



Monthly Missions Focus: Nepal

Location: Southern Asia between China (Tibet) and India.

Area: 140,800 sq km – slightly larger



than Arkansas.

Population: 28,287,147 (July 2006 est.)

Capital Kathmandu 1,500,000.

Peoples: Ethnic groups: Chhettri 15.5%, Brahman-Hill 12.5%, Magar 7%, Tharu 6.6%, Tamang 5.5%, Newar 5.4%, Muslim 4.2%, Kami 3.9%, Yadav 3.9%, other 32.7%, unspecified 2.8% (2001 census)

Literacy 40%. Official language Nepali. Nepali 47.8%, Maithali 12.1%, Bhojpuri 7.4%, Tharu (Dagaura/Rana) 5.8%, Tamang 5.1%, Newar 3.6%, Magar 3.3%, Awadhi 2.4%, other 10%, unspecified 2.5% (2001 census) All languages 124.

Religion: The world's only official Hindu state – Hindu 80.6%, Buddhist 10.7%, Muslim 4.2%, Kirant 3.6%, other 0.9% (2001 census)

Answers to Prayer

- 🌐 The opening up of Nepal. No Christian was officially allowed to live in Nepal before 1960. By 1990 there was a measure of religious freedom to worship, but not to proselytize.
- 🌐 The thrilling growth of the Church.
- 🌐 Increased unity in the Church after some difficult years during the 1990s.

Challenges for Prayer

- 🌐 Religious freedom has increased, but is still only partial.
- 🌐 The Church in Nepal has flourished in the midst of pressure as a remarkable indigenous movement.
- 🌐 The first generation of Nepali leaders laid a good foundation. Pray for effective transfer of leadership to a second generation, men and women of vision who are filled with the Holy Spirit for the task ahead, and leadership training.
- 🌐 Missions have played a remarkable supportive role in improving health, agriculture and education. Pray for wisdom and grace for leaders and missionaries, and for the entry of called workers.
- 🌐 Nepalis who have migrated temporarily for work or permanently in large numbers to India, the Himalayan region and beyond, may total 10 million.

Statistics are compiled from *Operation World* and *CIA – The World Factbook 2006*.

Newar People

Ask a Newar person whether he is Hindu or Buddhist, the saying goes, and he will answer "yes." After 15 centuries of continuous exposure to both faiths, the Newars have concocted a blend of the two religions.

Their forms of worship, their rituals and their idols differ little. In fact, some Buddhist and Hindu temples and shrines contain idols and deities from both faiths. One source suggests that the best description of the Newar faith is "Hinduistic Buddhism."

One significant difference still exists: the Hindus enthusiastically sacrifice animals, while the Buddhists do not. During the season when most animal sacrifices take place, Tibetan monasteries in Nepal hold special services to pray for good rebirths of the sacrificed animals.

Believed to be the original inhabitants of Nepal, the Newar people live in Nepal, India and Bhutan. Fewer than two per cent are Christian. (*Global Prayer Digest – February 10, 2006*)

Tibetan Buddhist Sherpas (Sharwas) of Nepal

Sherpas were the first to successfully climb the famed 29,028 foot peak of Mount Everest! British mountain climbers hired them as porters, but due to the Sherpas exceptional work ethics and their ability to climb, mountaineering became a significant new part of their culture. According to a recent scientific study, the Sherpas are the world's "most efficient human haulers."

Far exceeding the income of the average Nepalese, many workers choose to work and serve as base camp staff, guides and cooks. After 1953, teams of Western mountain climbers invaded the Sherpa homeland of Khumbu in Nepal.

The major changes coming from Western infiltration among the Sherpas are beneficial to them. The Sherpas use their extra income to help them preserve their traditional culture. Westerners are helping the Sherpa homeland, the Khumbu, by funding local hospitals, schools and ecological programs. Yet the Sherpas have also developed a taste for Western snack foods that might take the place of their healthier lentils and whole grain diet.

The Sherpas have a total population of about 35,000 in Nepal. Their culture has evolved from thousands of years of fascinating stories and myths. They are a Tibetan Buddhist people, yet their contact with Westerners provides them with the possible opportunity to find Christ. (*Global Prayer Digest – October 25, 2005*)