

Manangba

Approximately 5,000 Manangba people live on the slopes of the Nepal Himalayas, at high altitudes of between 3,200 and 3,700 metres (10,500 to 12,100 ft.) above sea level. The botanist Perdita Phole, who has studied the plants and flowers of this remote region, listed a 1988 population of 3,736 Manangba people.¹ They inhabit seven villages along the Marsyangdi River in the Nyeshang area of Manang District. Manang is situated in the north-west of the Gandaki Zone, which has Pokhara as its main city.

Pokhara is many days' trek from Manang for poorer locals, or a short airplane journey for wealthier locals and the foreign trekkers who come to the area to acclimatize to the high altitude before continuing on the world-famous Annapurna Circuit. Manang is a large village of approximately 500 households. The second largest Manangba community is Braga, with 200 houses, while the others are small, averaging 15 to 20 houses in each.

The Manangba people enjoy the enviable privilege of having special trading rights, which they gained way back in 1784. 'Today they exploit these rights with shopping trips to Singapore and Hong Kong where they buy electronic goods and other modern equipment to resell in Nepal. Not surprisingly, they are shrewd traders and hard bargainers.'² These special trading privileges have made the Manangba some of the wealthiest people in Nepal. Visitors to this remote Himalayan outpost are often surprised and disappointed to find this tribe wearing Western clothing, with stylish haircuts, polished nails and most of the latest Western music and appliances. Even back in the early 1970s

one researcher noted, 'It is remarkable that they are familiar with the modern conveniences of jet air travel, railroads, elevators and automobiles, considering their illiteracy and their primitive way of life and home environment. They trade in semi-precious stones, silk and gold, and return from abroad with transistor radios, wrist watches, cosmetics, silk and general merchandise.'³ Those rural Manangba who stay closer to home cultivate wheat, potato, barley, maize and radish. They also herd sheep and goats.

The Manangba claim to be close relatives of the Gurung people, although the Gurung deny this relationship. The Manangba language is similar to Gurung, being part of the Tamangic branch of Tibeto-Burman. Culturally the Manangba are closer to the Tibetans, whom they trade with but refuse to marry.

All Manangba people profess Tibetan Buddhism, although traditionally their rituals had a strong Bon spirit-worship influence.

Ironically, for a small tribe living on the 'roof of the world', materialism has choked the lives of the Manangba people. One observer states, 'They are nominally Buddhist, but give little thought or care to religion and have allowed their few temples and old monaster-

ies to fall into general disrepair.'⁴

This small, well-travelled tribe has shown little interest in Christianity. Some have been exposed to the gospel on their international travels, but their greed and spiritual blindness have prevented the Manangba from seeing the true spiritual riches available in Christ.



Population:
4,800 (2000)
5,940 (2010)
7,350 (2020)
Countries: Nepal
Buddhism: Tibetan
Christians: none known

Overview of the Manangba

Other Names: Manangay, Manang, Manangi, Nyeshang, Nyishang, Northern Gurung, Manangbolt, Manangbhot, Manangpa, Nesyangba, Neshyangba, Neshyangpa

Population Sources:
3,736 in Nepal (1990, P Pohle [1988 figure])

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Himalayish, Tibeto-Kanauri, Tibetan, Tamangic

Dialects: 1 (Prakaa)

Professing Buddhists: 100%

Practising Buddhists: 30%

Christians: 0%

Scripture: none

Jesus film: none

Gospel Recordings: Manang

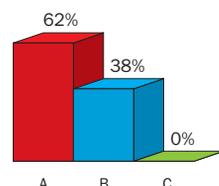
Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: NMM



Dwayne Graybill

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