

Baragaunle

A linguistic source in 1990 estimated a population of '1,600 to 2,200 or more'¹ Baragaunle people living in north-central Nepal. One researcher records that they inhabit 18 villages 'above the Thak Khola River and to the south of Lo Manthang in Mustang District'.² More specifically, there are 650 Baragaunle people in Kagbeni village, 530 to 1,140 in Jharkot, and 400 in Purang village—all places located 'in the Kali Gandaki Valley and on the hillsides north of Jomson up to Kagbeni, and east to Muktinath; on the plains and along the river'³ and within the Mustang District of the Dhawalagiri Zone in Nepal. The name *Baragaun* means 'twelve villages', and for a long time the people from this tribe occupied that many communities. They have now grown to occupy 18 villages, but they are still called Baragaunle.

Oddly, despite the remote location of their area, the Baragaunle people see many foreigners because they are based along the famous Annapurna trek.⁴ Since it opened to foreigners in 1977, it has become the most popular trek in Nepal. Mt Annapurna is one of the highest mountains on earth at 8,090 metres (26,535 ft.). One guidebook notes, 'If you have time, it's worth making the side trip to the mediaeval-looking village of Kagbeni at 2,810 metres [9,217 ft.]. This very Tibetan influenced settlement is as close as you can get to Lo Manthang, the capital of the legendary kingdom of Mustang further to the north, without paying a \$700 permit fee. . . . The trail climbs through a desert landscape then past meadows and streams



to the interesting village of Jharkot at 3,500 metres [11,480 feet].⁵

The classification of the Baragaunle is problematic, even though they have been acknowledged by the government as one of the 61 tribes in Nepal (under the name *Bahra Gaunle*). Except for their language and history, the Baragaunle 'resemble Lobas in facial features, language and clothes. They also build their homes in the style of the Lobas of Lo Manthang.'⁶

Until the 1980s, the Baragaunle provided a large number of bondservants to their rich Thakali neighbours. 'It was said that Purang alone, a village of 100 houses, had 35 men and women working as bond servants to a single rich Thakali household in Tukche. . . .

Almost every household in the villages of Baragaun had to supply an adult member of the family to its Thakali money lending masters.'⁷ All Baragaunle people profess Tibetan Buddhism as their religion, although there are also many influences from the Bon religion, which pre-dates Buddhism. The Baragaunle area contains the famous Buddhist temple of Muktinath, which is popularly known as Chhume Gyatsa throughout the Tibetan-speaking world.

Very little gospel witness had ever

gone out in this remote part of Nepal until recent years, when the more relaxed political situation has allowed various Christian ministries to operate freely. Although approximately a third of the Baragaunle people have now heard the gospel through literature and evangelists, most are unable to grasp the message. So far, no known Baragaunle people have believed in Jesus Christ.



Population:
2,200 (2000)
2,700 (2010)
3,350 (2020)
Countries: Nepal
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: none known

Overview of the Baragaunle

Other Names: Baragaun, Baragaon, Bhoti Gurung, Bahra Gaunle, Panchgaunle, Panchgaun, Baragaunle: Mustang

Population Sources:
'1,600 to 2,200 or more' in Nepal (2000, B Grimes [1990 figure])

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Himalayish, Tibeto-Kanauri, Tibetic, Tibetan, Central

Dialects: 2 (Jharkot, Kagbeni)

Professing Buddhists: 100%

Practising Buddhists: 70%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

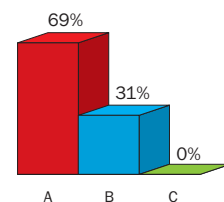
Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: BON

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