

Unreached Peoples: The Larke Nubri People of Nepal & Bhutan

by Paul Hattaway

The Larki people, living in the north Gorkha district of Nepal, are a totally unreached group in desperate need of the true saviour, Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Missions Work", "Evangelism Outreach"

Description

This sermon sheds light on the Larki people living in the remote Nubri Valley of Nepal, their traditional way of life, strong ties to Tibetan Buddhism, and the challenges they face in terms of isolation, poverty, and high child mortality rates. It emphasizes the urgent need for the Larkis to encounter the true savior, Jesus Christ, and the transformative power of His love and light in their lives.

Transcript

In scattered villages in the north Gorkha district of Nepal, near the Nepal border with China, in the Nubri Valley, lives the Larki people, also known as the Nubriba in the local language. At the foot of the mighty Manaslu mountain peak, at more than 8000m, the 8th highest mountain in the world, the Larki villages and fields are situated on mountain slopes up to 4000m above sea level. Some of the more isolated Larki villages take days to reach by foot over high mountain passes.

Westerners are still a rare sight here among the Larki, which is one of the most underdeveloped and poorest areas of Nepal, and where the way of life has been unchanged for decades, even centuries. Primitive Larki villages, housing up to 200 families, are camouflaged in the grey landscape of stone and coloured only by the many Buddhist prayer flags blowing in the wind. Larki houses are solid two-storey buildings made from stone and wood, with roofs made of stone to withstand the harsh mountain winds.

The lower storey is a storage area for cattle feed and a winter stable for animals. The upper floor is the family living quarters. The living area consists of a single room where everything from eating to sleeping is done in the open.

Chairs are non-existent since people prefer to sit on locally woven rugs spread upon the floor next to the fireplace. The head woman of the house always sits to the left of the fireplace, next to where the cooking utensils are stored. From there she controls the preparation and serving of food and drinks.

The male head of the household always sits on the right side of the fireplace, directly below the altar of the pola or household guard and protector. Allowing a low caste person such as a blacksmith to enter the house is seen as very offensive to the house guard and protector. The social system of the Larki is based on the joint family and everything is centred around the Buddhist monastery.

Tibetan Buddhism is the religion of all Larkis. It shapes their identity for they say to be a Larki is to be a Buddhist. But they are also nature worshippers and worship the hills and mountains as gods.

Buddhist Lamas are responsible to please the spiritual beings through their rituals. These spiritual beings are believed to be responsible for sickness. The Lamas also perform ceremonies for controlling the weather, ensuring good crops, they name the children, they perform death rites when somebody dies and they are responsible for training their own sons in the basics of Buddhism.

The Larkis are a totally unreached group in desperate need of the true saviour. The economy of the Larki who migrated from Tibet many years ago is based on farming, livestock raising and trade. Despite the searing peaks of the world's highest mountain range, the Larki area still receives the monsoon rains from the Indian plains.

But farming in this area is difficult due to the low temperature and the high altitude. Because there is snowfall for six months of the year, the growing season is short with only one crop per year. Therefore farming only makes out one part of the local economy.

Yaks, goats and sheep are the main source of meat, dairy products and transport. During the spring the animals are herded to the high pastures only to return after summer. But the main occupation of the Larkis is trade.

The Larki lies amongst the most important trade routes between Nepal and Tibet. The Larkis living near the border of Tibet buy and sell goods across the border. Raw wool and salt are bought in Tibet.

The wool is processed into clothing and then traded back to Tibet. The salt is traded for corn and rice in the lower valleys of Nepal. Most of the Larkis cannot read or write, they speak their Tibetan language.

30% of the children die before the age of 5, possibly one of the highest child mortality rates in the world. High altitude, unsanitary conditions and the lack of medical facilities all contribute to the high mortality rates. The customs of the Larki totally resemble those of the Tibetans.

Their dress, food, birth, marriage and death ceremonies are similar to the Tibetans of the north. It is still very common for one wife to have several husbands. The father will arrange a marriage for all of his sons with only one single woman.

The brothers share the wife and in doing so they do not have to split up their father's estate into small pieces of land, too small for them to make a living from. The Larkis are warm and friendly but are still lost for eternity. Let us pray that the light of their only true God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, will penetrate and transform their hearts.

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