

nepali traditions

AND CULTURE



HORNBILL SCHOOL
2019

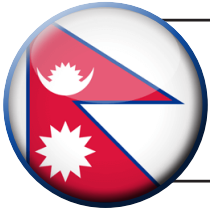


Nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, Nepal is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Asia. With a complex mix of people of Indo-Tibetan origin and its own indigenous people with influences from both India Tibet, and all the way up to Mongolia in the North.

There are more than 40 different tribes.
There are more than 60 sub castes and different ethnic groups which make up Nepal.

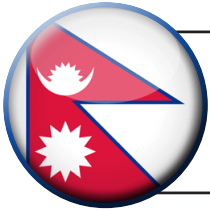


Content



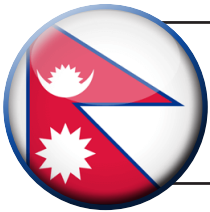
Greetings

Use the correct terms to greet people.



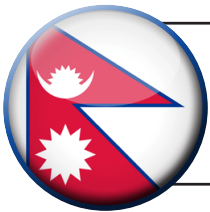
Food & Hygiene

Food is key to all cultures.



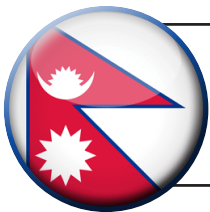
Beliefs & Faith

Nepali culture is based on deep religious beliefs.



Useful Phrases

Learn simple phrases to help you communicate.



About Nepal

Festivals, the Arts, Rituals and Rites.

In Nepal there are more than 100 ethnic or tribal groups who each have their own particular customs and traditions. Additionally there are 123 different ethnic languages or dialects spoken in Nepal.

The customs listed in this booklet are practiced generally by our

Nepali community in Brunei although there may be slight tribal or regional variations.

Nepali or Hindu culture very much centers around parents, teachers, religion and values and they each play an important role in the everyday life of the Nepali people.

You will not cause offence to people from a different cultural background if you are unaware of such expectations because Nepali people do understand that there are different customs and traditions in other cultures as well.



Greeting

Gre



Greeting each other in the Nepali Community

Among the most common form of greetings, Namaste (pronounced Na mus tey) is widely accepted. This was mainly due to the influx of Sanskrit as a dominant source of religious literature and language.

The Word Namaste' is a derivative of a Sanskrit word commonly used across Nepal/ India/ Burma/Thailand etc. which literally means 'I bow to you'.

In the Himalayan region with more of Indo-Tibetan population, they may say 'chhey' and bow one's head with sometimes hands joined; especially to elders or older people.

Among the Limbu's, they may say '**Sewaru**'.

Namaste or **Namashkar** is the accepted form of greeting and introduction amongst Nepali people. It can be used for any part of the day and when meeting or parting.

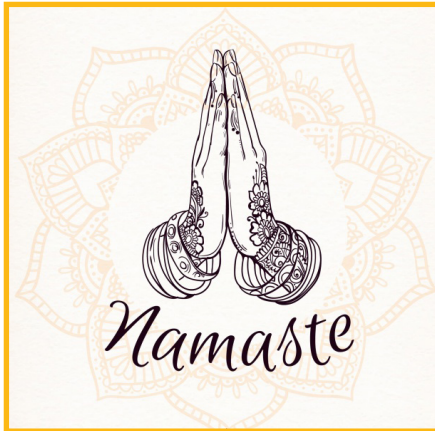
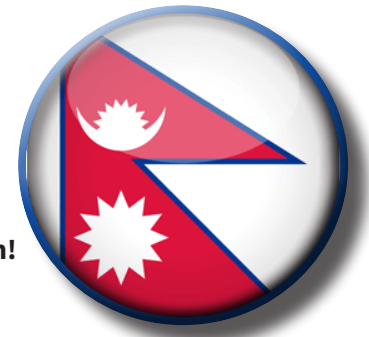
May your mind and my mind come together and may this meeting or conference be a successful one.'

However, within the British Gurkha community, soldiers may sometimes use 'Ram, Ram hajur' as a form of greeting with each other (male to male only). Lord Ram is considered the 7th incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Sustainer and greeting one with the Lord's name is considered auspicious.



eting

You don't get a second chance to make a first impression!



Having said that, these days it is not used commonly within the British Gurkha community although it is still a common practice among the Indian Gurkha soldiers.

Note : When a Nepali is introduced or greets another Nepali it is normally done so with a namaste/namaskar.

Nepali men may choose to shake hands with each other but when introduced to a woman especially a Nepali woman they will exchange namaste/namaskar.

Tapai or **hajur** (you) – the most polite form of addressing a person and used for anyone older, respected or in official and formal situations.

Timi (you) – also polite but informal form of addressing a person and used for peers, someone younger or very close.

Nepal's flag is the only national flag in the world that is not rectangular in shape. According to its official description, the red in the flag stands for victory in war or courage, and is also the colour of the rhododendron, the national flower of Nepal. The flag's blue border signifies peace. The curved moon on the flag is a symbol of the peaceful and calm nature of Nepali people, while the sun represents the aggressiveness of Nepali warriors.

Within the Nepali Culture there are four most important figures. These are listed in order of importance.

- **PARENTS - CONSIDERED AS THE FIRST FORM OF GOD**
- **TEACHERS - HOLD THE SAME POSITION AS THE MAIN TRINITY IN HINDUISM**
- **GUESTS - GUESTS VISITING NEPALI HOMES ARE CONSIDERED A FORM OF GOD**
- **GOD - AS RELIGION IS CONSIDERED MOST IMPORTANT**

Parents are considered the first form of God because they brought us into this world. Nepali culture expects Nepali children to revere parents the way they would revere God. It is a cultural expectation that the sons in the family look after their aged parents.

Teachers – teachers hold the same position as the main Trinity in Hinduism i.e.

**Lord Brahma the Creator,
Lord Vishnu the Preserver and
Lord Shiva the Destroyer,**

because teachers help to create good qualities in their students. Teachers also help to preserve whatever good qualities their students already have and help to destroy whatever bad qualities their students develop. Hence, culture expects teachers to be revered as a form of the Trinity.

Guests – In Nepal and India, many people believe that God can visit their homes in any form especially in the form of a guest and hence the respect or reverence extended towards guests. In Nepal, everybody else besides Nepali people are considered a foreigner and a guest. Therefore respect is extended to anyone from another country.

God – As religion is considered most important, faith in God plays a central role in the culture and traditions of the Nepali people.



Food & Hygiene

The staple food of Nepal is mainly rice based.

Food is greatly influenced by both northern and southern neighbours. However, there are many different dishes that are native to Nepal and kept alive among various communities.

Food very unique to Nepal can be found among communities like '**Thakali**' with their 'Dal Bhat and variety of 'Tarkari', (lentil, rice and curry); and '**Newars**' with their repertoire of dishes which consist of both vegetarian and meat based dishes.

Momos (Nepali version of the dumpling) has made a strong hold among Nepali people around the world.

Offering items or food to others

Offering items or food with the right hand to others is considered polite or auspicious.

If it is being offered to someone older or a guest then both hands must be used.

Offering something with the right hand and the left hand touching the right elbow or any part below the elbow is also acceptable.

Offering anything with the left hand is considered impolite or inauspicious.

Reason – in the older days, when soaps were not available, Nepali people used soil or ash to clean their hands after going to the toilet.

Traditionally the right hand is used for eating food and the left hand is used for cleaning your bowels.

Additionally, when performing auspicious religious ceremonies all offerings to the Gods are made with the right hand. When performing inauspicious religious ceremonies like funeral rites or death anniversaries, all offerings are made with the left hand and hence, the belief that the left hand is unclean or inauspicious.

Offering of food and other hygiene matters

Once your lips have touched a food item or its container, it is considered jutho (polluted) for others.

It is not considered polite to eat off someone else's plate or offer anyone food you have taken a bite out of.

During menstruation women are considered 'impure' and hence, are kept in seclusion until their fourth day purification bath. During such times, Nepali women do not visit temples or even enter the kitchen (within orthodox

families)

Reason Obviously, in both cases the reason is hygiene.

However in the latter case, men and women would be expected to take a bath before going to the temple.

People, especially in the villages, would normally go to a river to take a bath. Since, water from the river is also used for drinking and cooking, women bathing in the river during their menstruation would contaminate the water - hence the custom.

Momos remain one of the most favourite dishes of Non Nepali staff at Hornbill School.





DAL BHAT IS THE MOST WIDELY EATEN DISH IN NEPAL



Belief & Faith

Nepal is a secular country. Although Hinduism is still the dominant religion, other faiths have a strong base in Nepal.

The form of Hinduism that is practiced in Nepal is quite different to that of India as its intermingled with values of Buddhism along with Hindu philosophies and other tribal and ethnic beliefs which includes 'Deities' and worship of objects in Nature.

With such myriad of belief systems, people in Nepal have very rich and varied celebrations and religious observations at different levels and forms. Other religions, such as Islam and Christianity also have a strong following in Nepal.

Hinduism.

Lord Shiva is regarded as the guardian deity of the country.

Nepal is home to the famous Lord Shiva temple, the Pashupatinath Temple, where Hindus from all over the world go to for pilgrimage.

According to Hindu mythology, the **Goddess Sita** of the epic Ramayana, was born in the Mithila Kingdom of Janaka Raja.

Lumbini is a Buddhist pilgrimage site and UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Kapilavastu district. Traditionally it is held to be the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, a Kshatriya caste prince of the Sakya clan, who as the Buddha Gautama, founded Buddhism.

In Nepal, the faiths of Buddhism and Hinduism share common temples and worship common deities

All three main branches of Buddhism exist in Nepal and the ethnic group known as the Newa people have their own branch of the faith. Buddhism is also the dominant religion of the thinly populated northern areas, which are mostly inhabited by Tibetan-related people, such as the Sherpa.

Among other natives of Nepal, those more influenced by Hinduism are the **Magar, Sunwar, Limbu and Rai**.

Hindu influence is less prominent among the **Gurung, Bhutia,** and **Thakali** groups who employ Buddhist monks for their religious ceremonies.

Most of the festivals in Nepal are Hindu.

The Machendrajatra festival, dedicated to Hindu **Shaiva Siddha**, is celebrated by many Buddhists in Nepal as a main festival.

Islam is a minority religion in Nepal, with 4.2% of the population being Muslim according to a 2006 Nepali census.

Mundhum, Christianity and Jainism are other minority faiths.

Touching with feet

Many Nepali and Hindus take inanimate objects and food to be different forms of God.

For example, books and educational items are considered to be forms of the **Goddess Saraswati**, the Goddess of Learning;

Additionally jewellery and money are considered to be forms of the **Goddess Laxmi**, the Goddess of Wealth.

Nepali people are expected to show their gratitude to objects that serve us e.g. cloths, stationary, furniture etc.. Therefore avoid touching them with your feet.





& Faith

Hinduism, often regarded as the oldest religion on the earth has a myriad of forms of the god and goddess.

Hinduism

- **BRAHMA IS REGARDED AS THE DESIGNER & CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE**
- **VISHNU IS REGARDED AS THE PRESERVER AND THE GOD OF PEACE**
- **SHIVA IS OFTEN REGARDED AS THE DESTROYER**
- **GANESHA IS THE SON OF LORD SHIVA AND WORSHIPPED BEFORE MAJOR UNDERTAKINGS (GOD OF WORK)**
- **SARASWATI IS REGARDED AS THE GODDESS OF KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM AND ART**
- **LAXMI IS THE GODDESS OF LIGHT, BEAUTY AND FORTUNES**

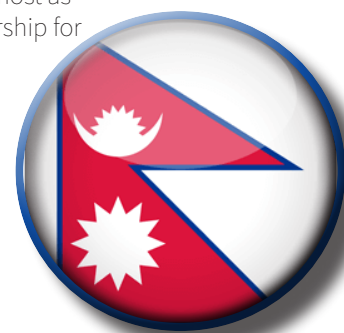
Due to different beliefs, traditions and cultures, different gods and goddesses are worshipped in different ways. Although there are a myriad of deities it is always agreed that supreme one is Brahma

Buddhism

- **BUDDHA WAS BORN IN LUMBINI**
- **BUDDHISM IS THE SECOND-LARGEST RELIGION IN NEPAL**
- **BUDDHISM, CONSISTING MAINLY OF TIBETO-BURMAN-SPEAKING ETHNICITIES**

Tourism is an important factor for promoting Nepali Buddhism to the world. Every year, Kathmandu can receive more than 10,000 travellers from all over the world who just come to visit the Stupa Boudhanath and Swayambhunath Stupas.

In Nepal, the majority of people identify as Hindu's, however, Buddhist influences are pervasive in most aspects of Nepali culture to such an extent that Buddhist and Hindu temples are shared places of worship for people of both faiths. So that, unlike, other countries, the distinction between Hinduism and Buddhism in Nepal is not always clear.





Useful Phrases

The Nepali language was developed from the Vedic Period (period when the Vedas came into existence. 1500-500 BCE). The dialects in Nepal can be broadly divided into two groups. The **Gurung, Magar, Sherpa, Thakali, Rai,** and **Limbu**, are Tibeto-Burmese dialects and **Nepali, Hindi, Mithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu** etc are Indo-European dialects.

Many of the words are from the Sanskrit language. History shows that the Nepali language emerged from the Karnali region as Khas Kura or language. Stone and copper inscriptions found in the Karnali region from the medieval times provide evidence of the Khas language.

Nepali is the official language. Being a multilingual country most people speak two or three languages in Nepal. After the first translation of Sanskrit Epics like Ramayana into Nepali by the first poet and writer Bhanubhakta, in 1814, other literary works followed in this language.

Phrases that can be used with children :

Timro naam ke ho?	What is your name?
Mero naam ho.	My name is
Timro umer kati ho?	What is your age?
Mero umer Ho.	My age is
Timi kati warsha pugiau?	How old are you?
Ma warsha puge.	I am years old.
Timi kasto chhau ?	How are you?
Ma sanchai chhu.	I am fine.
Syabash	Well done.
Timi kaha jaadaichhau?	Where are you going?
Ma jaadai chhu.	I am going to
Timile ke gareko?	What are you doing?
Yo ke ho?	What is this?
Timile ke khandaichhau ?	What are you eating?
Malai suna	Listen to me.
Syabash. Kati ramro.	Well done. How nice.
Syabash. Ek dum ramro.	Well done. Excellent.
Ramro.	Good, nice.
Timi kasto chau?	How are you?

Phrases that can be used with adults :

Tapaiko naam ke ho?	What is your name?
Mero naam ho.	My name is
Tapaiko umer kati ho?	What is your age?
Mero umer ho.	My age is
Tapai kasto hunu hunchha ?	How are you ?
Ma sanchai chhu.	I am fine.
Syabash	Well done.
Tapai kaha jaanu bhayeko?	Where are you going?
Ma jaadai chhu.	I am going to
Tapaile ke garnu bhayeko?	What are you doing?
Yo ke ho?	What is this?
Tapaile ke khanu hundaicha ?	What are you eating?
Kripaya halla na garnuhos	Please do not make a noise.
Kripaya malai sunnuhos	Please listen to me.
Kripaya mero kura sunnuhos	Please listen to what I am saying.
Syabash. Kati ramro.	Well done. How nice.
Syabash. Ek dum ramro.	Well done. Excellent.
Ramro.	Good, nice.
Paani pyunuhos.	Drink water.



**Wandering holy
men of Nepal
leave materialistic
pleasures behind
as they devote their
lives to God**



About Nepal

Festivals

Nepali people celebrate a myriad of festivals mostly linked to religion and religious ceremonies. Each ethnic group has their own set of ritualistic celebrations which differ slightly from how others observe their own.

The main festivals that every Hindu or Nepali would celebrate with great zeal are **Dashain** and **Tihar**.

Celebrations are carried out as communities in villages and cities or within families.



Portrait of Kublai Khan
by Araniko



Portrait of Kublai Khan's wife, Chab
by Araniko

Art

Nepal has been a centre of Art and Architecture in the Asian subcontinental region for many years with the likes of the artist Araniko, who mastered the design of the Stupa structure and who was later invited to Kublai Khan's palace to help design future building works.

The rich history of art is evident from the temple structures and medieval architectures spread across Kathmandu valley, which was in reality the Centre of Art in the region.

Kathmandu houses architectural structures both from China and South India. From traditional 'Thangka' Art to religious sculptures and ethnic art forms like 'Maithali Art'.

Nepal is still vibrant and colorful in terms of art and artistry.



Left: White Stupa of Miaoying Temple in Beijing designed by Araniko.

Taking almost ten years (1279-1288 CE) to complete, the Stupa better known as White Dagoba, is still standing today.

Thirteen broad circular bands of molding, called the "Thirteen Heavens," divide its surface



Nepal

Rites & Rituals

Hinduism and Buddhism have played a very important role in shaping various ritualistic practices in Nepal and among Nepali people.

People in Nepal observe very complex ritualistic practices to do with different stages of life, from birth to death and with other aspects of growing up.

Each individual ethnic group has its own practices which are quite varied. Most of the rituals happen around Gods, Goddesses and temples with priest presiding over them.

Nepal being a farming community, most of the rituals cater to farming and agricultural needs.



Above: Example of Nepali Art

Khadaa

It is a Hornbill custom to offer a khadaa (sometimes known as a greeting scarf) to friends, or guests when they arrive at school. This is our way of indicating your honourable intentions, and wishes of happiness during your time with us.

We also give a Khadaa as a farewell gesture as it symbolizes a safe journey.

The khadaa symbolizes purity and compassion. While we offer khadaas in many different colours, the main colour is white (or cream), which symbolises the pure heart of the giver.

The khadaa is also often placed around the necks of statues and hung on the top of Thangka paintings. It is an ancient custom to bring a khadaa when visiting a temple, shrine, guru, or teacher. This is a way of showing gratitude for the kindness of your teacher and the gems of their teachings.

We believe that the khadaa is a very important gift, so offering a khadaa has its own ordination. At Hornbill School we will usually fold the khadaa into a double layer and hold it with two hands to offer it to you. The fold of the khadaa will be towards the giver - this symbolises that there is nothing hidden in our greeting (because you can see inside the fold). We will then ask you to pass back the khadaa and we will place it around your neck.

Our khadaas often have images and symbols printed on them. These are known as **Ashtamangala**.

The **Ashtamangala** is a sacred suite of Eight Auspicious Signs endemic to a number of religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. The symbols or “symbolic attributes” are yidam and teaching tools.

Groupings of eight auspicious symbols were originally used in India at ceremonies such as an investiture or coronation of a king.

An early grouping of symbols included: throne, swastika, handprint, hooked knot, vase of jewels, water libation flask, pair of fishes and a lidded bowl. In Buddhism, these eight symbols of good fortune represent the offerings made by the gods to Shakyamuni Buddha immediately after he gained enlightenment.

