

Monpa, Kalaktang

According to the eminent Indian anthropologist K S Singh, approximately 8,000 Kalaktang Monpa people live in the Kalaktang Circle of the West Kameng area of Tawang District in the north-east Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Kalaktang Monpa have been granted status in India as a Scheduled Tribe, but more research needs to be done to determine their ethnolinguistic relationship to other tribal groups, including the large Tsangla group. Although the Kalaktang Monpa language and culture appear to be quite different from those of most of the other Monpa groups, there are very few differences between the Kalaktang Monpa and the Dirang Monpa (despite the fact that the Indian authorities' investigations led them to grant separate tribal status to each group).

The Kalaktang Monpa are believed to be the original inhabitants of the Kalaktang circle, from which they take their name. In the past the Kalaktang Monpa did not possess a script, so their history was handed down in oral stories. Elderly Kalaktang Monpa men recall that their ancestors migrated to their present location from the Bumthang and Thalong areas in eastern Bhutan. The Kalaktang Monpa have a rich culture. They are 'skilled in dyeing, weaving, paper-making, carpentry, cane and bamboo work. They perform some very popular forms of



a mask dance.¹¹ Another source says, 'they have many pantomime dances which are generally performed during the annual festivals, both in the monasteries and in the villages. The *Ajilamu* and yak dances are very popular.'¹²

All Kalaktang Monpa were traditionally employed in farming or trading, but in recent years the Indian government has implemented various schemes and projects in the Kalaktang Monpa area. Consequently, many people have new occupations like office jobs, teaching and contract work. Medical centres, schools, banks and a postal system are now operating in the Kalaktang area.

All Kalaktang Monpa are thought to believe in Tibetan Buddhism. 'Their sacred place is called *goompha* which is adorned with the images of Lord Buddha and the Bodhisattvas (incarnations of Lord Buddha). The lama is their priest and his services are required to perform the birth, marriage and death rituals. Simultaneously they practise pre-Buddhistic animism or shamanism. The animistic priest, called *phrame*, cures diseases and removes evil spirits. . . . They share a common *goompha* (religious shrine) with the other Buddhist communities. Some of the Kalaktang Monpa send their children to the *goomphas* in the different parts of the country to acquire training in Lamaism. They have also established matrimonial and religious

links with the other Monpas, Sherdukpens, Tibetans, Khambas and Membas.¹³

There are no known Christians among the Kalaktang Monpa tribe. Their communities are extremely tightly sealed, and people generally are not open to outside influence. Much prayer is needed before the gospel will be able to penetrate this precious unreached people group.



Population:
8,450 (2000)
9,850 (2010)
11,500 (2020)
Countries: India
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: none known

Overview of the Kalaktang Monpa

Other Names: Monba, Moinba, Monpa, Menba, Tsangla

Population Sources:
8,000 in India (1995, K S Singh)

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

Dialects: 0
Professing Buddhists: 100%

Practising Buddhists: 90%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

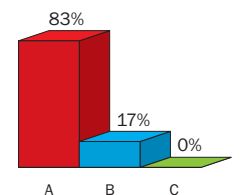
Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: MOB04

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