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NEPAL



NEPAL





ABOUT THIS PACKET

This packet has been created to serve as a resource for the 2016 Nepal Medical Team.



This packet is information about the country and can be read at your leisure or on the airplane. The final section of this booklet is specific to the areas we will be working near (however, not the actual clinic locations) and contains information you may want to know before the trip. The contents herein are not for distributional purposes and are intended for the use of the team and their families. Sources of the information all come from public record and documentation. You may access any of the information and more updates directly from the World Wide Web and other public sources.

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BACKGROUND

In 1951, the Nepali monarch ended the century-old system of rule by hereditary premiers and instituted a cabinet system that brought political parties into the government. That arrangement lasted until 1960, when political parties were again banned, but was reinstated in 1990 with the establishment of a multiparty democracy within the framework of a constitutional monarchy. An insurgency led by Maoists broke out in 1996. The ensuing 10-year civil war between Maoist and government forces witnessed the dissolution of the cabinet and parliament and the re-assumption of absolute power by the king in 2002. Several weeks of mass protests in April 2006 were followed by several months of peace negotiations between the Maoists and government officials, and culminated in a late 2006 peace accord and the 2007 promulgation of an interim constitution. Following a nationwide Constituent Assembly (CA) election in 2008, the newly formed CA declared Nepal a federal democratic republic, abolished the monarchy, and elected the country's first president. After the CA failed to draft a constitution by a May 2012 deadline set by the Supreme Court, then-Prime Minister Baburam BHATTARAI dissolved the CA. Months of negotiations ensued until March 2013 when the major political parties agreed to create an interim government headed by then-Chief Justice Khil Raj REGMI with a mandate to hold elections for a new CA. Elections were held in November 2013, in which the Nepali Congress won the largest share of seats in the CA and in February 2014 formed a coalition government with the second place Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist and with Nepali Congress President Sushil KOIRALA as prime minister. Nepal's new constitution came into effect in September 2015.



PUBLIC HEALTH

Nepal at a Glance

- Population: 31,551,305
- Household income: \$700 per year
- Life expectancy at birth women/men: 68/65 yrs
- Infant mortality rate: 39/1,000 live births

Source: Population Reference Bureau World Population Data Sheet, 2014

Top 10 Causes of Death

1. Lung Disease 11%
2. Coronary Heart Disease 11%
3. Stroke 9%
4. Influenza and Pneumonia 9%
5. Diarrheal diseases 4%
6. Suicide 4%
7. Tuberculosis 3%
8. Diabetes Mellitus 3%
9. Traffic Accidents 3%
10. Low Birth Rates 3%

Source: WHO World Health Statistics 2014

Median Age: 23.4

Average Annual Growth Rate: 1.79% (2015)

Infant Mortality: 39/1000 live births

<5 Mortality: 42/1000 (2009) (1990: 142/1000)

Children <5 underweight: 29.1% (2011 est.)

Total Fertility Rate: 2.24/woman (2015 es)

Maternal Mortality: 258/100,000 live births

Adult +15 Literacy rate: 71.2% (Male: 89.2%; Female: 77.5%) (2015 est)

Improved Drinking Water Source: 87% of population (91% urban; 86% rural)

Access to Sanitation Facilities: 35% of population (50% urban; 32% rural)

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate: 0.3% (2012 est.)

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS: 49,000 (2013 est.)

HIV/AIDS - deaths: 2,600 (2013 est.)

Child Labor (5 – 14): 2,467,549 (33.9%) (2006 est)

Major infectious diseases

Degree of risk: very high

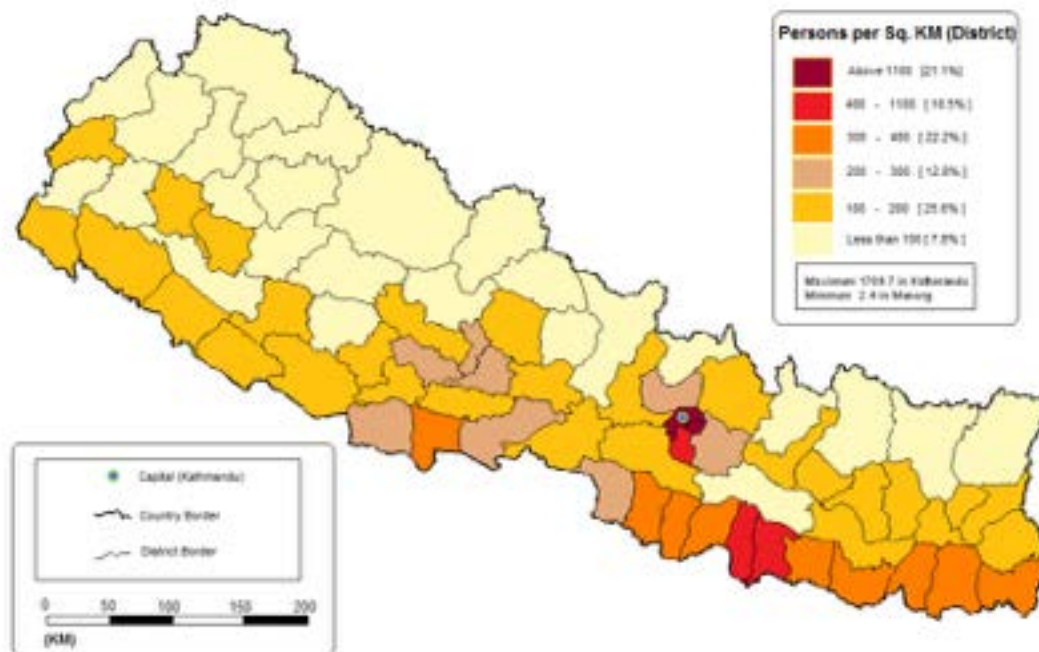
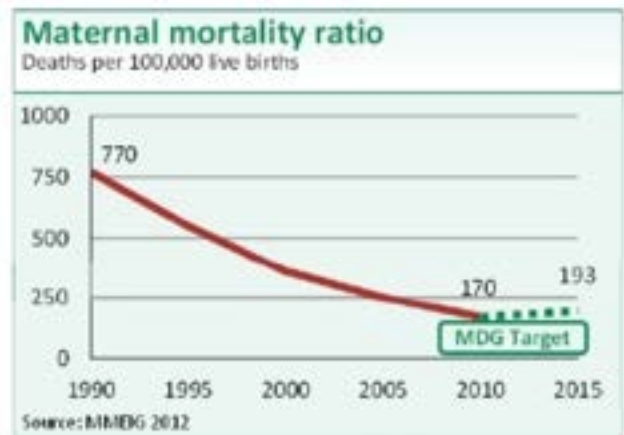
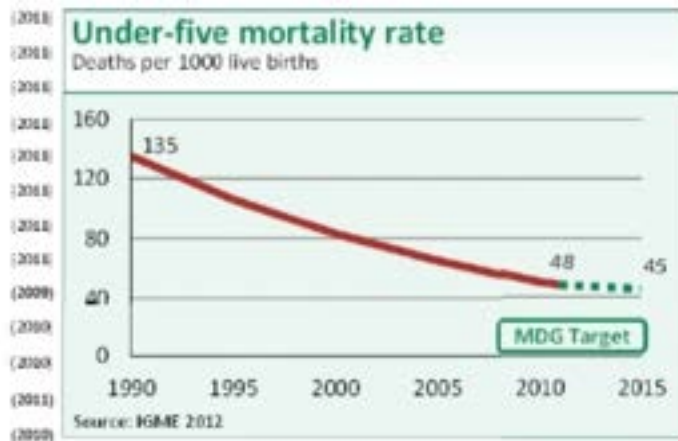
Food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A and E, and typhoid fever

Vector borne diseases: dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis, and malaria

Water contact disease: leptospirosis, schistosomiasis

Respiratory Diseases: Meningococcal meningitis

CIA World Fact Book (2015)



BHAGMATTI DISTRICT



Area: 9428 km²

Population: 3,008,487 (2012)

Capital: Kathmandu

The Bagmati zone derives its name from the river Bagmati and is located in the Central Development Region. There are 1.5 million people in the Bagmati region, primarily centered in the Kathmandu valley. The Bagmati river, from which the region receives its name, is a very sacred river in Nepal. The river separates Kathmandu from Lalitpur. Most of the Hindus in Nepal are cremated along the banks of this holy river. In fact, there is a fable that before cremation, the dead body must be dipped in the river Bhagmati of Nepal at least three times. Cremation follows the ritual washing of the body and immediately after the cremation ceremony is over, the person who lights the funeral pyre, usually the first son, also bathes in the river. At the end of cremation, the relatives also take baths in this holy river.

KATHMANDU

Kathmandu is the capital and the largest city of Nepal, and is situated in the World Heritage Site Kathmandu Valley. Considered by some to be among the most beautiful cities in the world, Kathmandu is the most developed city in the nation. The religiously rich Kathmandu valley, home to hundreds of Hindu shrines, had been a lure for young Western travelers attracted by Eastern mysticism, especially during the soul-searching era of the 1960s and 1970s. While the spectacular landscape and the lure of the nearby Himalayas long drew tourists from around the world, political instability and civil unrest has slowed the stream of visitors.

HISTORY

Neolithic tools found in the Kathmandu Valley indicate that people have been living there for at least 9000 years. The history of Kathmandu is really a history of the Newar people, the main inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. While the documented history of the valley goes back to the Kiratis, around the 7th century BC, the foundation of Kathmandu itself dates from the 12th century AD, during the time of the Malla dynasty.

The original settlements, in the southern half of the old town, grew up around the trade route to Tibet and in early pilgrim rest houses such as the Kasthamandap, which later lent its name to the city. Originally known as Kantipur, the city flourished during the Malla era, and the bulk of its superb temples, buildings and other monuments date from this time. Initially, Kathmandu was an independent city within the valley, but in the 14th century the valley was united under the rule of the Malla king of Bhaktapur. The 15th century saw division once more, this time into the three independent kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. Rivalry between the three city-states led to a series of wars that left each state weakened and vulnerable to the 1768 invasion of the valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah. The ensuing Shah dynasty unified Nepal and made the expanded city of Kathmandu its new capital - a position the city has held ever since.

GEOGRAPHY and CLIMATE

Kathmandu is located in the northwestern part of Kathmandu Valley, at an elevation of approximately 4,500 feet (1,400 meters). The Kathmandu Valley, which covers an area of 218 square miles, has been declared a World Heritage Site consisting of seven different monument zones. These zones are: The city centers of, Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, the two most important Buddhist stupas, Swayambhunath and Boudhanath, and two famous Hindu shrines, Pashupatinath temple and Changu Narayan.

The Bagmati, Bishnumati, Dhobikhola, and Tukucha rivers wind through the city.



The Kathmandu Valley has a mild climate most of the year. The average maximum daytime temperature in January is 64.4°F (18°C), rising to an average maximum of around 84.2°F (29°C) in July. There is a rainy monsoon season between June and August, while May and June can be very hot and humid. In spring (March to April) and autumn (October to November) the temperatures are pleasant with occasional short bursts of rain, while November to February is dry, but can be very cold, especially at night. Mean annual precipitation is 56.18 inches (1427mm)

Earthquakes and pollution have damaged Kathmandu's numerous Buddhist and Hindu temples and palaces. Human and animal wastes, agricultural run-off, and industrial effluents contaminate the water supply.

WEATHER IN KATHMANDU

Climate data for Kathmandu (1981-2010)												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Record high °C (°F)	24.4 (75.9)	26.3 (82.9)	33.3 (91.9)	36.0 (96)	36.1 (97)	37.2 (99)	32.8 (91)	33.3 (91.9)	33.3 (91.9)	33.3 (91.9)	29.4 (84.9)	26.3 (82.9)
Average high °C (°F)	19.1 (66.4)	21.4 (70.5)	25.3 (77.5)	28.2 (82.8)	28.7 (83.7)	29.1 (84.4)	28.4 (83.1)	28.7 (83.7)	28.1 (82.6)	26.8 (80.2)	23.6 (74.5)	20.2 (68.4)
Average low °C (°F)	2.4 (36.3)	4.5 (40.1)	8.2 (46.8)	11.7 (53.1)	15.7 (60.3)	19.1 (66.4)	20.2 (68.4)	20.0 (68)	18.5 (65.3)	13.4 (56.1)	7.8 (46)	3.7 (38.7)
Record low °C (°F)	-2.8 (27)	-1.1 (30)	1.7 (35.1)	4.4 (39.9)	9.4 (48.9)	13.9 (57)	16.1 (61)	16.1 (61)	13.3 (55.9)	5.6 (42.1)	0.6 (33.1)	-1.7 (28.9)
Average precipitation mm (inches)	14.4 (0.567)	18.7 (0.736)	34.2 (1.346)	61.0 (2.402)	123.6 (4.866)	236.3 (9.303)	363.4 (14.307)	330.8 (13.024)	199.8 (7.866)	51.2 (2.016)	8.3 (0.327)	13.2 (0.52)
Average precipitation days	2	3	4	6	12	17	23	22	15	4	1	1
Average relative humidity (%)	79	71	61	53	57	73	81	83	82	79	85	80
Mean monthly sunshine hours	223	254	260	231	229	186	136	159	132	252	244	250

Source #1: Department of Hydrology and Meteorology^[1] World Meteorological Organization (precipitation days)^[2]

Source #2: Danish Meteorological Institute (sun and relative humidity)^[3] Sistema de Clasificación Bioclimática Mundial (extremes)^[4]

DEMOGRAPHICS

Kathmandu's population was 671,846 in 2001, although 1,081,845 people were estimated to be living in the metropolitan area.

POPULATION BREAKDOWN

Chhettri	15.5%	Tamang	5.5%
Brahmans	2.5%	Near	5.4%
Magar	7%	Muslim	4.2%
There	6.6%	All Other	42.4%

LANGUAGE

Nepali is the most widely spoken language of the valley. Newark speak Nepal Bhasa/Newari while Hindi and English are understood by most of the educated population of the city. The Kathmandu district itself is known as the "city of temples," attracting Hindu people and those who have interest in others' religion.



RELIGION

With 80.6 percent of the population Hindu in 2001. Nepal remains the only official Hindu state in the world. The Kathmandu district itself is known as the "city of temples," attracting Hindu people and those who have interest in others' religion. religions include Buddhist 10.7 percent, Muslim 4.2 percent, Kirant 3.6 percent, and other 0.9 percent, Nepal University, formerly called Tribhuvan University, is the only university in Kathmandu. Established in 1959, and with approximately 272,746 students, it is the largest university in Nepal.

CULTURE

The ancient and refined traditional culture of Kathmandu, for that matter in the whole of Nepal, is an uninterrupted and exceptional meeting of the Hindu and Buddhist ethos practiced by its highly religious people. It has also embraced in its fold the cultural diversity provided by the other religions such as Jainism, Islam and Christianity.

The ancient trade route between India and Tibet that passed through Kathmandu enabled fusion of artistic and architectural traditions of other cultures to be amalgamated with local architectural and artistic culture.

The City Core has most of the remarkable cultural wealth that evolved during the reign of the Malla kings between 15th and 18th centuries. The city was filled with sculptures, pagodas, stupas and palace buildings of exceptional beauty. There are also 106 monastic courtyards (known as baha or bahi) known for their art and piety. The level of skill of the local artisans are the exquisite wood carving, stone carving, metal casting, weaving, pottery and other crafts. The finest wood carvings are seen on the ornate windows of old buildings and on the roof struts of temples. Carving skills of the local artisans are seen at every street corner in the form of images of gods and goddesses and sunken water spouts.



ARTS

Kathmandu valley has been described as "an enormous treasure house of art and sculptures". These treasures are made of wood, stone, metal and terracotta, and found in profusion in various temples, shrines, stupas, gompas, chaityas and palaces. The art objects are also seen in street corners, lanes, private courtyards and in open ground; mostly in the form of icons of gods and goddesses. Kathmandu valley has been the repository of all this art treasure for a long time but it got a worldwide exposure only after the country opened its doors to the outside world in 1950.

The religious art of Nepal and Kathmandu in particular is iconic symbolism of the Mother Goddesses such as: the Bhavani, Durga, Gaja -Lakshmi, Hariti-Sitala, Mahsishamardini, Saptamatrika (seven mother goddesses) and Sri-Lakshmi. From the 3rd century BC, apart from the Hindu Gods and Goddesses, Buddhist monuments from the Ashokan period (it is said that Ashoka visited Nepal in 250 BC) have also embellished Nepal in general and the valley in particular. These art and architectural edifices encompass three major periods of evolution namely, the Licchavi or classical period (500 to 900 AD) with motivation from the Gupta period in India; the post-classical period (1000 to 1400 AD) with strong influence of the Palla art form that extended to Tibet as well; and of the Malla period (1400 onwards) that exhibited explicitly tantric influences coupled with the demonic art form of Tibetan Demonology.

A broad typology has been ascribed to the decorative designs and impressive carvings created by the creative and artistic people of Nepal, who have maintained a perfect blend of the two religious faiths of Hinduism and Buddhism. This typology based on the type of material used in the art forms is five in number. These are: the Stone Art, the Metal Art; the Wood Art; the Terracotta Art; and the Painting. These are briefly elaborated.

STONE ART

In the earliest times, at the dawn of civilization, stone heaps (made of boulders, pebbles etc.) were worshipped in Nepal, which is seen at several locations. The first real stone carvings started under the influence of the Mathura Art of India; some of these carvings are seen in the Pashupathinath temple complex. Later in mid 5th century AD Nepal Art evolved under the Ikshvaku, Gupta, Pala and Deccan Schools of Art forms. But the Nepalese sculptors improved on these forms which provide a typical style of Nepal. Nachiarcoil in Thanjavur district is famous for a light brown sand called vandal on the banks of the river Cauvery that is ideally suited for making moulds. Owing to the growing scarcity of copper, the bell-metal workers of the state have now switched to brassware. Some of the articles cast are vases in different shapes, tumblers, water containers, ornamented spittoons, food cases, bells, candle stands, kerosene lamps, picnic carriers, and a large variety of lamps. Of these, a few items like tumblers, food cases and milk containers are in bell metal and the rest are in brass. A special jar with a cashew-nut design and named after it has become a kind of hallmark of Nachiarcoil.



METAL ART

Metal images made of ashtadhatu (amalgam of eight metals) are common in Nepal and India, under both Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions. During the Licchavi period between the seventh and eighth centuries, bronze in solid form was widely used for casting metallic sculptures. But in the Medieval period, Pala influence evolved into a distinct form. These can be seen in the form of large royal figures fixed on top of pillars in Durbar Squares of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. Smaller and hollow cast bronze statues were made as icons for worship. In Tibetan metal work, a hole was left in the bronze statues for filling with mantras written on paper or filling with offering of grains, precious stones or miniature icons. But the hole was sealed with copper in the presence of a Lama before formal consecration of the image. Here again there are two forms- one of Gods and Goddesses of Mahayana school in Pala art form and the other iconography inspiration of the Shamanic practice of Tibetan Demonology.



WOOD ART

It is the traditional architecture in the Kathmandu valley in temples, palaces, monasteries and houses a perfected Newari art form generally carved very artistically out of Sal (Shorea), teak (agarth), deodar (cedrus) and Sisso (dalbegia). Malla Kings patronized this art form from 12th century onwards. Its life span is affected by mild climate, lichens, mosses, insects, borers, dry rots and biochemical defects. In the 14th century earthquake many of the wooden monuments were destroyed.

TERRA COTTA

Terra cotta art in Nepal is traced to the 300 BC. It was perfected between 16th and 18th centuries. Archeological excavations have unearthed hand-pressed moulds at Dhum Varahi at the fringes of Kathmandu, which are preserved in the museums in Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. The male and female figures decorated in bands around temples, called Nagabands were made of terra cotta. Other fine examples of terra cotta art mentioned are Mahabuddha and Mayadevi temples in Patan and gateway of the Teleju temple in Hanumandhoka complex. Clay is the basic ingredient of this art form.

PAINTINGS

Paintings are categorized under two broad heads namely the religious and the non-religious. The religious category is further subdivided into three forms of painted manuscripts, Thangkas or Paubhas and Pattas (banners) or metal strips.

MUSEUMS

Kathmandu is home to a number of museums and art galleries, including the National Museum of Nepal and the Natural History Museum of Nepal.

Nepal's art and architecture is a dazzling display from medieval to the present, which is a heady amalgamation of two of the ancient and greatest religions of the world – Hinduism and Buddhism. These are amply reflected not only in the many temples, shrines, stupas, monasteries and palaces in the seven well defined Monument Zones of the Kathmandu valley recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage site but also in its well planned and well exhibited displays in museums and



art galleries spread all over the Metropolitan area and also in its sister cities of Patan and Bhaktapur. The museums display unique artifacts and paintings from 5th century AD onwards to date, including archeological exportations.

The Museums and art galleries include the National Museum; the Natural History Museum; Hanumandhoka Palace Complex; the Tribhuvan Museum; the Mahendra Museum; the Birendra Museum; National Library; the Birendra Museum; the Kaiser Library; the Asa Archives; the Patan Museum; the National Art Gallery; the Pujarimath Museum; the Bronze and Brass Museum; the NAFA Gallery; the Srijana Contemporary Art Gallery; the J Art Gallery; the NEF-ART (Nepal Fine Art) Gallery; the Moti Azima Gallery; and the Nepal Art Council Gallery. Some of the important museums and galleries are elaborated.



The National Museum is located in the western part of Kathmandu near the Swoyambhunath stupa in the historical building which was constructed in early 19th century by General Bhimsen Thapa. It is the most important museum in the country, housing an extensive collection of weapons, art and antiquities of historic and cultural importance. The museum was established in 1928 as a collection of house of war trophies and weapons. The initial name of this museum was Chhauni Silkhana, which literally means "the stone house of arms and ammunition". Given its focus, the museum contains an extensive quantity of weapons, including locally made firearms used in various wars and leather cannons from the 18th–19th century. There is also an extensive collection of medieval and modern works in wood, bronze, stone, and paintings.

The Natural History Museum is located in the southern foothills of Swoyambhunath hill and has a sizable collection of different species of animals, butterflies and plants. The museum is noted in particular for its serial display of diverse life species from prehistoric shells to the stuffed animals, birds, crocodiles and many others.

The Hanumandhoka Palace, a lavish medieval palace complex in the Durbar, contains three separate museums of historic importance: The Tribhuvan Museum contains artifacts related to the King Tribhuvan (1906–1955). It has a variety of pieces including his personal belongings, letters and papers and memorabilia related to events he was involved in and a rare collection of photos and paintings of Royal family members. The Mahendra Museum is also dedicated to a king, Mahendra (1920–1972). Like the Tribhuvan Museum, it includes his personal belongings such as decorations, stamps and coins and personal notes and manuscripts, but it also has structural reconstructions of his cabinet room and office chamber. The Birendra museum contains items related to the late monarch, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah (1972–2001), including the royal dress worn during various state and historic occasions, medals and honorary titles received from other head of states and many more.

COUNTRY BACKGROUND



BRIEF HISTORY

The Nepal's rich prehistory consists mainly of the legendary traditions of the Newar, the indigenous community of Nepal Valley (now usually called Kāthmāndu Valley). There are usually both Buddhist and Brahmanic Hindu versions of these various legends. Both versions are accepted indiscriminately in the festivals associated with legendary events, a tribute to the remarkable synthesis that has been achieved in Nepal between the two related but divergent value systems.

References to Nepal Valley and Nepal's lower hill areas are found in the ancient Indian classics, suggesting that the Central Himalayan hills were closely related culturally and politically to the Gangetic Plain at least 2,500 years ago. Lumbini, Gautama Buddha's birthplace in southern Nepal, and Nepal Valley also figure prominently in Buddhist accounts. There is substantial archaeological evidence of an early Buddhist influence in Nepal, including a famous column inscribed by Ashoka (emperor of India, 3rd century bce) at Lumbini and several shrines in the valley.

A coherent dynastic history for Nepal Valley becomes possible, though with large gaps, with the rise of the Licchavi dynasty in the 4th or 5th century. Although the earlier Kirati dynasty had claimed the status of the Kshatriya caste of rulers and warriors, the Licchavis were probably the first ruling family in that area of plains Indian origin. This set a precedent for what became the normal pattern thereafter—Hindu kings claiming high-caste Indian origin ruling over a population much of which was neither Indo-Aryan nor Hindu.

The Licchavi dynastic chronicles, supplemented by numerous stone inscriptions, are particularly full from 500 to 700 ce; a powerful, unified kingdom also emerged in Tibet during this period, and the Himalayan passes to the north of the valley were opened. Extensive cultural, trade, and political relations developed across the Himalayas, transforming the valley from a relatively remote backwater into the major intellectual and commercial centre between South and Central Asia. Nepal's contacts with China began in the mid-7th century with the exchange of several missions. But intermittent warfare between Tibet and China terminated this relationship; and, while there were briefly renewed contacts in subsequent centuries, these were reestablished on a continuing basis only in the late 18th century.

The middle period in Nepalese history is usually considered coterminous with the rule of the Malla dynasty (10th–18th century) in Nepal Valley and surrounding areas. Although most of the Licchavi kings were devout Hindus, they did not impose Brahmanic social codes or values on their non-Hindu subjects; the Mallas perceived their responsibilities differently, however, and the great Malla ruler Jaya Sthiti (reigned c. 1382–95) introduced the first legal and social code strongly influenced by contemporary Hindu principles.

Jaya Sthiti's successor, Yakṣa Malla (reigned c. 1429–c. 1482), divided his kingdom among his three sons, thus creating the independent principalities of Kāthmāndu, Pātan, and Bhaktpūr (Bhādgāon) in the valley. Each of these states controlled territory in the surrounding hill areas, with particular importance attached to the trade routes northward to Tibet and southward to India that were vital to the valley's economy. There were also numerous small principalities in the western and eastern hill areas, whose independence was sustained through a delicate balance of power based upon traditional interrelationships and, in some cases, common ancestral origins (or claims thereto) among the ruling families. By the 16th century virtually all these principalities were ruled by dynasties claiming high-caste Indian origin whose members had fled to the hills in the wake of Muslim invasions of northern India.

In the early 18th century one of the principalities—Gorkha (also spelled Gurkha), ruled by the Shah family—began to assert a predominant role in the hills and even to pose a challenge to Nepal Valley. The Mallas, weakened by familial dissension and widespread social and economic discontent, were no match for the great Gorkha ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah. He conquered the valley in 1769 and moved his capital to Kāthmāndu shortly thereafter, providing the foundation for the modern state of Nepal.

The Shah (or Sah) rulers faced tremendous and persistent problems in trying to centralize an area long characterized by extreme diversity and ethnic and regional parochialism. They established a centralized political system by absorbing dominant regional and local elites into the central administration at Kāthmāndu. This action

neutralized potentially disintegrative political forces and involved them in national politics, but it also severely limited the centre's authority in outlying areas because local administration was based upon a compromise division of responsibilities between the local elites and the central administration.

From 1775 to 1951, Nepalese politics was characterized by confrontations between the royal family and several noble families. The position of the Shah dynasty was weakened by the fact that the two kings who ruled successively between 1777 and 1832 were minors when they ascended the throne. The regents and the nobility competed for political power, using the young rulers as puppets; both factions wanted a monopoly of political offices and power for their families, with their rivals exterminated, exiled to India, or placed in a subordinate status. This was achieved by the Thapa family (1806–37) and, even more extensively, by the Rana family (1846–1951). In these periods, the Shah ruler was relegated to an honorary position without power, while effective authority was concentrated in the hands of the leading members of the dominant family. Although intrafamilial arrangements on such questions as the succession and the distribution of responsibilities and spoils were achieved, no effective national political institutions were created. The excluded noble families had only two alternatives—to accept inferior posts in the administration and army or to conspire for the overthrow of the dominant family. Until 1950 and to some extent thereafter, Nepalese politics was basically conspiratorial in character, with familial loyalty taking precedence over loyalty to the crown or nation.

The introduction of a democratic political system in Nepal, a country accustomed to autocracy and with no deep democratic tradition or experience, proved a formidable task. A constitution was finally approved in 1959, under which general elections for a national assembly were held. The NC won an overwhelming victory and was entrusted with the formation of Nepal's first popular government. But persistent controversy between the Cabinet and King Mahendra (reigned 1955–72) led the king to dismiss the Nepali Congress government in December 1960 and to imprison most of the party's leaders. The constitution of 1959 was abolished in 1962, and a new constitution was promulgated that established the crown as the real source of authority. King Mahendra obtained both Indian and Chinese acceptance of his regime, and the internal opposition was weak, disorganized, and discouraged. Mahendra died in January 1972 and was succeeded by his son Birendra, who was crowned in 1975.

Throughout the 1970s King Birendra sought to expedite economic development programs while maintaining the "nonparty" political system established by his father. The results were disappointing on both accounts, and by 1979 a systemic crisis was evident. To meet the first serious political challenge to the monarchy since 1960, King Birendra announced in May 1979 that a national referendum would be held to decide between a nonparty and multiparty (by implication, parliamentary) political system. In the referendum, which was held in May 1980, the political groups supporting the existing nonparty system won by the relatively small margin of 55 percent, accurately reflecting the sharp differences in the country on basic political issues.

It was in this context that King Birendra decided in 1980 to retain the 1962 constitution but to liberalize the political system by providing for direct popular election of the National Assembly. The government also permitted the "illegal" political parties, such as the NC, to function under only minimal constraints. Elections were still formally held on a "partyless" basis, but many candidates ran informally and openly as members of political parties.

This partial movement toward a democratic parliamentary system satisfied neither the supporters of a multiparty constitutional monarchy nor several more radical leftist factions, and in February 1990 a coalition of centrist and

leftist opposition forces began a campaign demanding basic political reforms. A series of protests and strikes followed nationwide, and the royal government's efforts to suppress the movement with force were ineffectual. In April, as the situation in Kāthmāndu Valley worsened, King Birendra lifted the ban on political parties, abrogated the more repressive security ordinances, and on April 16 appointed a coalition interim government headed by the president of the NC, K.S. Bhattarai, but also including the moderate faction of the communist movement, the United Leftist Front.

The policy objectives of the interim government were "to maintain law and order, develop a multiparty system on the basis of constitutional monarchy, draft a new constitution, and hold general elections" to a parliament. Within a year, all four tasks were accomplished with remarkable success despite the broad divergence of views among the major political organizations. A draft of the new constitution, prepared by a broadly representative government commission, was submitted to the Palace and the Cabinet on September 10, 1990. In November, following two months of vigorous debate on a number of key issues—including the role of the king, the development of a secular state, emergency powers, and the status of Nepal's many languages—an amended version of the constitution was promulgated by King Birendra that provided for both a constitutional monarchy and a multiparty parliamentary political system.

General elections held on May 12, 1991, gave the NC a majority in parliament (110 of 205 seats), but the moderate Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)—CPN (UML)—with 69 seats, emerged as a strong opposition party. The two "Pancha" parties usually associated with the old system won only four seats. The elections were thus perceived to constitute a strong endorsement of the 1990 political changes, and G.P. Koirala, the brother of Nepal's first elected prime minister (1959–60), was nominated by the NC and appointed by the king to head the new elected government.

Nepal emerged from this period of rapid political change facing a multitude of economic and social problems; among these were a stagnant economy and a variety of regional ethnic and religious movements, some of whose basic demands were not acceptable to the country's Hindu majority. Although overwhelming support existed for the new democratic constitutional monarchy system, at both the party and the public level, the democratic movement itself remained badly fractionalized and antagonistic, making more difficult the new government's attempt to introduce the kind of hard-hitting economic and social policies the panchayat governments had carefully avoided in an effort to mollify several small but important interest groups.

The country's political life since 1990 has been marked by prolonged instability. For nearly two decades the government was largely in the hands of the NC with brief periods of CPN (UML) control. However, the NC's leadership squabbled frequently, and the party splintered early in the 21st century. The killing in 2001 of the king and most members of the royal family by the crown prince (who also died, from self-inflicted wounds) further heightened tensions, and, after the massacre, Koirala, who was serving his third term as prime minister, was forced to resign.

Meanwhile, a group of Maoist rebels emerged in the 1990s and rapidly grew in number and strength and established their own breakaway party, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), or CPN (M). The rebels often used violent tactics to champion the cause of the rural poor and advocated overthrowing the monarchy. By the early 21st century the Maoists not only posed a serious threat to the government but had virtually propelled the country into a state of civil war. Koirala was reelected to a fourth term as prime minister in April 2006, and later

that year the government of Nepal and the Maoist insurgency signed a UN-mediated peace accord that provided for temporary representation of the Maoists in the Council of Ministers, restricted the rebel army to camps, and required both the Maoists and the Nepalese army to lock equal amounts of their arms in UN-monitored containers.

An interim constitution, which transferred all executive power to the prime minister, was to remain in effect until the weapons management plan had been completed, elections had been held, and a permanent constitution had been drafted to replace the 1990 document. The extent of the duties of the king as head of state was to be determined by an elected constituent assembly, which would also draft a new constitution. Elections for the assembly, originally scheduled for June 2007, were postponed several times, notably after the Maoists pulled out of the government, demanding the immediate dissolution of the monarchy. In December 2007 it was finally agreed that the monarchy would be abolished, and elections were held in April 2008. The Maoists—who changed their party name to the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), or UCPN (M), in 2009—won the most seats, and on May 28, 2008, more than two centuries of royal rule came to an end as the new assembly voted to declare Nepal a democratic republic.

In July 2008 Ram Baran Yadav of the NC was elected by the assembly as the country's first president. One month later an election for prime minister was held in parliament. Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, popularly known as Prachanda, won by a wide margin and formed a coalition government. However, the coalition failed in early May 2009, and Prachanda resigned. Madhav Kumar Nepal of the CPN (UML) became prime minister later that month at the head of a 22-party coalition. The change did little to resolve the country's ongoing political deadlock, particularly the drafting of a new constitution. In June 2010 Prime Minister Nepal resigned under pressure from the UCPN (M), which claimed the right, as the largest political party, to choose the prime minister

Parliament, however, could not agree on Nepal's replacement, and he remained in office until fellow CPN (UML), Jhala Nath Khanal, took over in February 2011. By August, Khanal's government had collapsed, and the UCPN (M)'s Baburam Bhattarai had assumed the office. Negotiations in the assembly on a new constitution fared no better under Bhattarai, and in May 2012 the assembly was dissolved, and members of the government resigned. Bhattarai stayed on as caretaker prime minister until March 2013, when President Yadav appointed Khil Raj Regmi, chief justice of the country's Supreme Court, as prime minister until elections could be held.

Parliamentary elections took place in November, with the NC gaining the largest number of seats and the CPN (UML) second. The two parties discussed forming a coalition government for several months, which finally took office in February 2014. Sushil Koirala of the NC, a cousin of B.P. Koirala, was named prime minister. After only two months in power, the Koirala administration had to deal with an avalanche on Mount Everest in mid-April that killed 16 sherpas, shut down the climbing season on the mountain, and sparked widespread protest by the families of those killed, who considered their treatment by the government inadequate. More disasters followed—a landslide in early August in which 156 people died, floods later that month that killed 102 more, and a freak snowstorm in the Annapurna region in October that killed several dozen trekkers—and in each case the government was criticized for its poor response to the crises.

Those events, however, paled in comparison with the catastrophe that struck Nepal on April 25, 2015, when the country suffered one of the most-severe earthquakes in its history. A magnitude-7.8 temblor struck some 50 miles (80 km) northwest of Kathmandu, causing widespread death and destruction. Initial estimates of hundreds

of people killed by the temblor soon escalated to the thousands—with many thousands more injured—as debris was cleared in Kathmandu and other cities and rescue workers reached remote towns and villages. Damage to buildings and infrastructure was widespread, and many of the country's historic structures in the Kathmandu Valley that had been included in a UNESCO World Heritage site (designated 1979) were destroyed or severely damaged. In addition, the quake triggered avalanches on Mount Everest that descended on hundreds of people on the mountain for the spring climbing season, killing 19 people—thus surpassing the death toll from the 2014 avalanche—and injuring dozens more. Numerous aftershocks followed the initial quake, including a severe magnitude-7.3 temblor on May 12 centred near the Tibet border west of Everest. In all, some 9,000 people were killed and nearly 16,800 more injured in the two quakes.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country in 2015 helped spur negotiations on the new constitution. In mid-September parliament finally approved the document, which took effect on September 20 and established Nepal as a secular federal-style republic. Promulgation of the constitution elicited violent protests by some minority groups, especially in the southern part of the country, whose members claimed that their rights were not being adequately protected. In mid-October parliament elected Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli as prime minister, succeeding Koirala, and at the end of the month the legislators chose a woman, Bidhya Devi Bhandari, as the country's new president.

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

LOCATION

Nepal measures about 800 kilometers (497 mi) along its Himalayan axis by 150 to 250 kilometers (93 to 155 mi) across. Nepal has an area of 147,181 square kilometers (56,827 sq mi).

Nepal is landlocked by India on three sides and China's Tibet Autonomous Region to the north. West Bengal's narrow Siliguri Corridor or Chicken's Neck separate Nepal and Bangladesh. To the east are India and Bhutan. Nepal depends on India for goods transport facilities and access to the sea, even for most goods imported from China.



CLIMATE

Nepal's latitude is about the same as that of Florida, however with elevations ranging from less than 100 meters (300 ft) to over 8,000 meters (26,000 ft) and precipitation from 160 millimeters (6 in) to over 5,000 millimeters (16 ft) the country has eight climate zones from tropical to perpetual snow.

The tropical zone below 1,000 meters (3,300 ft) experiences frost less than once per decade. It can be subdivided into lower tropical (below 300 meters or 1,000 ft.) with 18% of the nation's land area) and upper (18% of land area) tropical zones. The best mangoes and well as papaya and banana are largely confined to the lower zone. Other fruit such as litchee, jackfruit, citrus and mangoes of lower quality grow in the upper tropical zone as well. Winter crops include grains and vegetables typically grown in temperate climates. The Outer Terai is virtually all in the lower tropical zone. Inner Terai valleys span both tropical zones. The Sivalik Hills are mostly upper tropical. Tropical climate zones extend far up river valleys across the Middle Hills and even into the Mountain regions.

The subtropical climate zone from 1,000 to 2,000 meters (3,300 to 6,600 ft) occupies 22% of Nepal's land area and is the most prevalent climate of the Middle Hills above river valleys. It experiences frost up to 53 days per year, however this varies greatly with elevation, proximity to high mountains and terrain either draining or ponding cold air drainage. Crops include rice, maize, millet, wheat, potato, stone fruits and citrus.

The great majority of Nepal's population occupies the tropical and subtropical climate zones. In the Middle Hills, upper-caste Hindus are concentrated in tropical valleys which are well suited for rice cultivation while Janajati ethnic groups mostly live above in the subtropical zone and grow other grains more than rice.



The Temperate climate zone from 2,000 to 3,000 meters (6,600 to 9,800 ft) occupies 12% of Nepal's land area and has up to 153 annual days of frost. It is encountered in higher parts of the Middle Hills and throughout much of the Mountain region. Crops include cold-tolerant rice, maize, wheat, barley, potato, apple, walnut, peach, various cole, amaranths, and buckwheat.

The Subalpine zone from 3,000 to 4,000 meters (9,800 to 13,100 ft) occupies 9% of Nepal's land area, mainly in the Mountain and Himalayan regions. It has permanent settlements in the Himalaya, but further south it is only seasonally occupied as pasture for sheep, goats, yak and hybrids in warmer months. There are up to 229 annual days of frost here. Crops include barley, potato, cabbage, cauliflower, amaranthus, buckwheat and apple. Medicinal plants are gathered.

The Alpine zone from 4,000 to 5,000 meters (13,100 to 16,400 ft) occupies 8% of the country's land area. There are a few permanent settlements above 4,000 meters. There is virtually no plant cultivation although medicinal herbs are gathered. Sheep, goats, yaks and hybrids are pastured in warmer months.

Above 5,000 meters the climate becomes Nival and there is no human habitation or even seasonal use.

Arid and semi-arid land in the rain shadow of high ranges have a Transhimalayan climate. Population density is very low. Cultivation and husbandry conform to subalpine and alpine patterns but depend on snowmelt and streams for irrigation.

Precipitation generally decreases from east to west with increasing distance from the Bay of Bengal, source of the summer monsoon. Eastern Nepal gets about 2,500 mm (100 in) annually; the Kathmandu area about 1,400 mm (55 in) and western Nepal about 1,000 mm (40 in). This pattern is modified by adiabatic effects as rising air masses cool and drop their moisture content on windward slopes, then warm up as they descend so relative humidity drops. Annual precipitation reaches 5,500 mm (18 ft) on windward slopes in the Annapurna Himalaya beyond a relatively low stretch of the Mahabharat Range. In rain shadows beyond the high mountains, annual precipitation drops as low as 160 mm (6 in).

ECONOMY

OVERVIEW

Nepal's gross domestic product (GDP) for 2012 was estimated at over \$17.921 billion (adjusted to nominal GDP). In 2010, agriculture accounted for 36.1%, services comprised 48.5%, and industry 15.4% of Nepal's GDP. While agriculture and industry are contracting, the contribution by the service sector is increasing.

Agriculture employs 76% of the workforce, services 18% and manufacturing and craft-based industry 6%. Agricultural produce – mostly grown in the Terai region bordering India – includes tea, rice, corn, wheat, sugarcane, root crops, milk, and water buffalo meat. Industry mainly involves the processing of agricultural produce, including jute, sugarcane, tobacco, and grain. Its workforce of about 10 million suffers from a severe shortage of skilled labor.

Nepal's economic growth continues to be adversely affected by the political uncertainty. Nevertheless, real GDP growth was estimated to



increase to almost 5 percent for 2011–2012. This is an improvement from the 3.5 percent GDP growth in 2010–2011 and would be the second-highest growth rate in the post-conflict era. Sources of growth include agriculture, construction, financial and other services. The contribution of growth by consumption fueled by remittances has declined since 2010/2011. While remittance growth slowed to 11 percent (in Nepali Rupee terms) in 2010/2011, it has since increased to 37 percent. Remittances are estimated to be equivalent to 25–30 percent of GDP. Inflation has been reduced to a three-year low of 7 percent.

The proportion of poor people has declined substantially since 2003. The percentage of people living below the international poverty line (people earning less than US\$1.25 per day) has halved in seven years. At this measure of poverty the percentage of poor people declined from 53.1% in 2003/2004 to 24.8% in 2010/2011. With a higher poverty line of US\$2 per-capita per day, poverty declined by one quarter to 57.3%. However, the income distribution remains grossly uneven.

In a recent survey, Nepal has performed extremely well in reducing poverty along with Rwanda and Bangladesh as the percentage of poor dropped to 44.2 percent of the population in 2011 from 64.7 percent in 2006—4.1 percentage points per year, which means that Nepal has made improvement in sectors like nutrition, child mortality, electricity, improved flooring and assets. If the progress of reducing poverty continues at this rate, then it is predicted that Nepal will halve the current poverty rate and eradicate it within the next 20 years

The spectacular landscape and diverse, exotic cultures of Nepal represent considerable potential for tourism, but growth in the industry has been stifled by political instability and poor infrastructure. Despite these problems, in 2012 the number of international tourists visiting Nepal was 598,204, a 10% increase on the previous year. The tourism sector contributed nearly 3% of national GDP in 2012 and is the second-biggest foreign income earner after remittances.

The rate of unemployment and underemployment approaches half of the working-age population. Thus many Nepali citizens move to other countries in search of work. Destinations include India, Qatar, the United States, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Brunei Darussalam, Australia, and Canada. Nepal receives \$50 million a year through the Gurkha soldiers who serve in the Indian and British armies and are highly esteemed for their skill and bravery. As of 2010, the total remittance value is around \$3.5 billion. In 2009 alone, the remittance contributed to 22.9% of the nation's GDP.

A long-standing economic agreement underpins a close relationship with India. The country receives foreign aid from the UK, India, Japan, the US, the EU, China, Switzerland, and Scandinavian countries. Poverty is acute; per-capita income is around \$1,000. The distribution of wealth among the Nepali is consistent with that in many developed and developing countries: the highest 10% of households control 39.1% of the national wealth and the lowest 10% control only 2.6%.

The government's budget is about \$1.153 billion, with expenditure of \$1.789 billion (FY 20005/06). The Nepali rupee has been tied to the Indian rupee at an exchange rate of 1.6 for many years. Since the loosening of exchange rate controls in the early 1990s, the black market for foreign exchange has all but disappeared. The inflation rate has dropped to 2.9% after a period of higher inflation during the 1990s.

Nepal's exports of mainly carpets, clothing, hemp, leather goods, jute goods and grain total \$822 million. Import

commodities of mainly gold, machinery and equipment, petroleum products and fertilizer total US\$2 billion. European Union (EU) (46.13%), the US (17.4%), and Germany (7.1%) are its main export partners. Recently, the European Union has become the largest buyer of Nepali ready-made garments (RMG). Exports to the EU accounted for "46.13 percent of the country's total garment exports". Nepal's import partners include India (47.5%), the United Arab Emirates (11.2%), China (10.7%), Saudi Arabia (4.9%), and Singapore (4%).

Besides having landlocked, rugged geography, few tangible natural resources and poor infrastructure, the ineffective post-1950 government and the long-running civil war are also factors in stunting the nation's economic growth and development.

Wikipedia, 2016



STATISTICS:

Labor force: 14.76 million (2014 est.)

Unemployment rate: 46% (2014 est.)

GDP Per Capita income: \$2400 USD (2012 est.)

Population below poverty line: 25.2% (2012 est.)

Public debt: 30% of GDP.

Household income % of the lowest population: 3.2%

POVERTY



Nepal is the poorest country in South Asia and ranks as the twelfth poorest countries in the world. However, over the last decade the country has made considerable progress reducing poverty but is still falling behind. Urban poverty declined from 22% to 10% and rural poverty declined from 43% to 35%.

About four fifths of the working population live in rural areas and depend on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. In these areas the majority of households have little or no access to primary health care, education, clean drinking water and

sanitation services. Life is a constant struggle for survival

Some poor families in Nepal are often obliged to send their children to work rather than to school. In this way the poverty cycle is reused in the next generation. It is estimated that about one quarter of children in Nepal between four and five years old are engaged in some kind of family or wage labor.

In Nepal, only less than half of the population has access to safe drinking water and about half the children below five years of age are underweight. The average age that people live in Nepal is about 54 years while countries like Canada have achieved life expectancy of about 80 years. This is mainly due to the lack of clean water, poverty and unavailability of basic health care. Half of the population live below the poverty line, and about one third of the population lives without clear water. These are people who do not have access to basic needs such as food, health and education. Half the children are malnourished and under weight. Half the people are jobless in Nepal. Average income of Nepal is less than \$200 a year. About 15% of the Nepalese have access to health services. Nearly half the children's in Nepal are under weight. Nepal's most of the poor people live in rural areas yet still a huge percentage of poor people struggle in cities trying to make ends meet. About 80% of Nepalese are farmers.

Most youth leave for cities to help their parents financially. Many go overseas for employment opportunities while others study in cities and/or work there. Those who live in the villages, specially, Kids spend most of their daily life doing house-hold works. Because of the civil war, Nepal's beautiful villages with magnificent mountains and landscape are as empty as a ghost town.

Many of those who flocked to the cities without financial support end up begging on the streets or find job as a servant, taking on the house-hold works of a family in return for food and a shelter. Most poor people, including kids in cities, work as a servant, dishwasher, bus conductor, porter, painter, waiter/server, and helper in many construction works including home construction. Those with a little bit of financial support from parents will try to

get a job while going to a government college. Most students living in cities like Kathmandu work while they study. In the city, the cost of living is extremely high, and poor to mid-class family struggle to pay off bills such as house rent, food, transportation, phone, water, and electricity. The most popular business in the city is opening a convenience shop, easy to start – rent a room, pack it with groceries, and open it. The second most popular business is building a house with lots of rooms for rent – in fact people build their houses with extra rooms for others to rent.

CURRENCY

Nepal's official currency is the Nepalese Rupee or NRP & Rs. The Nepalese Rupee comes in 1, 2, 5, 10 coins and 20, 25, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 rupee notes. There are smaller coins called "paise" which you will come across but really never use. They come in 1, 5, 10, 25, 50 paise coins. Large denomination of Nepalese rupees



have their own names. 100,000 Nepalese rupees is known as 1 lakh. 200,000 is known as 2 lakh and so on. 2,000,000 Nepalese rupees is known as 2 lakhs. It's the "S" at the end that's important to remember. In millions add it, in one hundred thousands don't. Note: Up until about 5 years ago Indian Rupees were accepted in many parts of Nepal as regular cash with their own valuation in exchange for goods. That is no longer the case. Indian rupees will often be accepted but only after being converted to Nepalese Rupees via current currency exchange rates.

CONVERTING CURRENCY

Nepal's number one industry is tourism. Therefore there are many ways to get your cash converted to Nepalese rupees throughout the main cities in Nepal. However Kathmandu remains the most popular place to obtain your money from home. If you are bringing cash from lesser known currency it's best to change it in Kathmandu city rather than anywhere else. The main ways to obtain Nepalese Rupees are: ATM's, money exchangers, cash advance credit cards, travelers cheques and wire services. Major cash currencies for converting to Rs include: USD, GBP, EURO, YEN and Indian Rupee. Most other currencies are accepted but stick with converting them to rupee in Kathmandu rather than Pokhara or other smaller cities. While generally a safe country be careful at night or in crowded streets if accessing an ATM. Likewise on treks where you need to carry large quantities of cash - don't leave it unattended in your room.

ATMs

Automated Teller Machines are available throughout Nepal. However only Kathmandu and Pokhara have regularly "working" machines that accept international cards. Throughout the rest of the country they exist for National banks but not all International bank cards are accepted. Popular ATM's that accept international credit cards (VISA, MasterCard) in Kathmandu and Pokhara include: Standard Chartered, Everest Bank, Nabil Bank & Himalaya Bank. Cash is given out only in Nepalese Rupees. Cirrus and American Express cards will need to be checked individually as they each have different relationships with national banks. Ask your own bank who they recommend to use in Nepal before leaving. The best places to try ATM's is around Thamel in Kathmandu and Lakeside in Pokhara. Do be aware of electrical power failures when using ATM's.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards can be used in a few major stores, hotels, restaurants, tour agencies and banks. Do be aware of commissions added and don't leave your credit card unattended with anyone no matter their excuse. All major Credit cards are accepted in Nepal. These include VISA, MasterCard, Cirrus and American Express. Do be aware that not all of these cards will work in some of the ATM's. There are small signs in a few ATM's saying what will work. It's best to stick with the larger international banks than the smaller regional banks for withdrawing cash.

When paying for tourist activities, hotels, flights, treks or goods in person by credit card you should be aware of certain things. Chip & pin services are not fully active in Nepal. Many retail stores still use old style carbon copy machines. Do not leave your credit card with anyone. Electricity black outs are common in Nepal and many genuine people and not so genuine will ask you to leave the card with them until later. It's much better to take the card with you and come back later yourself rather than leave it there. If paying for meals in restaurants do be aware of additional charges such as VAT and services charges along with credit card fees and currency exchanges. You could be spending a lot more than you think. Paying for things in Nepal by cash is generally safer than by Credit Card. If going to Nepal with a credit card make sure you notify your credit card company first as many have Nepal on a black list and might cancel your card if you start to use it in Nepal without letting them know.

MONEY CHANGERS

There are plenty of Money Changers in Nepal's tourist areas and they are known as either "Money Changers" or "Foreign Exchange (FOREX)." All major currencies are accepted. Many medium sized currencies are accepted. And many minor currencies are also accepted though you might have to wait a while. Morning rates are often posted outside of the money changer store fronts every morning. The rates don't vary much at all between stores and usually if you think you are getting a good bargain they'll recalculate as you hand them your money. Ask what the exchange rate is first and if they charge a commission. Avoid hotels or the airports for changing money.

THINGS TO BUY

There are beautiful things to purchase at all price points in Kathmandu. From religious icons to fun children's clothing, you can shop to your heart's content. Prayer bowls come in all size and prices - even if you don't buy, learn how to play these melodic and calming bowls. Any shopkeeper will teach you. Hand woven Tibetan rugs are available in small shops within the Tibetan communities, again in all sizes and prices, ranging from rough wool children's rugs at a few dollars U.S. to beautiful and intricate silk masterpieces at many thousands of dollars. The same is true for the intricate paintings - if it is painted by a master, using a brush the thickness of one human hair and following a centuries old pattern, you can expect to pay a premium for it.

PEOPLE

According to the 2011 census, Nepal's population grew from 9 million people in 1950 to 26.5 million. From 2001 to 2011, the average family size declined from 5.44 to 4.9. The census also noted some 1.9 million absentee people, over a million more than in 2001; most are male laborers employed overseas, predominantly in South Asia and the Middle East. This correlated with the drop in sex ratio from 94.41 as compared to 99.80 for 2001. The annual population growth rate is 1.35%.

The Nepali are descendants of three major migrations from India, Tibet, and North Burma and the Chinese province of Yunnan via Assam. Among the earliest inhabitants were the Kirat of east mid-region, Newar of the Kathmandu Valley and aboriginal Tharu and Maithali in the southern Terai region. The ancestors of the Brahmin and Chetri caste groups came from India's present Kumaon, Garhwal and Kashmir regions, while other ethnic groups trace their origins to North Burma and Yunnan and Tibet, e.g., the Gurung and Magar in the west, Rai, Sunuwar and Limbu in the east (from Yunnan and north Burma via Assam), and Sherpa and Bhutia in the north (from Tibet).

Despite the migration of a significant section of the population to the Terai (southern plains) in recent years, the majority of Nepali still live in the central highlands; the northern mountains are sparsely populated. Kathmandu, with a population of over 2.6 million (metropolitan area: 5 million), is the largest city in the country and the cultural and economic heart.

According to the World Refugee Survey 2008, published by the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Nepal hosted a population of refugees and asylum seekers in 2007 numbering approximately 130,000. Of this population, approximately 109,200 persons were from Bhutan and 20,500 from People's Republic of China. The government of Nepal restricted ethnic Nepali expelled from Bhutan to seven camps in the Jhapa and Morang districts, and refugees were not permitted to work in most professions. At present, the United States is working towards resettling more than 60,000 of these refugees in the US. Nepal life revolves mostly around agriculture and allied activities in small villages, where the overwhelming majority of Nepals live. As per the 2001 census, 72.2% of the population lives in about 638,000 villages and the remaining 27.8% lives in more than 5,100 towns and over 380 urban agglomerations.

Caste system in modern Nepal

The Nepalese caste system the traditional system of social stratification of Nepal. The caste system defines social classes by a number of hierarchical endogamous groups often termed as Jāt. This custom was previously only prevalent in the societies of the Khas, Newār, Madhesi.

Since the unification of Nepal in the 18th century, Nepal's various indigenous "Janajati" tribes as well as few Madhesi castes have been incorporated within the caste hierarchy. Nepalese caste system broadly borrows the classical Chaturvarnashram model consisting of four broad social classes or varna: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. The ethnic indigenous "Adivasi/Janajati" groups do not belong to this caste system. The caste system is still intact today but the rules are not as rigid as they were in the past. In 1962, a law was passed making it illegal to discriminate against other castes led all castes to be equally treated by the law. Education is free and

open to all castes.

The caste system conjoints a structural class divide which persists, in which lower castes/ethnicities are generally socio-economically are not equal like those of higher castes/ethnicities. Recent research has also shown that when it comes to Nepali people's impressions of social change, "Poverty, Human Resources and Region" explain more of the variation than "Ethnicity, Caste or Religious belonging" - i.e. people's perception of their own social situation has more to do with geography and objective social class, than with their association with the groups that the state has based its internal social policy on.

Participation of Khas-Brahmins in Civil Service is 41.3% in spite of its population size of less than 13%. The population of Newar is around 5%, but its occupancy in Civil Service is more than one-thirds (33.2%), the population of Khas Chhetris constitutes 17.6% but its participation is mere 14.7%. If the major three castes (Khas Brahmin & Chhetris, and Newars) combine together their shares in the Government of Nepal Civil Service Employment is 89.2% in 1991. Their dominance is reflected in education, administration and economical activities of the nation. Among those 73.8% in higher education belong to higher castes, 22.0% Janajatis and 2.9% Dalit.

The Khas Brahmins and Chhetris have become major decision makers in the bureaucracy of Nepal has become crystal clear. In terms of earning/income generation, Newar has the highest per capita income of Rs. 38,193. The Hill 'high' castes come next with an average income of Rs. 24,399, Janajatis ranks third with an average income of Rs. 15,630, Dalit Rs. 12,114 and Muslim ranks the lowest, Rs.11,014' Need of Social Integration The democratic transitions also failed to be inclusive management and functioning governance mainly because government was unable to understand and articulate the spirit of all Nepalese people irrespective of their caste, gender, ethnicity, religion etc.

In this process the left outs were oppressed class (Dalits), women, the poorest of the poor, powerless and the second class citizen and indigenous nationalities (Janajatis). In Nepal, high castes dominate 91.2% among the prominent position in politics and bureaucracy. The Dalits who constitute 12.8 percent of the total population of the country have no representation in the higher echelons of power' (Gurung, H. 2006). Similarly, the Janajati has 36.0% of the total population of the country, has representation of 7.1%. In terms of education, 88.0% of Khas Brahmins & Chhetris, and Newars have access to school, 12.0% have never been to school. More than fifty (52.0%) of Hill Dalits, 47.0% of the Tarai Dalits, 48.0% of the Muslims and 30 percent of the Hill Janajatis have never been to school.(Census, 2001)

In recent times, following the overthrow of the Nepali monarchy and move towards a federal republic, ethnicity and caste have taken center stage - the indigenous peoples (Adivasi Janajati) who make up a third of the country having been guaranteed rights that have not yet been fulfilled. There is an observable reaction to this among certain Khas Brahmin & Chhetri groups, seeking to prevent group-based rights from becoming an important factor in the country that earlier had a political system associated with group-based discrimination. Certain outside analysts have suggested that "seeking a balance in approach requires addressing both specific indigenous historical injustices while creating a common citizenship for all marginalised citizens regardless of identity, which remains a particularly challenging issue for Nepal.

LANGUAGE

Nepal's diverse linguistic heritage stems from four major language groups: Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Mongolian and various indigenous language isolates. The major languages of Nepal (percent spoken as native language) according to the 2011 census are Nepali (44.6%), Maithili (11.7%), Bhojpuri (6.0%), Tharu (5.8%), Tamang (5.1%), Nepal Bhasa (3.2%), Bajjika (3%) and Magar (3.0%), Doteli (3.0%), Urdu (2.6%) and Sunwar. In addition, Nepal is home to at least four indigenous sign languages.

Derived from Sanskrit, Nepali is written in Devanagari script. Nepali is the official national language and serves as lingua franca among Nepali of different ethnolinguistic groups. The regional languages Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Maithili and rarely Urdu of Nepali Muslims are spoken in the southern Terai Region. Many Nepali in government and business speak English as well. Varieties of Tibetan are spoken in and north of the higher Himalaya where standard literary Tibetan is widely understood by those with religious education. Local dialects in the Terai and hills are mostly unwritten with efforts underway to develop systems for writing many in Devanagari or the Roman alphabet. Wikipedia, 2015

CULTURE and ETIQUETTE

Many different ethnic groups coexist in Nepal, each with their own complex customs. In the Kathmandu Valley, where they mix the most, there's a high degree of tolerance of different clothes and lifestyles – a fact that travellers sense, and often abuse. Away from the tourist areas, however, ethnic groups are quite parochial, and foreign ways may cause offence. That said, many taboos relax the further and higher you head into the mountains, as Hindu behavioural norms are only partially shared by Buddhist and animist ethnic groups.

The **do's and don'ts** listed here are more flexible than they sound. You'll make gaffes all the time and Nepalis will rarely say anything. When in doubt, do as you see Nepalis doing.

COMMON COURTESIES

As a foreigner, you're likely to be an **object of curiosity**, and you may be joined in the street or on the trail by someone who just wants to chat. Nepalis will constantly be befriending you, wanting to exchange addresses, take photos and extract solemn promises that you will write to them.

Giving the Nepali **greeting**, namaste ("I salute the god within you"), your palms held together as if praying, is one of the most attractive and addictive of Nepalese customs. It isn't used freely or casually: think of it as "how do you do?" rather than "hello!" If you want to show great respect, namaskar is a more formal or subservient variant.

Another delightful aspect of Nepali culture is the familiar ways Nepalis address each other: it's well worth learning didi ("older sister"), bahini ("younger sister"), daai ("older brother"), bhaai ("younger brother"), buwa ("father") and aamaa ("mother") for the warm reaction they'll usually provoke. To be more

formal or respectful, just add ji to the end of someone's name, as in "namaste, John-ji".

The word dhanyabaad is usually translated as "thank you" but is normally reserved for an act beyond the call of duty – so if you feel you have to say something, "thank you" in English is widely understood.

The gestures for "**yes**" and "**no**" are also confusing to foreigners. To indicate agreement, tilt your head slightly to one side and then back the other way. To tell a tout or a seller "no", hold one hand up in front of you, palm forwards, and swivel your wrist subtly, as if you were adjusting a bracelet; shaking the head in the Western fashion looks too much like "yes". To point use the chin, rather than the finger.

CASTE AND STATUS

Hill Nepal is less rigid than much of India, but **caste** is deeply ingrained in the national psyche. Nepal "abolished" the caste system in 1963, but millennia-old habits take time to change. Though professions are changing and "love marriage" is more popular, caste and status still determine whom most Nepalis may (or must) marry, where they can live and who they can associate with. Foreigners are technically casteless, but in the remote far western hills they can be considered **polluting** to orthodox, high-caste Hindus. Wherever you travel you should be sensitive to minor caste restrictions: for example, you may not be allowed into the kitchen of a high-caste Hindu home.

Status (ijat) is equally important. Meeting for the first time, Nepalis observe a ritual of asking each other's name, home town and profession, which helps determine relative status and therefore the correct level of deference. As a Westerner you have a lot of status, and relatively speaking you're fabulously wealthy.

EATING

Probably the greatest number of Nepali taboos are to do with **food**. One underlying principle is that once you've touched something to your lips, it's polluted (jutho) for everyone else. If you take a sip from someone else's water bottle, try not to let it touch your lips (and the same applies if it's your own). Don't eat off someone else's plate or offer anyone food you've taken a bite of, and don't touch cooked food until you've bought it.

If eating with your **hands**, use the right one only. The left hand is reserved for washing after defecating; you can use it to hold a glass or utensil while you eat, but don't wipe your mouth, or pass food with it. It's considered good manners to give and receive everything with the right hand. In order to convey respect, offer money, food or gifts with both hands, or with the right hand while the left touches the wrist.

CLOTHING AND THE BODY

Nepalis are innately conservative in their attitudes to **clothing**, and it's worth knowing how you may come across. The following hints apply especially in temples and monasteries.

Men should always wear a shirt in public, and long trousers if possible (shorts are fine on well-used trekking trails). For **women** in villages, a sari or skirt that hangs to mid-calf level is traditional, though trousers are acceptable these days. Shoulders are usually covered, and vest-tops are considered risqué. Girls in Kathmandu

and Pokhara do wear shorts or short skirts, but this is relatively new and you run the risk of being seen as sexually available. Generally, looking **clean** shows respect – and earns it. Ungroomed travellers may find themselves treated with significantly less courtesy.

Only women with babies or small children bare their breasts. When Nepali men bathe in public, they do it in their underwear, and women bathe underneath a lungi (sarong). Foreigners are expected to do likewise. In Nepal, the forehead is regarded as the most sacred part of the body and it's impolite to touch an adult Nepali's head. The **feet** are the most unclean part, so don't put yours on chairs or tables, and when sitting, try not to point the soles of your feet at anyone. It's also bad manners to step over the legs of someone seated.

Male friends will often hold hands in public, but not lovers of the opposite sex. **Couples** who cuddle or kiss in public will at best draw unwelcome attention. Handshaking has increased, but not all women will feel comfortable to shake a man's hand.

TEMPLES AND HOMES

Major **Hindu temples** or their innermost sanctums are usually off-limits to nonbelievers, who are a possible cause of ritual pollution. Where you are allowed in, be respectful, take your shoes off before entering, don't take photos unless you've asked permission, and leave a few rupees in the donation box. Try not to touch offerings or shrines. Leather is usually not allowed in temple precincts.

Similar sensitivity is due at Buddhist temples and monasteries. If you're granted an audience with a lama, it's traditional to present him with a kata (a ceremonial white scarf, usually sold nearby). Walk around Buddhist stupas and monuments clockwise.

If invited for a meal in a **private home**, you can bring fruit or sweets, but don't expect thanks as gifts tend to be received without any fuss. Take your shoes off when entering, or follow the example of your host. When the food is served you may be expected to eat first, so you won't be able to follow your host's lead. Take less than you can eat – asking for seconds is the best compliment you can give. The meal is typically served at the end of a gathering; when the eating is done, everyone leaves.

Sherpas and some other highland groups regard the **family hearth** as sacred, so don't throw rubbish or scraps into it.

HUSTLE AND HASSLE

Indian-style **hustle** is on the rise in Nepal. You'll get a dose of it at the airport or any major bus station, where hotel touts lie in wait to accost arriving tourists. They also cruise the tourist strips of Kathmandu, offering drugs, treks, and, increasingly, sex. For the most part, though, Nepali touts are less aggressive than their Indian brethren, and if you're entering Nepal from North India, where aggressive touts have to be dealt with firmly, you should prepare to adjust your attitude. Ignore them entirely and they're likely to ignore you. If that doesn't work, most touts will leave you alone if asked nicely, whereas they'll take a rude brush-off personally.

The tourist zones are full of other lone entrepreneurs and middlemen – **touts** by any other name. Ticket agents,

rikshaw-wallahs, guesthouse-owners and guides are ever-anxious to broker services and information. They usually get their commission from the seller; your price is bumped up correspondingly. In general, cutting out the middleman gives you more control over the transaction. You should find, however, that a few rupees (and smiles) given to people whose services you may require again will smooth the way and make your stay more pleasant.

BEGGARS

Dealing with **beggars** is part and parcel of traveling in Nepal. The pathos might initially get to you, as it should, but you will probably adjust to it fairly quickly. A thornier dilemma is how to cope with panhandling kids.

A small number of bona fide beggars make an honest living from bakshish (alms). Hindus and Buddhists have a long and honourable tradition of giving to lepers, the disabled, sadhus and monks. It's terrifyingly easy for a **Nepali woman** to find herself destitute and on the street, either widowed or divorced – perhaps for failing to bear a son or from a dowry dispute. There are no **unemployment benefits** in Nepal, and many who can't work and have no family turn to begging (or prostitution).

In the hills, ailing locals will occasionally approach foreigners for **medicine**: it's unwise to make any prescriptions unless you're qualified to diagnose the illness. However, before leaving the country you can donate unused medicines to the destitute through the dispensary at Kathmandu's Bir Hospital, or to the Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre in Kathmandu, which gives them to monks.

Children

Throughout Nepal – principally along the tourist trails – **children** will hound you. Repeatedly shouting "namaste" or "hello" at the weird-looking stranger is universal and often kids will ask you for "one dollar", "chocolate" or "pen". They're not orphans or beggars, just ordinary schoolkids who've seen too many well-meaning but thoughtless tourists handing out little gifts wherever they go. A firm-but-gentle hoina holaa! ("I don't think so!") is usually enough. Few children would ever ask a Nepali for money, so reacting like a local will quickly embarrass them. Sometimes, however, they will tag along for hours; the best defences are a sense of humour and/or a strategic lack of engagement.

Street children are a different case – don't give (or not directly), and watch your wallet.

NEPAL KEY PHRASES

English	नेपाली (Nepali)
Welcome	स्वागतम् (swagatam)
Hello (General greeting)	नमस्ते (namaste)
How are you?	तपाईंलाई कस्तो छ? (tapaii lai kasto cha?) तिमीलाई कस्तो छ? (timi lai kasto cha?)
Reply to 'How are you?'	मलाई सन्धै छ । तपाईंलाई नि? (malaai sanchai cha. tapaiilaai ni?)
Long time no see	लामो समयसम्म हराउनु भयो नी! (lamo samaya samma haraunu bhayo ni!)
What's your name?	तपाईंको नाम के हो? (tapaiiko naam ke ho?) तिम्रो नाम के हो? (timro naam ke ho?)
My name is ...	मेरो नाम ... हो (mero naam ... ho)
Where are you from?	तपाईंकी घर काहाँ हो? (tapaiikii ghara kaaham ho?)
I'm from ...	मेरो घर ... हो (mero ghara ... ho)
Pleased to meet you	तपाईंलाई भेटेर खुशी लाग्यो (tapaiilaai bhetera khushii laagyo)
Good morning (Morning greeting)	शुभ प्रभात (subha prabhat)
Good afternoon (Afternoon greeting)	नमस्कार (namaskar)
Good evening (Evening greeting)	शुभ सन्ध्या (subha sandhya)
Good night	शुभ रात्री (subha ratri)

Goodbye (Parting phrases)	नमस्ते (namaste)
Good luck	शुभ कामना (subhakamana)
Cheers! (Toasts used when drinking)	शुभ कामना (subhakamana)
Have a nice day	शुभ दिन (subha din)
Bon appetit / Have a nice meal	राम्ररी खानु होला (ramrari khanu hola)
Bon voyage / Have a good journey	शुभ-यात्रा (shubha yatra)
I understand	मैले बुझें (maile bujhaam)
I don't understand	मैले बुझिन (maile bujhina)
Yes	हो (ho)
No	होइन (hoena)
Maybe	शायद (saayad)
I don't know	मलाई थाहा छैन (malaaii thaahaa chaina)
Please speak more slowly	बिस्तारै भन्नुस् (bistaarai bhannus)
Please say that again	फेरि भन्नुस् (pheri bhannus)
Please write it down	कृपया लेख्नुहोस् (kripaya lekhnuhos)
Do you speak Nepali?	के तपाइ नेपाली बोल्नुहुन्छ? (ke tapain nepali bolnuhunchha?)
Yes, a little (reply to 'Do you speak ...?')	हजुर, अलि अलि बोल्छु (hajur, ali ali bolchhu)
Speak to me in Nepali?	म सँग नेपालीमा बोल्नुस। (ma sanga nepali ma bolnus)
How do you say ... in Nepali?	तपाइले नेपालीमा लाइ कसरी भन्नुहुन्छ? (tapain le nepalima ... lai kasari bhannu hunchha?)

Excuse me	माफ गर्नुस् (maapha ganus)
How much is this?	यो कति हो? (yo kati ho)
Sorry	माफ गर्नुस् (maapha ganus)
Thank you	धन्यवाद (dhanyabad)
Reply to thank you	<i>no equivalent</i>
Where's the toilet?	शौचालय कता छ? (sauchalaya kata chha)
This gentleman will pay for everything	यहाँ हरेकचिजको भुक्तानी गर्नुहुन्छ। (yaha harekchijko bhuktani garnuhunchha)
This lady will pay for everything	उहाँले हरेकचिजको भुक्तानी गर्नुहुन्छ। (uhale harekchijko bhuktani garnuhunchha)
Would you like to dance with me?	के तपाइ मसँग नाच्न चाहनुहुन्छ? (ke tapain masanga nachna chahanuhunchha)
I love you	म तपाइलाइ माया गर्छु। (ma tapainlai maya garchu)
Get well soon	चाँडै निको हुनुहोस् (chadai niko hunuhos)
Leave me alone!	मलाइ एकलै छोड्नुहोस् (malai eaklai chodnuhos)
Help!	सहयोग गर्नुस् (sahayao garnus)
Fire!	आगो बाल्नुस् (aago balnus)
Stop!	रोक्नुहोस् (roknuhos) रोकिनुहोस् (rokinuhos)
Call the police!	प्रहरी बोलाउनुहोस् (prahari bolaunuhos)
Christmas and New Year greetings	क्रिसमसको शुभकामना तथा नयाँ वर्षको शुभकामना (krismas ko subhakamana tatha nayabarsha ko subhakamana)

Birthday greetings	जन्मदिनको शुभकामना! (janmadinko shubhakamana)
One language is never enough	एउटामात्र भाषा कहिल्यै पर्याप्त हुँदैन। (euṭāmātra bhāṣā kahilyai paryāpta huṁdaina)

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ए ऐ ओ औ अं अः अँ
a ā i ī u ū e, ē ai o, ō au aṁ aḥ aṁ

Nepali Vowel sounds

क ka	ख kha	ग ga	घ gha	ङ ṅa
च ca	छ cha	ज ja	झ jha	ञ ña
ट ṭa	ठ ṭha	ड ḍa	ढ ḍha	ण ṇa
त ta	थ tha	द da	ध dha	न na
प pa	फ pha	ब ba	भ bha	म ma
य ya	र ra	ल la	व va	
श śa	ष ṣa	स sa	ह ha	
क्ष kṣa	त्र tra	ज्ञ gya		

Nepali Consonants sounds

EDUCATION

Literacy (2011)

Total 65.9%

Male 75.1%

Female 57.4%

Nepal was long based on Home schooling and Gurukula. The first formal school was established in 1853 but was intended to the elites. The birth of the Nepalese democracy in 1951 opened the classrooms to a more diverse population.

The education plan in 1971 fastened the development of Education in the country: In 1951, Nepal had 10 000 students divided in 300 schools, with an adult literacy rate of 5%. By 2010, the adult literacy rate had jumped to 60.3% (female: 46.3%, male: 73%) and the number of schools to 49 000. Poverty and social exclusion of women, lower caste, indigenous people are nowadays the main constraints to an equitable access to Education. The Ministry of Education is the apex body responsible for initiating and managing education activities in the country. The Minister of Education, assisted by the State/Assistant Minister, provides political leadership to the Ministry. The Ministry, as a part of the government bureaucracy, is headed by the Secretary of Education and consists of the central office, various functional offices, and offices located at the regional and district levels. The Central Office or the Ministry is mainly responsible for policy development, planning and monitoring, and evaluation regarding different aspects of education.

With a purpose of bringing education administration nearer to the people, the Ministry has established five Regional Directorates and 75 District Education Offices in five development regions and 75 districts respectively. These decentralized offices are responsible for overseeing nonformal and school-level education activities in their respective areas. Regional Directorates are mainly responsible for coordinating and monitoring and evaluation of education activities and the District Education Offices are the main implementing agencies.

The National Center for Educational Development (NCED) is an apex body for teacher training in Nepal. There are 34 Educational Training Centers (ETCs) under NCED to support the teachers in pedagogical areas.

Legally, there are two types of school in the country: community and institutional. Community schools receive regular government grants whereas institutional schools are funded by school's own or other non-governmental sources. Institutional schools are organized either as a non-profit trust or as a company. However, in practical terms, schools are mainly of two types: public (community) and private (institutional).

A third type of school is the kind run by the local people enthusiastic toward having a school in their locality. They do not receive regular government grants and most of them do not have any other sustainable financial source. Supported and managed by the local people, they can be thus identified as the real community schools.

Except one, all universities/academies are publicly managed and are supported by public source fund. However,

public universities also provide affiliation to private colleges. Two academies of higher education are single college institutes whereas other universities have constituent and affiliated colleges across the country. Education in Nepal is structured as school education and higher education. School education includes primary level of grades 1–5, lower secondary and secondary levels of grades 6–8 and 9–10 respectively. Pre-primary level of education is available in some areas. Six years old is the prescribed age for admission into grade one. A national level School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination is conducted at the end of grade 10.

Grades 11 and 12 are considered as higher secondary level. Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB) supervises higher secondary schools which are mostly under private management. Previously these grades were under the university system and were run as proficiency certificate level. Though some universities still offer these programs, the policy now is to integrate these grades into the school system.

Higher education consists of bachelor, masters, and PhD levels. Depending upon the stream and subject, bachelors level may be of three to five years' duration. The duration of masters level is generally two years. Some universities offer programs like M Phil and post-graduate diplomas.

Vocational education in Nepal starts after lower secondary education. Students can choose to follow a two-year curriculum leading to the "Technical School leaving Certificate". Universities also offers professional and technical degrees. Out of the formal track, short-term programs(1 year) focusing on skills development are also available. There is DLE which refers to class 8.As new educational structure is going to be introduced very soon.

RELIGION

Nepal is a secular state. Prior to the movement for democracy in early 2006 and the sacking of King Gyanendra in 2008, the country was officially a Hindu state. According to the 2011 census, 81.3% of the Nepalese population was Hindu, 9.0% was Buddhist, 4.5% was Muslim, 3.0% was Kiratist (indigenous ethnic religion), 1.42% was Christian, and 0.9% follow other religions or no religion.

According to the 2001 census, 80.62 percent of Nepalese were Hindu, 10.74 percent Buddhist, 4.20 percent Muslim, 3.60 percent Kirant (an indigenous religion), 0.45 percent Christian, and 0.4 percent were classified as other groups such as Bön religion. In 1971 Hindus were 89.4 percent of the population, Buddhists 7.5 percent, and Kirants statistically 0 percent. However, statistics on religious groups are complicated by the ubiquity of dual faith practices, particularly among Hindus and Buddhists. Moreover, shifts in the population's religious composition also reflect political changes.

The geographical distribution of religious groups in the early 1990s revealed a preponderance of Hindus, accounting for at least 87 percent of the population in every region. The largest concentrations of Buddhists were found in the eastern hills, the Kathmandu Valley, and the central Tarai; in each area about 10 percent of the people were Buddhist. Buddhism was more common among the Newar and Tibeto-Nepalese groups. Among the Tibeto-Nepalese, those most influenced by Hinduism were the Magar, Sunwar, and Rai peoples. Hindu influence was less prominent among the Gurung, Limbu, Bhote, Tamang and Thakali groups, who continued to employ Buddhist monks for their religious ceremonies. Since both Hinduism as well as Buddhism are Dharmic religions, they usually accept each other's practices and many people practice a combination of both.

In 2015, a new constitution was adopted and granted equal rights to all religions in Nepal.

FLAG

The national flag of Nepal is the world's only non-quadrilateral national flag. The flag is a simplified combination of two single pennons, the vexillological word for a pennant. Its crimson red is the colour of the rhododendron, the country's national flower. Red is also the sign of victory in war. The blue border is the colour of peace. Until 1962, the flag's emblems, the sun and the crescent moon, had human faces. They were removed to modernize the flag.

The flag was adopted, with the formation of a new constitutional government, on December 16, 1962. The individual pennants had been used for the preceding two centuries and the double pennant since the 19th century. The flag borrows the basic design from the original design, which has been in use for more than 2,000 years.



GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY

GOVERNMENT

Constitution of Nepal has defined three organs of the government.

Executive: The form of governance of Nepal shall be a multi-party, competitive, federal democratic republican parliamentary system based on plurality.

Federal Executive

The executive power of Nepal shall rest with the Council of Ministers in accordance with the Constitution and law. The President shall appoint the parliamentary party leader of the political party with the majority in the House of Representatives as a Prime Minister, and a Council of Ministers shall be formed in his/her chairmanship.

Provincial Executive

The executive power of the Province shall, pursuant to the Constitution and laws, be vested in the Council of Ministers of the Province. Provided that the executive power of the Province shall be exercised by the Provincial Head in case of absence of the Provincial Executive in a State of Emergency or enforcement of Federal rule. Every province shall have a Provincial Head as the representative of the Federal government. The President shall appoint a Provincial Head for every province. The Provincial Head shall exercise the rights and duties as specified in the constitution or laws. The Provincial Head shall appoint the leader of the parliamentary party with majority in the Provincial Assembly as the Chief Minister and the Provincial Council of Ministers shall be formed under the chairpersonship of the Chief Minister.

Legislative

Federal Legislature

There shall be a Legislature, called Federal Parliament, consisting of two Houses, namely the House of Representatives and the National Assembly.

The House of Representatives: Except when dissolved earlier, the term of House of Representatives shall be five years. The House of Representatives shall consist of 275 members as follows:

- 165 members elected through the first-past-the-post electoral system consisting of one member from each of the one hundred and sixty five electoral constituencies formed by dividing Nepal into 165 constituencies based on geography, and population.
- 110 elected from proportional representation electoral system where voters vote for parties, while treating the whole country as a single electoral constituency.

The National Assembly: National Assembly shall be a permanent house. The tenure of members of National

Assembly shall be six years. The National Assembly shall consist of two 59 members as follows:

- 56 members elected from an Electoral College comprising members of Provincial Assembly and chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of Village councils and Mayors and Deputy Mayors of Municipal councils, with different weights of votes for each, with eight members from each province, including at least three women, one Dalit, one person with disability or minority;
- 3 members, including at least one woman, to be nominated by the President on the recommendation of Government of Nepal.

Provincial Legislature: There shall be a unicameral legislature in a province which shall be called the Provincial Assembly. Every Provincial Assembly shall consist of the following number of members:

- Members equal to double the number of members to be elected through the first-past-the-post (FPTP) election system to the House of Representatives from the concerned province,
- The number of members to be elected through the Proportional Representation (PR) election system equal to the number equivalent to the remaining forty per cent when the number of members from FPTP is regarded as sixty per cent.

Judiciary: Powers relating to justice in Nepal shall be exercised by courts and other judicial institutions in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, other laws and recognized principles of justice. There shall be the following courts in Nepal:

- Supreme Court
- High Courts
- District Courts

MILITARY

Nepal's military consists of the Nepali Army, which includes the Nepali Army Air Service. The Nepali Police Force is the civilian police and the Armed Police Force Nepal is the paramilitary force. Service is voluntary and the minimum age for enlistment is 18 years. Nepal spends \$99.2 million (2004) on its military—1.5% of its GDP. Much of the equipment and arms are imported from India. Consequently, the US provided M16s, M4s and other Colt weapons to combat communist (Maoist) insurgents. The standard-issue battle rifle of the Nepali army is the Colt M16.

In the new regulations by Nepali Army, female soldiers have been barred from participating in combat situations and fighting in the frontlines of war. However, they are allowed to be a part of the army in sections like intelligence, headquarters, signals and operations.

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TRANSNATIONAL ISSUES

Disputes - international:

Joint border commission continues to work on contested sections of boundary with India, including the 400 sq km dispute over the source of the Kalapani River; India has instituted a stricter border regime to restrict transit of Maoist insurgents and illegal cross-border activities

Refugees and internally displaced persons:

Refugees (country of origin): 15,000 (Tibet/China) (2014); fewer than 18,000 (Bhutan) (2015)

IDPs: 58,689 (remaining from ten-year Maoist insurgency that officially ended in 2006; figure does not include people displaced since 2007 by inter-communal violence and insecurity in the Terai region; 2015 earthquakes) (2015)

stateless persons: undetermined (2013); note - in 2007-2008 the government distributed 2.6 million citizenship certificates to the 3.4 million people without one; the remaining 800,000 without citizenship certificates are not necessarily stateless, and the UNHCR is working with the Nepali Government to clarify their situation; smaller numbers of Bhutanese Hindu refugees of Nepali origin (the Lhotsampa) who were stripped of Bhutanese nationality and forced to flee their country in the late 1980s and early 1990s - and undocumented Tibetan refugees who arrived in Nepal prior to the 1990s - are considered stateless

Illicit drugs:

illicit producer of cannabis and hashish for the domestic and international drug markets; transit point for opiates from Southeast Asia to the West

CIA World Fact Book, 2015

EMBLEM OF NEPAL



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