

Monpa, Chugpa

The Chugpa Monpa tribe live in just one location, Chug village, in north-east India. Chug village is within the Dirang District in the fascinating state of Arunachal Pradesh, home to dozens of relatively untouched tribes and colourful people groups. The Chugpa Monpa's homeland 'experiences severe cold weather during the winter months. During the monsoon the area receives heavy rainfall. Their houses can be marked from a long distance by prayer flags.'¹ The Chugpa Monpa were not counted separately in the 1981 Indian census, but in the 1971 census they numbered 483 people. Based on the 1991 census, they are now believed to number more than 800.

The oral traditions of the Chugpa say they migrated to their present location from the west and settled in the Sangti area of the Dirang Subdivision for a considerable period before moving on to their present location in a beautiful valley. Because of their different origins, the Chugpa Monpa language is quite distinct from other Monpa varieties spoken in the area, although they have learned to speak a Monpa lingua franca and Hindi in order to



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communicate with their neighbours. Despite their linguistic and cultural differences, the various Monpa groups share a certain uniformity in their appearance. Men and women wear maroon or black gowns and jackets, while Monpa men are fond of wearing their distinctive caps made of yak hair, which is both warm and waterproof. Arunachal Pradesh is renowned for its incredibly wet weather—some meteorologists have labelled it the wettest place on earth. During the monsoon, it is common for an inch of rain to fall in Arunachal in an hour. Many different varieties of fruit and vegetables grow in this moist environment.

The diet of the Chugpa Monpa includes 'beef, pork, mutton, chicken and venison. The flesh of monkey is considered a taboo. . . . They drink *bangchen* (local beer) prepared out of rice or maize. . . . They also drink *ara* (distilled liquor). The Chug Monpas are fond of apples, oranges and plums.'²

Remarkably for a tiny people group who only inhabit one village, the Chugpa Monpa community has five social divisions, or clans: the Gumpa, Khumupa, Khumuthongkor, Ngarmupa and Changmuchipa. In times past there were strict restrictions against

individuals from the same clan marrying each other, but in recent times the village has relaxed these taboos due to their small numbers and their desire for survival. There have been some cases of intermarriage with people from the Sherdukpen, Dirang Monpa and Lish Monpa groups.

One hundred per cent of Chugpa Monpa profess Buddhism

as their religion. They send their sons to Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in north India and maintain links with numerous other Buddhist tribes and people groups, including contacts inside Tibet. Lamas preside over birth, marriage and funeral rites. After a person dies, the lama decides whether the deceased should be buried, cremated, 'or if the body should be cut into 108 pieces and thrown into the river'.³

Although the people groups living on the southern plains of Arunachal Pradesh have witnessed tremendous Christian growth over the past 20 years, the gospel has yet to make an impact on the Chugpa Monpa.



Population:
817 (2000)
950 (2010)
1,110 (2020)
Countries: India
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: none known

Overview of the Chugpa Monpa

Other Names: Monba, Moinba, Monpa, Menba, Chug, Chung Monpa

Population Sources:

817 in India (2001, FMC South Asia)

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Himalayish, Mahakiranti, Kiranti, Eastern

Dialects: 0

Professing Buddhists: 100%

Practising Buddhists: 80%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

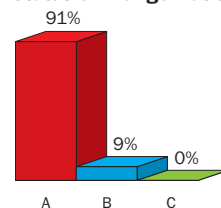
Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: MOB02

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians
C = Are adherents to some form of Christianity