other religions, especially Christianity, is conceived as a patriotic duty in the Maldives.

*Xavier Romero-Frías* names two books (*Voyage de Pyrard aux Indes Orientales*-available in English and *People of the Maldives Islands*) that contain the true history of the Maldives but are forbidden in the country.

The Maldives were among the many regions that suffered during the Tsunami of December 2004. Around 82 deaths were confirmed and estimates stand around 180. Over 120,000 people were displaced.

(from [http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/indian\\_subcontinent/maldives/history.htm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/indian_subcontinent/maldives/history.htm)); [http://www.maldivesroyalfamily.com/maldives\\_romero\\_history.shtml](http://www.maldivesroyalfamily.com/maldives_romero_history.shtml); <http://www.maldivesculture.com/histor05.html>; Encarta; <http://www.mapsofworld.com/country-profile/maldives1.html>

## PEOPLE GROUPS

### ***Arab (410)***

The Arabs are primarily Sunni Muslims and speak standard Arabic. They also speak Judeo-Iraqi. The Bible, Jesus Film, God's Story Video, Christian Radio Broadcasting, and Audio recordings are available in Arabic. They are also known by the names Anglolan Arabs, Baggara, Bedouin Arab, Bosnian Muslims, Coast, Coast Arab, Hemat, Iraqi Arab, Lebanese Arab, Levantine Arab, Nawar, Palestinian Arab, Palestinian Arab, Saudi Arab, Syrian Arab, and Syro-Lebanese Arab. They are considered unreached/least reached. Only 1% of Arabs in the Maldives are evangelical Christians.

Arabs first arrived in the Maldives as early as the second century BC as they were traveling to the Far East. The Arabs "represent the largest, most diverse and most politically influential Muslim ethnic group in the world" (Arabs comprise the majority population in 22 countries). Although, the Arabs are diverse, they all speak Arabic, or some dialect of it, and are proud to be Arab.

For most of the Diaspora Arabs, there have been a greater variety of job opportunities. This has greatly aided their poor living conditions. However, it has also weakened their traditional family ties. There is greater freedom for women to leave the home, fewer arranged marriages, and less social pressure to conform to traditional religious practices. In comparison to the traditional desert or village Arab, the social structure of the Diaspora Arab is very complex. Today, most Diaspora Arabs identify themselves by nationality rather than tribal affiliations."

(<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=100425&rog3=MV>)

### ***British (100)***

The British are primarily Christian and speak English. The Bible, Jesus Film, God's Story Video, Christian Radio Broadcasting, and Audio recordings are available in English. Although, 79.45% are adherents to Christianity, only 12.5% are Evangelicals. They are also known by the names Anglo-Pakistani, Anglophones, Euronesian, Scot, Scottish, and White. The British influence in the Maldives began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Maldives were a protectorate of the British. During this time, the British were allowed to establish defense facilities there.

### ***Gujarati (570)***

The Gujarati are primarily Hindu and speak Gujarati. The Bible, Jesus Film, Christian Radio Broadcasting, and Audio recordings are available in Gujarati. In addition to Gujarati, they also speak Gujarati: Tarimuki. They are also known by the names Bajania Gujarani, Indo-Pakistani, Karana, Parsi, Shahinshahi, Zarabe, Zardasht, and Zarushti. They are considered unreached/least reached.

The Gujarat are the original inhabitants of the Gujrat state in India. However, "today there are significant Gujarati communities in some 27 nations." The Gujarati are known for being resourceful businessmen and most Gujarati are involved in trade or small business and have managed to maintain their own culture and customs.

Most marriages in Gujarati societies are arranged. For the Hindu Gujarati, caste and social rank are very important considerations. The Muslim Gujarati are only allowed to marry those from selected groups. They also practice *purdah*, which means that the women are required to wear veils and remain isolated. Marriage is considered to be an alliance between two families, not just two individuals.

The folklore of the Hindu Gujarati reflects the mythology surrounding the Hindu deity, Krishna. Dances in honor of Krishna have survived in the form of the popular folk dance known as garaba. (<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103544&rog3=MV>)

### ***Malay (210)***

The Malay are primarily Muslim and speak Malay. They also speak West Borneo Coast Malay. The Bible, Jesus Film, Christian Radio Broadcasting, and Audio recordings are available in Malay. They are also known by the names Javar; Malao-Polynesian; Malay, Salon; Melaju; and Melayu. They are considered unreached/least reached.

Most Malay live in Malaysia. They dominated local trade in Southeast Asia as well as long distance trade to India and China. As a result of their domination of the sea trade there are many Malay communities throughout the area.

Batik is a Malay traditional art and it is still popular. Also, "courtesy is a very important aspect of Malay society. Most of their groups are loosely structured, their commitments are not strong, and loyalty to a group is not as important as being courteous." The "pure Malay" is considered to be kind towards women, children and animals; introspective; polite; slow to speak; passive; and indolent. Yet, when angered, a Malay may lose all self-control and get into a frenzy. Of course, there are many variations of what a "true Malay" is, depending on the countries in which they now live. Malayan identity is based on speaking Malay and adhering to the Islamic faith. The Islamic faith that many adhere to is influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism, and ethnic religions.

(<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>)

### ***Malayali (540)***

The Malayali are primarily Muslim and speak Malayalam. The Bible, Jesus Film, God's Story Video, Christian Radio Broadcasting, and Audio recordings are available in Malayalam. They are also known by the names Cochin Jew and Moplah.

### ***Maldivian, Malki (323,500)***

The Maldivian, Malki are primarily Muslim and speak Maldivian. The New Testament, Christian Radio Broadcasting, and Audio recordings are available in Maldivian. They are also known by the names *Dhivehi*, *Mahi*, *Maldivian*, and *Malki*. They are considered unreached/least reached.

They are a small, kindred society unified by common history, the Dhivehi language, and the Islamic faith. Islam has given strength to the society and the faith is taken very seriously. The ties and obligations felt by individuals to their community, to their President, to a whole nation, reflect the tradition of strong family ties. Intelligent, as well as devout, the people of The Maldives are tolerant and respectful of each other and of visitors to the country.



Hardworking, but unhurried, playful and respectful, Maldivians have been able to blend tradition and modernity. All Maldivians have open access to education. All have the opportunity to play significant roles in the economic life of the nation. Great respect is felt for the head of the national 'family' as well as for the head of each household. The family unit is strong.

A population of little over 300,000 people is spread over the islands with over a quarter of them living in Male', the capital. To foreigners the village people on some islands may seem shy. Curious of outsiders, they prefer to observe newcomers from a distance at first. One soon learns of their hospitality when the island chief provides a cold coconut drink and a healthy snack, usually made of seafood.

Athletic, the Maldivians are either soccer players or soccer fans, natural swimmers and divers, aggressive players in tennis, cricket, or badminton, the young people are encouraged to develop physically as well as intellectually and morally. Friendliness and honesty are taken for granted in The Maldives where old customs and Muslim traditions are respected.

The government is dedicated to improving the life of the people on the islands. Young people are encouraged to strive for higher education. Under government sponsorship young students are given grants to study abroad and they return to The Maldives to give service to the country.

Brilliant young women hold key positions in the government, working tirelessly to serve their country and people. Fishermen unload their silvery haul. Women attired in traditional dress sweep the grounds of a school readying it for a special Independence Day celebration. Five times a day finds a nation expressing religious devotion in prayer at one of the many mosques. Festivals give way to fun-loving, talented men and women singing and dancing.

### ***Sinhalese (2,170)***

The Sinhalese are primarily Theravada Buddhists and speak Sinhala. The Bible, Jesus Film, Christian Radio Broadcasting, and Audio recordings are available in Sinhalese. They are also known by the names Cingalese, Singalese, Singhalese, and Sinhala. The majority of the Sinhalese live in Sri Lanka where they are the majority people group. There are also many Sinhalese living in Libya, Malaysia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, and the United States.

### ***Tamil (410)***

The Tamil are primarily Hindu and speak Tamil. The Bible, Jesus Film, God's Story Video, Christian Radio Broadcasting, and Audio recordings are available in Tamil. They are also known by the names Ceylon; Ceylon Tamil; East Indian; Indian; Indian Tamil; Labbai; Madrasi; Maure, Ceylon; Sri Lankan; and Tamalsan. "The Tamil people are a South Asian community numbering more than seventy million and living mostly in Tamil Nadu state and neighbouring areas in south-eastern India (65 million), in the north and

east of Sri Lanka (three million), in Malaysia (two million), Singapore (approx 200,000) and Canada (approx 200,000, most in Toronto). There are also pockets of Tamil communities living in Madagascar, Seychelles Islands, Australia, South Africa, Mauritius, Trinidad and many European countries.”

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_people)

<http://www.tamilnation.org/culture/>.

## **MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

1. Evangelical Christians should pray for and seek ways to relieve the suffering of the peoples of the Maldives as they face consequences of global warming. The coral on which the lands rest are dying due to higher water temperatures. Further, rising ocean waters threaten the Islands very existence.
2. Evangelical Christians should accept the responsibility of sharing the Message with these least evangelized people in the world.
3. Evangelical Christians should develop contextualized strategies to witness to these peoples. Points of contact could be developed out of some of the myths and stories told in the country (see appendix).
4. Evangelical Christians should support efforts to provide Scriptures in the Dhivehi Language. The project is underway but incomplete.
5. Evangelical Christians should seek to win Maldivians who are living outside the country and could be avenues or bridges back into the Maldivian culture.
6. Evangelical Christians should pray that God will intervene in supernatural ways to bring Maldivian peoples to faith in Christ. Pray that God will speak to the Muslims through dreams and visions.
7. Evangelical Christians should pray for an opening into the Lakshadweep Islands (Minicoy) that are populated primarily by people from Maldives.
8. Evangelical Christians should pray for the small community of Christians in the Maldives. Ask the Lord to give them boldness and courage in spite of the persecution.
9. Evangelicals should pray for and support the Far East Broadcasting Association that is broadcasting radio programs in Dhivehi from Seychelles. Pray that they would be able to continue and that people would listen and understand what they hear. In early June the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs called on all Maldivians not to listen to the Christian programs broadcast in Dhivehi language. This appeal was not heeded, and in fact probably caused a substantial increase in listeners!”

<http://www.leaderu.com/common/maldives.html>

### **Cultural Appendix:**

In one of their folk tales, Three Palms Mohamed, the king desires to cut off the foot of a tax collector because he treated the king badly when they were children. However, upon seeing what was happening, one of the tax collector’s servants rushed to place his foot on the chopping block in place of his masters. They decided that this was a suitable

substitute. The servant's leg was not cut off because the daughter of the king asked him to have mercy on the servant because he had performed magic to heal her from a stomach ache. Below is the complete story from

[http://www.maldivesculture.com/fanditha/maldives\\_three\\_palms\\_mohamed.htm](http://www.maldivesculture.com/fanditha/maldives_three_palms_mohamed.htm).

According to Buraara, six hundred years ago in *Malé*, two young boys from Chittagong were aboard a ship anchored in the harbor after a voyage across the Bay of Bengal. Salih and Nasurath were allowed ashore for a short visit, and they hid among the 'garden-quinine' plants in the Lonu Ziyaaraiy Kolhu area until their ship left. Next day they met a childless middle-aged man named Dhon Hassan who lived near a bushy part of Malé known as Valu Maizaan. Dhon Hassan had the two boys circumcised in preparation for their education as Muslims but he died suddenly, and when his house and land reverted to government property, the boys found themselves homeless again.

By chance, they came upon the Huvadhu atoll tax-collector as he unloaded his cargo under a tree at the north beach. He offered them a roll of *bon'di*, a coconut sweet, in return for guarding the cargo against the crows, but when time came for payment, the man became reluctant and abusive before finally kicking a single *bon'di* from a bundle towards the hungry boys. They rushed towards the food, and his foot hit one of them. The boys were appalled by this treatment and wanted to leave Malé. "These days we have to submit to being kicked, or spat on, or hit with something," they said as they chewed the *bon'di*. "Let us hope a time comes when, God willing, we won't experience such things."

Their wish was granted when Salih and Nasurath were adopted by the Malé treasurer. They learnt to perform his official duties so competently they became indispensable to government. Salih passed away, leaving Nasurath to become the queen's new treasurer after the death of his guardian.

Treasurer Nasurath was crowned King Nasuraddheen when the old queen died. Chosen for his outstanding intellect and wisdom, the new king also proved to be a cruel and vengeful man who amputated men's hands for theft, and he had never forgotten that insulting kick from the Huvadhu tax collector...

The king sent a letter to that tax collector and when he opened the letter this is what he read: "Hey tax collector, when you travel across Huvadhu channel heading for Malé, collect all the live cowrie shells you can find without leaving the ship, or I'll have your foot chopped off."

The tax collector was most unhappy about the letter, and his sadness spread through the atoll. His household had about 144 toddy men and among them was a man called Three Palms Mohamed. Why did he have such a name? Because each of the other toddy men could tend nearly 144 palms every day, and all he could manage was three! The whole atoll knew this!

One day the toddy man walked into the kitchen, hung up his implements and demanded food. “Three Palms Mohamed, you only have your hunger to think about,” someone said. “The noble tax collector has received a letter from the king in Malé. It has made him very unhappy, and his misery has spread throughout the atoll.” “What was in the letter?” asked Mohamed, wondering what had made his master so distressed. “It said he must collect live cowrie shells straight from the sea as his *odi* sails to Malé, or his foot will be cut off!” “I can help with that problem,” announced Three Palms, “if I get to marry Dhon Kamana, the collector's daughter.”

He ate his food and left, and the people in the kitchen gossiped about what had been said and the story spread from mouth to ear until it reached the tax collector. He sent for the toddy man and told him he was aware of his comments and wanted to know if he really knew how to satisfy the king's command. “Yes sir,” Mohamed assured him, “if I am permitted to marry your daughter, Dhon Kamana, then I can make it happen.” Without hesitating, the tax collector gave permission for the marriage.

“Get the *odi* ready, sir, and set up a reciting hut at the beach and pick the flowers. Let me know when everything is ready.” When it was all done, Mohamed went to the new hut and offered flowers to the ocean as he made his recitations. Then he found the tax collector and woke him up. “Tomorrow morning, sir, during the first hour of sunrise, leave for Malé in the *odi*.” Mohamed went off, and the tax collector sent for the crewmen and they all recited travel prayers before sailing away just after daybreak.

From the moment they entered Huvadhu channel, cowrie shells began crawling up the hull and into the boat. There were so many, the crew had to bail them out like water to stop the vessel from sinking, and the cowrie didn't stop climbing in until they entered Vaadhoo channel just south of Malé.

The tax collector had fulfilled every demand in the royal letter so King Nasuraddheen couldn't punish him. The monarch formally accepted the island produce and cowries, and gave permission for the tax collector to leave in his *odi*. After finishing his trading, he sailed back home.

Two years later, King Nasuraddheen decided to do the same thing again and sent the tax collector another royal letter which made him even unhappier than before. “Oh my dear people, last time the letter demanded something that could actually be found around here. Now the king wants coco-de-mer, not cowries, or my foot will be amputated! Where do these things grow? This is a serious problem.” The people in his house dropped their heads onto their chests in sadness, and distress spread throughout the atoll.

Mohamed entered the kitchen with the toddy from three palms, hung up his implements, and demanded food. Then he noticed everyone had their heads down and tears were falling as they cried out: “All you ever know is your own hunger!” “What's happened?” “Another letter has come from Malé, and the tax collector is really worried. At least cowries were available on the reefs. The letter is demanding that coco-de-mer be taken aboard between Huvadhu and Vaadhoo channels, or his foot will be chopped off.”

“That's nothing,” said Mohamed, just like he did the first time. “Serve the food. With God's help, and provided this time I really do marry the man's daughter, I can sort this out.”

Again, the collector heard of Mohamed's words and summoned him. “This new letter is causing me a lot more worry than the last one. What can we do about it?” “Marry me to your daughter, and I'll take care of it,” Mohamed said. “I'll marry her to you, just fix the problem.” “This time I won't be doing it for something cheap like a grouper fish,” Mohamed warned.

On the next auspicious night, the tax collector allowed his daughter Dhon Kamana to marry Three Palms Mohamed. Mohamed stopped tending his palms and spent all his time sitting and looking at his new wife. Eventually he was summoned because he was ignoring his master's problem with the letter. As before, Mohamed ordered the preparation of an *odi* for the journey to Malé, the building of a reciting hut at the beach, and the picking of flowers. When the collector had organized all these things, Mohamed recited for three nights and then offered flowers to the ocean. He told the tax collector to leave for Malé next morning during the second hour after sunrise. The collector took Mohamed's advice and after reciting travel prayers together, he and his crew left for Malé.

They entered Huvadhu channel and a thick flotsam of husks surrounded their *odi* and seemed to stay with them as they sailed. The husks knocked against the hull, and an old man asked for one of the nuts to be brought aboard. “Young men, this is what's known as a coco-de-mer,” he said. They brought aboard all the floating husks they could find until they entered Vaadhoo channel and the flotsam disappeared completely.

The collector moored at Malé harbor, delivered the tax produce to the Treasury and then did his trading. He had fulfilled all the instructions in the royal letter, so he was given permission to leave Malé. He returned to his island and stayed there.

Three years later, King Nasuraddheen once again wrote to the Huvadhu tax collector. This time the letter didn't go into details; it ordered him to Malé without conditions. The king had made up his mind, “*I'm going to chop off the foot of the man who kicked my brother and me that day.*”

From the time he married Dhon Kamana, Three Palms Mohamed was completely enchanted and spent all his time looking at her. For her part, Dhon Kamana never even spoke to him.

The collector wanted to talk to Mohamed about the latest royal letter, so he summoned him. “My son, I have received this royal command to go to Malé.” “In that case, I shall accompany you there,” said Mohamed. “Then we should prepare for the trip,” the father-in-law suggested.

Mohamed ordered the *odi* set for launching on a particular day, and when it was ready and the day had arrived, the collector asked Mohamed to name the best hour for their departure. Mohamed told him to gather the crewmen and start the travel prayer, while Mohamed himself hurried back to his wife and massaged her back and told her to think kindly of him while he was away in Malé with her father.

When the prayers were over, the collector told his men to fetch Mohamed. The son-in-law said he wouldn't be much longer and returned again to his house and massaged his wife's back and asked if she would be missing him while he was gone. Dhon Kamana didn't say a word, and Mohamed kept repeating himself, making no attempt to leave. Someone was sent from the beach to fetch him, and when Mohamed finally arrived at the water's edge, the collector took his son-in-law's hand and led him aboard the *bokkura* and out onto the *odi* as it left for Malé.

When they anchored the vessel at Guraabu Thun'di in Malé, Mohamed climbed onto dry land and drove a mooring spike into the earth. As he did this, the daughter of King Nasuraddeen began to scream as if someone was driving a stake into her stomach. There was nothing she could do to relieve the pain. Medicine and *fanditha* men came to treat her but they couldn't help, and even sorcerers from the south were found to be powerless. The king asked if there was anyone else who might be able to help, and some people mentioned the Huvadhu tax *odi* had arrived late that afternoon. "Maybe there is a sorcerer on board," they said.

Under orders from the king, people went to the waterfront and called out to the *odi*, asking if there was a sorcerer aboard. "Yes, a sorcerer sailed with us," came the reply. "He got off to moor the boat and we haven't seen him since. He must be somewhere on the island."

The people were ordered to find this man and they searched everywhere until they discovered him sleeping on the large bench-bed in a house at the beach near Lonu Ziyaaraiy Kolhu. They woke Mohamed up and took him to the palace. "Respected sorcerer, please help me with this problem," pleaded the king as he explained how his daughter was suffering from severe stomach pains and unable to sit or stand despite the efforts of numerous *fanditha* and medicine men. Mohamed agreed to help and went straight down to the beach and called out to the *odi* and the tax collector, telling him to land.

They went to the mooring spike where Mohamed gave him three betel leaves. "I'm going to do a *fanditha* for the princess. Wait until I get to the palace and then give me time to make the spell before you put one of the leaves into your mouth. Wait until you can taste the *kulhi kulhi miununeemaa*. Lift the mooring spike out a little and hold it there. Wait until I have finished the next *fanditha* and put the second leaf into your mouth. When you taste the *kulhi kulhi miununeemaa* again, pull the spike out a little more and hold it there. Wait until you've chewed the last leaf, then take the spike out completely and drive it in somewhere else. Afterwards get back on board and stay there."

Mohamed headed back to the palace and the princess, and began the *fanditha*. In the time it takes for a betel leaf to be *kulhi miya*, the king's daughter was able to sit up and lie down again. The king ordered that another *fanditha* be performed, and Mohamed humbly agreed. Once again, only a short period of time passed, enough for a betel leaf *kulhi miyey hayey*, and the daughter was able to sit up and lie down, but her stomach-ache was still there. "There's so many blessings because of what you have done. Please, do another *fanditha*," exhorted the king. Mohamed obeyed and in a few moments, similar to *bileiy gadehge kulhi miyey haa iru*, the princess jumped up and said her pain was gone.

Meanwhile, after the three leaves were *kulhi miyunumun*, the collector pulled the mooring post out completely and set it in a new position. Then he returned to the *odi*. Three Palms Mohamed left the palace and went back to the friend's place and fell asleep again.

Next day at sunrise, a designated official informed the king the tax *odi* had arrived. The following Friday, the king returned to the palace after performing the *as-ru* prayer. He summoned the nobles and the person holding the *ogaru* sword and told them he wanted a chair placed in front of the Hand Chopping mosque. He then ordered a chopping block set up, and as the servants followed the orders they asked each other who the thief was. At that time, anyone caught stealing had a hand chopped off in front of that mosque. "Who is it?" This question went from mouth to ear as it spread around the island. People gathered to find out the answer.

Sleeping in the house at Lonu Ziyaaraiy Kolhu, Three Palms Mohamed heard the commotion and got up to see what was happening. When everything was ready, the king arrived at the mosque and sat in the chair, demanding the presence of the tax collector. Three Palms Mohamed headed towards the crowd just as the escort brought his father-in-law before the king. The area was jammed with people and Mohamed squeezed through them like a fish wriggling through a net. As he reached the centre of the mob, the guard arrived on the other side with the collector. From her viewing pavilion, the princess was also watching the spectacle.

King Nasuraddheen gave the order to seize the tax collector and hold his foot in position. Seeing what was happening, Mohamed rushed towards them, pushing his master's leg away from the block and placing his own foot there. He called himself a slave, and told them to cut off his leg instead. The king's daughter saw everything, she told the head minister to inform her father that amputating Mohamed's foot would be like cutting off her own. The minister ran straight over to the king, and Mohamed's foot was saved. The temporary presence of the collector's foot on the block was accepted as fulfillment of the king's order, and he was given permission to return to his island and allowed to keep his position. After leaving the tax goods at the treasury building and doing some private trading, the collector and his son-in-law sailed for home.

## RESOURCES

<http://www.ethnicarvest.org/bibles/> - has a list of Bibles and scripture resources with links. Arabic, Gujarati, Malay, Sinhala, and Tamil are languages in the Maldives that are available.

[http://www.jesustore.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Product\\_Code=JFP0014&Category\\_Code=008](http://www.jesustore.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Product_Code=JFP0014&Category_Code=008) – you can order copies of the Jesus Film in Arabic, Malay, and Tamil

<http://globalrecordings.net/> - you can search to find recordings in the desired language  
Resources for Arabic

<http://www.scriptureresources.com/finaisearch.asp?txteth=ABV> has a list of Scripture resources available

<http://newlins.net/wbr/jplang.php?ethcode=ABV> has a list of radio broadcasts available in Arabic

[http://globalrecordings.net/show\\_langcode.php?lang=ABV](http://globalrecordings.net/show_langcode.php?lang=ABV) has Global Recordings Network resources

Resources for Gujarati

<http://www.scriptureresources.com/finaisearch.asp?txteth=GJR> has a list of Scripture resources available

<http://newlins.net/wbr/jplang.php?ethcode=GJR> has a list of radio broadcasts available in Gujarati

Resources for Malay

<http://www.scriptureresources.com/finaisearch.asp?txteth=MLI> has a list of Scripture resources available in Malay

<http://www.scriptureresources.com/finaisearch.asp?txteth=MLI> has a list of radio broadcasts available in Malay

Resources for Maldivian (Dhivehi)

<http://www.scriptureresources.com/finaisearch.asp?txteth=SNM> has a list of Scripture resources available in Maldivian

<http://newlins.net/wbr/jplang.php?ethcode=SNM> has a list of Radio Broadcasts available in Maldivian

[http://globalrecordings.net/show\\_language.php?langno=4696](http://globalrecordings.net/show_language.php?langno=4696) has a list of recordings available from Gospel Recordings Network in Dhivehi

Resources for Sinhala

<http://www.scriptureresources.com/finaisearch.asp?txteth=SNH> has a list of Scripture resources available in Sinhala

<http://newlins.net/wbr/jplang.php?ethcode=SNH> has a list of Scripture resources available in Sinhala

Resources for Tamil

<http://www.scriptureresources.com/finaisearch.asp?txteth=TCV> has a list of Scripture resources available in Tamil

<http://newlins.net/wbr/jplang.php?ethcode=TCV> has a list of radio broadcasts available in Tamil