

The Chepang of Nepal

The Chepang people live at the outer foothills of the Himalayas. . In the past most of the Chepang lived at an altitude of between 800 and 1,500 meters in very rugged and partially forested hills. In recent years some have migrated to lower areas and even more recently to cities such as Kathmandu.

The language is known as ‘Chepang’ to other Nepalis but is called approximately *Chyobang* by the people themselves.

There are two main dialects of the language; the major dialect is spoken in the areas noted above, while there is a western dialect spoken by a small number of people in the western part of the region. This western dialect is essentially identical to a language spoken across the Narayani River, in the Tanahu district. Those living in the Tanahun district have been given the name Bhujel, and do not regard themselves as Chepang

Over the past few generations the Chepang have changed from a semi-nomadic to a settled way of life, with the result that, for food supplies, they now rely more on the produce of permanent fields than on the forest. Some slash-and-burn agriculture is still practiced however, and the forest is still an important supplementary source of food, especially wild yams, during the lean period before the new year’s crops.

Fifty years ago very few Chepang had attended a school, now a major portion of younger people have had some school education.

Originally the Chepang practiced a religion based on shamanism, which focused particularly on the healing of sickness. Now many are Christians, possibly a majority of them.

Image
 Unavailable

Primary Religion:

Animism

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

3%

Churches:

30

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

New Testament

Population (date):

28,000 (2000)



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Item Name	Item Note	Profile Summary
Have They Heard The Gospel?		
Call Themselves Christian (%)	6%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	3%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	90%	
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	80%	
Comment (Pastors)	unknown	
Response To The Gospel	When the translators were first working among the Chepang people a man's daughter became very ill and was taken to the hospital where a nurse told the man that if he prayed to Jesus his daughter could be healed. So the man prayed and his daughter was healed. A few days later that man became a Christian. Not long after that the translators were forced to leave the country. They were concerned for this new Christian and they asked many people to pray for him. Several months later they received a letter from some other missionaries who had met the man. They reported that there were now 70 Christians among the Chepang. The first Christian had been sharing his faith with others and many had believed.	
Number Of Communities	unknown	
Number Of Churches	30	
Comment (Churches)	couple dozen churches in one area	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Yes. The Chepang have the New Testament written in their language. They also have a few portions of the gospels on cassette.	
Translation Medium	Printed	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Literacy Rate: 4 % The Chepang have a low view of their mother tongue. They see Nepali as a superior language, the language of the gods. There is more motivation among the people to learn Nepali than to learn to read and write in Chepang.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Recordings: A few portions of the Gospel on tape as well as some hymns Literature: None Films/videos: None Radio: None	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	There are basically two types of Chepang groups. A small minority of the villages are evangelized and have spiritual life. These are coming out of the dependency and complacency that has characterized the group. They are hopeful for progress and are starting to understand what that looks like. The other group is much larger, has not been evangelized, and remains in that typical dependent and complacent state. The recommended approaches are now focusing on that group which is reached. First, as they grow in the Lord there will be indigenous evangelism to those Chepang which are not reached. This would be the ideal way to reach those unevangelized Chepang. Whatever can be done to facilitate the maturity of those reached Chepang will be the recommended approach. Specifically, that help may come in the form of culturally sensitive community development encouragement. This is to say that the Chepang need a Christian community development program to be informed by anthropological research. Much of the help that has been given them was not culturally relevant since they were not able to reproduce it. This was usually because it was expensive and foreign to their ways of thinking. With their lack of involvement, it became natural for them to expect help in the form of aide that was alien to them and therefore only a handout instead of something that was a part of them. All future help needs to come in a form which inspires community involvement and ownership. With this said, future help may take the form of expertise and advice on technical matters such as education about better crop maintenance and selection, basic health and hygiene maintenance, and access/application for grants which are available to them. Already help like this is being given in the form of literature and literacy. For example, the primers are being designed alongside them, but the motivation is theirs. Also, the production and distribution of the primers will be left for them to accomplish.	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Nepal	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	Isolated group in the Lothar Khola region, east and west of Kandrang Garhi. They also inhabit the valleys washed by the Male Khila River, in the mid-region of the Mahabharat Mountains.	

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Item Name	Item Note
Country	Nepal
Ecosystem Type	Tropical Forest
Ecosystem Type	Semi-tropical
Geological Type	Mountain, Slope
Elevation	4,000-6,500ft
Longitude	27N
Latitude	85E
Climate	Cool and pleasant summers, chilly winters.

Language & Linguistics

Group Description

Primary Language	CHEPANG
Comment (Alternate Names)	An alternate name is Tspang.
Dialects	EASTERN CHEPANG
Dialects	WESTERN CHEPANG
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Somewhat resistant
Percent Monolingual (%)	5%
Second Languages	Nepali, 95% know some amount of Nepali.
Linguistically Related Languages	GHARTI
Comments (Related Languages)	98% lexical similarity to Bujhel (listed in Ethnologue as Bujhayel as an alternate name of Gharti), and similar morphologically to Kiranti languages.

Literacy

Group Description

Adult Literacy Percentage	40% of men and 15% of women are literate in Nepali. Only 1-5% are literate in Chepang.
Literacy Attitude	Somewhat resistant
Active Literacy Program	Yes, SIL is in the process of implementing a literacy project.
Publications In Vernacular	There are 17-18 small books for learning reading skills (primers). These include stories in their culture.
Comment (Literacy)	Overall, they are somewhat resistant to literacy in their own language, because they would rather learn Nepali.

Economics

Group Description

Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists
Subsistence Type	Hunter-gatherers
Subsistence Type	Fishers
Average Annual Income	unknown
Occupation	They used to be entirely hunter-gatherers, but they were forced to move to a mountainous region and become agriculturalists because of deforestation.
Income Sources	Selling crops

Community Development

Group Description

Health Care (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Health Care)	Local governments health posts are inadequate
Diet (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Diet)	They eat corn mush, vegetables, and rarely meat and rice
Water (Quality)	Fair
Comment (Water)	Rainwater, springs, and rivers. Water projects piping water from the spring are in disrepair.
Shelter Description	simple wood homes with thatch roofs
Electricity	None

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Item Name

Item Note

Comment (Energy)	They use wood and it is possible in the future that deforestation will deplete their supply.
Clothing	loin cloths and vest-like clothes called bhotos for men, and saris and cholos for women
Transportation	Transportation: 12 mile hike out to a dirt road where there is 10 hour bus ride into the capital city
Infant Mortality Rate	12 mile hike to dirt road where they can take a 10 hour bus ride to the capital city.
	50%

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures	Patrilineal, extended family units.
Identification With National Culture	Distinct
Comment (Identification with National Culture)	identified as poor both financially and socially, low-class
Self Image	Depressed
Recreations	Group drinking
Local Language Broadcasting	None
Attitude To Outsiders	Very receptive
Comment (Attitude To Outsiders)	They view the Nepali culture as prestigious
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Reached Status	Engaged
Comment (Reached Status)	Some villages are reached (one pocket of villages),
Reached Classification	Unevangelized
Bible Schools	none
Christian Clinics/Hospitals	none
Christian Literacy Centers	One is in progress
Comment (Church Growth)	Two Nepali denominations have orphanages.

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Attitude To Christianity	Somewhat receptive
Attitude To Religious Change	Somewhat receptive
Resistance / Receptivity	Receptive
Spiritual Climate And Openness	There are basically two types of Chepang groups. A small minority of the villages are evangelized and have spiritual life. These are coming out of the dependency and complacency that has characterized the group. They are hopeful for progress and are starting to understand what that looks like. The other group is much larger, has not been evangelized, and remains in that typical dependent and complacent state.
Current Needs	The recommended approaches are now focusing on that group that is reached. First, as they grow in the Lord there will be indigenous evangelism to those Chepang which are not reached. This would be the ideal way to reach those unevangelized Chepang. Whatever can be done to facilitate the maturity of those reached Chepang will be the recommended approach. Specifically, that help may come in the form of culturally sensitive community development encouragement. This is to say that the Chepang need a Christian community development program that is informed by anthropological research. Much of the help that has been given them was not culturally relevant since they were not able to reproduce it. This was usually because it was expensive and foreign to their ways of thinking. With their lack of involvement, it became natural for them to expect help in the form of aide that was alien to them and therefore only a handout instead of something that was a part of them. All future help needs to come in a form which inspires community involvement and ownership. With this said, future help may take the form of expertise and advice on technical matters such as education about better crop maintenance and selection, basic health and hygiene maintenance, and access/application for grants which are available to them. Already help like this is being given in the form of literature and literacy. For example, the primers are being designed alongside them, but the motivation is theirs. Also, the production and distribution of the primers will be left for them to accomplish.

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Item Name

Items For Prayer

Item Note

Please pray for the Chepang Christians to grow in their walk with the Lord and to become the salt and light in their community that Jesus described. Pray that their sense of dependency will be replaced with dignity and motivation to take care of themselves.

Also pray for the unreached Chepang. Pray that God would use His Chepang people to draw the larger group of unevangelized to Himself.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Year Began

1968

By Whom

Wycliffe Bible Translators

Significant Events

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Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

Scripture

Available Scripture

New Testament

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed

Scripture Published When

1993 (translation had been started in 1968-1976, then had to leave and then finished in 1993)

Scripture Use

Hardly at all

Comment (Scripture Use)

Not widely used Scripture

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

no

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

yes, a few portions of the gospels

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

no

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

no

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Youth with a Mission

Organization Name

> UNLISTED Organization

UNLISTED Organization Name

OM (Overseas Missions)

Comment (Organization)

It is possible that OM is no longer in the area because of difficult traveling.

Comment (Main Ministry)

Trekking, handing out literature