

# NEPAL (नेपाल)



*Nepal is a landlocked country situated between China and India, that sits at a high-elevation in the Himalayan Mountain range. Nepal is home to eight of the world's 10 highest peaks, including Mount Everest and Kanchenjunga. From 1996-2006, Nepal faced a 10-year war between Maoist revolutionaries and government forces that resulted in the abolishment of the monarchy. Nepal occupies a special place in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Nepali is the official language and Hinduism is the dominant religion.*

## QUICK FACTS

- Population:** 30,430,267
- Area:** 147,181 sq km (slightly larger than Arkansas)
- Capital:** Kathmandu
- Languages:** Nepali (official) 48%, Maithali 12%, others 40%

## EDUCATION

School education is from grade 1-10 while grades 11 and 12 are considered higher secondary level. Legally, there are two types of school in the country: community schools which receive government grants; and institutional schools which are funded by non-governmental sources. Some schools are also run by locals without any kind of regular government or non-government funding. The literacy rate in Nepal is 60.3%.

## RELIGION

Given that Nepal was the birthplace of Buddha, as well as the world's only Hindu Kingdom, Nepal is an important place for many Hindus and Buddhists. Most of the population is Hindu (81.3%), while Buddhists—Theravada and Tantric— are the second largest group (10.7%). Most Buddhist practicing Nepalis are Tibetan refugees or otherwise ethnically Tibetan. Muslims (4.4%), Kirant (1.4%), Christians (0.9%), and others comprise the rest of the population. Within Nepal, there is a strong animistic and shamanic tradition, however the extent of animistic or shamanic beliefs and practices vary extensively throughout the country.

## ETHNICITY

Nepal's 2001 census enumerated 102 distinct ethnic identities. Ethnic groups in Nepal can be broadly divided into three categories-- Indo-Nepalese, Tibeto-Nepalese, and indigenous Nepalese. Sub ethnic/caste groups include Sherpas, Gurung, Newar, Chhetri and others.

## FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Family and religion are very important aspects of Nepali culture. Among landholding Hindu castes, high value is placed on joint family arrangements, in which sons of households alongside their wives, children, and parents reside together and resources and expenses are shared. Within the household, men and the elderly tend to have authority, with daughters-in-law occupying the lowest position in the family. Children tend to speak to adults using honorific titles. Marriages are usually arranged, though love marriages are becoming more common, especially in cities. Women and mothers tend to carry responsibility for caring for children and the elderly, though other immediate and extended family members play important roles in a child's care and socialization.



## CONTEMPORARY NEPAL

Newars (indigenous Nepalese) have resided in the Kathmandu Valley since the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD. They, alongside the Gorkhas (who invaded the valley in 1768), have been central to the eventual development of the modern state of Nepal. Likewise, both Newars and Gorkhas have played important roles in shaping modern Nepal's cultural and religious landscape. The Kingdom of Nepal, formed in 1798, became the world's only Hindu monarchy, ruled exclusively by a hereditary prime minister until its abolishment in 2008. Nepal's government structure shifted from rule by hereditary monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in 1951, and reforms in 1990 further de-centered monarchical rule creating a multiparty democracy within the preexisting constitutional monarchy.

From 1996-2006, a civil war, or the "People's War" was instigated by Maoist insurgents, mostly poor Nepali hill people, in an attempt to end oppression based on ethnic stratification and caste lines and abolish the monarchy in response to corruption. During the ten years of guerilla fighting, over 15,000 people were killed (4,500 by Maoists and 8,200 by the government), and 100,000 to 150,000 were internally displaced.

In response to widespread protest in April 2006, the Maoists agreed to end the violence, leading to a government ceasefire, and a peace agreement that November. Following the peace accord and a national election in April 2008, the new Constituent Assembly abolished the monarchy and declared Nepal a Federal National Republic. Since 2008, the government has changed hands multiple times between the Maoist and Marxist-Leninist branches of the Communist Party of Nepal. Power struggles persist and many international NGOs and foreign aid donors have a significant impact on local politics.

Notably, Nepal is one of few states in contemporary Asia to have outlawed the death penalty. Furthermore, Nepal is the first state in Asia to extend full rights to LGBTQ citizens, legalizing same-sex marriage in 2008, and providing a Third Gender category to citizens who are not "male" or "female".



### NEPALESE IN THE USA

Nepalese began migrating to the United States in the early 20th century and were initially classified as "other Asian." Nepalese Americans were first classified as a distinct ethnic group in 1974. Fewer than 100 Nepalese immigrants become U.S. citizens each year, but the number of Nepalese who become legal residents has grown steadily. The Nepalese Civil War markedly increased emigration from Nepal. Groups of Nepalese refugees, originally from Bhutan, (sometimes called Lhotshampas) have recently immigrated to the US.



*Nepal's flag, is the world's only non-quadrilateral flag. Red is the color of the rhododendron, the national flower of Nepal, as represents victory in war. The blue border represents peace. The sun and moon symbolize the hope for permanence of the state of Nepal, as well as the fierce and calm natures of the Nepali people.*



### NAMES

First names generally derive from Hindu or Buddhist traditions. There are a wide variety, but some common names include Ram, Mohan, Devika, and Jigme. Common last names include Sherpa, Koirala, Upadhyay, Shah and Tamu.

### FAMOUS NEPALIS

Buddha, Tenzing Norgay (mountaineer), Prabal Gurung (fashion designer), Kiran Chetry (television broadcaster), Anuradha Koirala (women's rights activist), Samrat Upadhyay (fiction writer)

### NEPALI WORDS

Hello, good morning/evening... *Namaste*  
 Good night ..... *Shuba ratri*  
 How are you? (informal) ..... *Ke chha?*  
 How are you (formal) ..... *Sanchai hunu hunchha*  
 I am fine..... *Tthik chha*  
 Good ..... *Raamro*  
 Bad ..... *Naraamro*  
 Yes ..... *Ho*  
 No ..... *Hoina*  
 Thank You ..... *Dhanya baad*  
 I am sorry ..... *Maaf garnus*  
 I don't understand ..... *Maile buzhina*  
 What is your name?..... *Tapaai ko nam ke ho?*  
 I like it..... *Malaai man paryo*  
 I don't like it..... *Malaai man parena*

### USEFUL LINKS

- [CIA World Factbook: Nepal](#)
- [National Geographic: Nepal](#)
- [Nepali Times Newspaper](#)