

OVERVIEW FOR SOUTH ASIA SCRIPT

Variety is the spice of life, and there is certainly much variety in the world's spiciest region, South Asia.

Islam controls the hearts of many of the peoples of Bangladesh. Buddhism was born in India, spread to Nepal, China, Bhutan, and Southeast Asia but it was embraced mainly in East Asia. Hinduism, that diverse cluster of traditional religions, has close to a billion adherents in India and Nepal. The high caste Brahmins may be harder to reach for Christ than any Muslim people, while lower caste peoples turn to Him by the thousands. Some of the peoples of southern and northeastern India are Christian, but only two percent of that great nation have embraced Christ and over 2,900 Least-Reached Peoples remain here in this region. Indian Christians are making heroic efforts to reach this region for Christ and God is at work.



CHIMMI OF THE LOBAS OF NEPAL

Chimmi Rinzin Gunrung was born in a remote Loba village in Nepal bordering Tibet on the north. The Lobas are an ethnic Tibetan people who migrated many years ago into the kingdom of Mustang, which is now in Nepal. This is Chimmi's story:

I was raised in a strong Buddhist family. Being the first child gave me the opportunity to go to primary school in the village where I learned to read and write. When I became older, I moved to lower Mustang to attend high school. After high school I went to Pokhara for higher studies

I was taught to be a disciple of Buddha. As a disciple, I did not lie or steal and I believed in Karma, or do good, get good—do bad, get bad. As a Buddhist, I would pray to earn merit so I would be reincarnated in a better life after I died. I tried hard to be a good person, but I could not live up to the standard. The more I tried to follow the rules, the more I suffered. I began to move away from my beliefs and began to associate with school friends who seemed to be very happy. After graduating from high school, I had difficulty finding a job. Over time, I became involved in illegal activities which eventually lead me to spend 6 years in prison. At that time, I felt that my life was meaningless. Because I was in prison, my family was mistreated and they soon abandoned me. I asked myself these questions, "Why did this happen to me? Is it because of bad Karma I am in this situation? Where is the merit my parents and I earned? When will the merit be transferred to my credit?" These questions and thoughts kept coming to mind each day I was in prison. I was growing hopeless behind the prison walls.

There were two brothers who were also in prison, and they were visited by another brother who was a Christian. Their brother would meet, visit and pray with them. I watched closely their meetings, and in time I saw a change in the lives of the two imprisoned brothers. They were very happy and I saw a real change in their lives. The two brothers were soon released from prison.

One day while I was sitting and talking with friends, I was called outside by the jailer to meet with the Christian brothers and another man who came to visit me. They asked about my well-being and after a few minutes of visiting, I felt a closeness to these men. They had a small booklet with them and asked me to translate it for them. The jailer gave permission for me to take the booklet. Before I could translate the book I had to read it over many times, and each time I was compelled to read it again. After reading and understanding the book, I drew comfort knowing that all of my misfortunes were

from my own deeds, but Jesus Christ suffered for all of mankind – including for me and my bad deeds.

I translated the booklet called “The Story of Jesus” and returned it to them. Something inside me changed. Sometime later, the brothers came to see me again and gave me a printed copy of the booklet I had translated. I also timidly asked for a Bible, which I had learned about from the booklet I translated and they brought me one. Not long afterwards I was pardoned and released from prison. I returned to my family and witnessed to them and in time they too became believers. It is difficult to tell others about Jesus in my culture, but I began sharing about Jesus with other family members and friends who also have eventually accepted Christ.

Today, I work for a game conservation project that protects the endangered snow leopard high in my Himalayan home. I am so thankful to the Lord for changing my life and I am praying that Jesus will make me an instrument to continue to reach other Loba and other people living in South Asia for the Lord. I am being mentored by the brother who brought the love of the Lord to me while in prison. Please pray for the rest of my family and extended family, that they too might come to know Jesus. Please also pray for the 45,000 Lobas who still don't know Jesus and for the more than 100,000 other people living in the Mustang District of northern Nepal at altitudes between 11,000 and 13,000 feet. The climate is difficult and the area is surrounded by Chinese-occupied Tibet. Until 1992, this area was closed to the outside world. The Lobas remain one of the most isolated peoples in the world, both geographically and spiritually, and are virtually unevangelized until now.

Let's pray for not only the Loba, but for all the more than 2,900 Least-Reached People Groups of South Asia as well...

LIGHT

Pray the Holy Spirit would cause the Loba to become dissatisfied with their traditional religions and to make them hungry for the Bread of Life.

LABORERS

Pray that the Lord will call people who are willing to go to Mustang. Pray for Christian tourists and hikers, who will share the love of Jesus with the Loba to light the darkness with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

LINGUISTS

Pray that God will raise up qualified linguists to translate the entire Bible into the Loba language since the Loba currently have no scriptures in their language.

LOCAL CHURCH

Pray the Lord will raise up a strong local church among the Loba that will bear faithful witness of His love and care

LEADERS

Pray that God will open the hearts of the governmental leaders in Nepal, as well as the local leaders of Mustang, to the truth.

NEHEMIAH NAIK OF THE BANJARA OF INDIA, MISSIONARY TO HIS OWN PEOPLE

Nehemiah was born in Andhra Pradesh, India, among the Banjara gypsies of India; their language is Lambadi, a name by which they are sometimes called. The light-skinned Banjara are a tribal group related to the European Romany gypsies, who probably originally migrated to Europe from India. There are 40 million spread throughout India but less than 8 people in 10,000 are Christian. In Andhra Pradesh alone, there are over 2.1 million who follow the Hindu religion, although they are also animists who worship their ancestors as well as the typical Hindu gods and goddesses.

Banjara are traditionally nomadic and have a tendency to live in isolation, shunning contact with other people. Recently, the Banjara have been forced to settle down in farming villages or work in construction. Some are wealthy while others are the poorest of the poor with very little education.

The Banjara are one of the groups in India that are considered untouchables or Dalit. They are a very oppressed, downtrodden and exploited social group not considered to be part of the human society who perform the most menial and degrading jobs. Sometimes Dalits perform important jobs, but this is not socially recognized. They are seen as polluting for higher caste people so that if a higher caste Hindu is touched by an untouchable or even had a Dalit's shadow across them, they must go through a rigorous series of rituals to be cleansed. Dalit often do not have enough food, health care, housing and/or clothing, nor access to education and employment opportunities to enable them to obtain a good job. This is Nehemiah's story:

An Indian evangelist came to my village and conducted a tent meeting when I was a 16 years old —only a young man. While this man was preaching and sharing the gospel, I felt convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit to pray and receive Christ as my personal savior. After I did, I felt God calling me to share this good news with my own people.

Already now I have successfully planted a number of small house fellowships among my own people but my vision is to see churches in every village in the 195 districts of the 506 districts in India. I want to conduct seminars for pastors and to raise up leaders for the emerging church among the Lambadi-speaking Banjara. I was encouraged when some of my new Banjara believers traveled to a distant village to minister and found ninety other Lambadi-speaking Christians waiting for them! God is at work among the Banjara!

One of the many exciting things happening is the way Indian gypsies are responding to Banjara language radio programs being broadcast from Trans World Radio in Sri Lanka. These programs are produced by Words of Hope radio ministry. Almost as soon as the Banjara-focused broadcasting began in 1995, Lambadi listeners began responding in large numbers by writing every month to testify how these gospel broadcasts have made life-changing impacts on many people.

Pray not only for Nehemiah and the Banjara but for all the other untouchable Dalit and every one of the more than 2,900 Least-Reached Peoples of South Asia...

RADIO & OTHER AUDIO MINISTRIES

Pray for God to empower these audio ministries such as Words of Hope, Gospel Recordings, Faith Comes by Hearing, Audio Scriptures, and many others to proclaim the gospel in relevant ways. Pray particularly for those which connect with those not reached in any other way.

