

Annex 3 | **A Country Report**

A Country Profile

Nepal

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1. Introduction

Nepal is a beautiful South Asian mountainous country. It is located from 26° 20' and 30° 10' north latitude and 80° 15' and 88° east longitude covering an area of 147,181 Square Kilometer. It is a landlocked country bordered by India in east, west and south and China in north. It is land of diversity. We can see diversity in landscape as northern part is mountainous region, mid part is hilly region and the southern part is flat land called Terai. The altitude varies from Kechanakalan, land below sea level, and 8848 meter high Mount Everest; the top of the world also lies in Nepal. Topographically it is so diverse that the mountains are filled with snow round the year and very cold, the mid hilly region is humid and filled with sloppy hills and the Terai is flat land with hot climate. In between three landscapes there are many small valleys. The southern Terai and the valleys are very fertile and hub of agricultural production.

The recorded history of Nepal begins from the time of Lord Buddha (623-548 BC) that is 6th century BC based on the Asokan Pillar inscription from Lumbini, birth place of Lord Buddha situated 250 Km south-west of Kathmandu valley in western Terai of Nepal.

According to the chronology Gopals, Mahishpal and Kirats were the ancient rulers of the Kathmandu valley respectively before the Christen era. Though these chronologies are doubtful in terms of their accuracy, time frame and even the name of the rulers, the inscriptional proven history of the Kathmandu valley starts from the 2nd century AD (Lichchhavi period). Many palaces, temples, monasteries, water conduits and so many other monuments were built in and around the Kathmandu valley belongs to this period. The Lichchhavi laid the foundation of cultural, social, art and architectural development

and administrative reforms and this period is also known as a "Golden Age" in Nepalese history.

During the early medieval period 11th - 14th century, Nepal became divided into several independent principalities.

Before the campaign of national integration launched by the then King Prithivi Narayan Shah (the king of Gorkha) in the middle of 18th century, the Kathmandu valley was ruled by the Malla kings (also known as a Medieval period 1200 to 1768), whose contributions to art and culture are indeed great and unique.

In medieval Nepal, following the Lichchhavi period, several impressive royal residence and architecture were built at different time in Kantipur, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and around the Kathmandu valley. The Malla Dynasty (1200-1768 AD) was considered as the "Golden period" for the arts and architectural point of view. All most all of the festive events and other forms of ICH which are in practice even today in the Kathmandu valley are the creation of that period. Most of the present extant, monuments of the Kathmandu valley are their creation.

In 1768 AD King Prithivi Narayan Shah the great annexed the many principalities of Nepal including Kathmandu valley and created unified country. Thus the Shah Dynasty of Gorkha came into the throne of the unified Kingdom and Kathmandu became the capital of the unified Nepal.

During the mid of 19th century Jung Bahadur Rana became the Prime Minister after the Kot massacre in 1846 AD to wield absolute power. He set upon oligarchy and the Shah Kings remained mere figure head of the state. The Ranas (1846-1950) were overthrown in a democratic movement of the early 1950.

With the pace of history, Nepal has been encountering rise and fall of different political system. It is a bitter fact that after some years of the unification of Nepal by Prithivi Narayan Shah, it had entered into Rana Regime, a family ruling period. In 1950, Nepal entered into democratic era by ending 104 years long Rana Regime by peoples' movement. In fact, since then Nepal has been witnessing instable political system as autocracy of kings, party less Panchayat system, direct ruling of King. Peoples' Movement 1990, ending the Panchayat system, has restored Multiparty Democracy and the kingship was confined into constitutional monarchy. After exercising multiparty democracy for about 5 years, Nepal entered into turmoil of domestic conflict for more than 10 years. The constitutional king tried to be active again and by the second people's movement 2006, Nepal has become Federal Democratic Republic state. At present, Nepal is in a process of peace building and drafting of a new constitution through elected Constitutional Assembly.

Administratively the country is divided into 5 development regions, 14 zones, and 75 districts. Within the administrative division 59 Municipalities and 3913 Village Development Committees are working as local government.

Nepal has joined United Nation in 1955 and has been playing active role in UN peace keeping missions in different parts of the globe namely: Lebanon, Haiti, etc. It has joined UNESCO in 1953. Similarly, it has become member of and playing active role in various UN specialized agencies. It is one of the founder members of Non-aligned

movement It has adopted principals of Non-aligned diplomacy as the basis of its foreign policy.

2. Demographic over view

According to the population census report 2002 the total population was estimated to 22736934. This population comprises of different religions, cast and ethnic groups. The cense report has stated that 103 different cast groups and has recorded 59 ethnic groups living in different parts of Nepal. Majority of people belongs to Indo-Aryan, and Mongoloid race.

The high mountainous areas having very cold climate, remoteness and less developmental infrastructure is found comparatively less dense in terms of population in comparison to the hilly and Terai. Mainly mongoloid people are residing in mountainous region and the human settlements are wide scattered.

Mid hilly region having mild and pleasant climate is also having scattered distribution of settlements depending up on the slope of landscape, availability of development infrastructures and fertility of the land. It is considered as the pocket area of various indigenous groups' mainly belonging to mongoloid and Indo-Aryans.

The mid-valleys are very fertile and densely populated. The settlements are of mixed type as people belonging to different race and cast groups are residing in these areas. The southern Terai is a flat and fertile land having comparatively hot climate. The urban areas in Terai are densely populated, where as the semi-urban areas are moderately populated. The rural areas are less dense and the settlements are wide scattered. The social compositions are rather heterogeneous.

3. Ethnography and Social structure

Nepalese society is based on cast system. The then king Prithivi Narayan Shah, had regarded Nepal as "a garden of 4 race and 36 casts". [The legacy of ancient cast system and practice can still be seen in Nepal as still there is practice of](#) Brahaman, Chhetri, Indigenous Society, Dalit (untouchable) society etc and they can be distinguished through their socio-cultural beliefs and practices including language.

Most of the Nepalese societies are patrimonial but some mongoloid and indigenous societies are matrimonial too. However, most of the societies are male dominated.

Domination of joint family culture is common in the country. But mainly in the urban, and semi urban areas and among the new generation, youths, the practice of nucleus family is taking momentum.

4. Culture

Nepal is very rich in its cultural diversity as each cast group has its own religion, beliefs, traditions, taboos, rituals, ceremonies, customs, festive events, folk songs, traditional dances, performances etc with specific identity. It is the specialty of Nepalese people and community that they enjoy in celebrating a verity of cultural customs, rituals and festive

events etc all around the year. It could be considered as one of the uniqueness of this small country that people from different geographic regions, casts and tribes respect each other's customs and enjoy them by celebrating or taking part. In addition, Nepal is rich in woodcarvings, metal work, temples, monuments, traditional arts and artifacts, craftsmanship and so forth.

Similarly, it is very rich in linguistic diversity too. The languages spoken in Nepal belong to four language families: Indo Aryan (79.1%), Tibeto-Burman (18.4%), Austro-Asiatic (Munda) and Dravidian (0.30%). The people who did not provide information about their language are the 2.2% of the total population in Nepal (Yadav 2003)

“In Nepal, the language of people is recorded in terms of their reported mother tongue. According to the census definition, a mother tongue is the one that is spoken by a person in childhood. The 2002 census provided detailed on 92 language groups. According to the 2002 census, the Nepali language speakers are recorded as 48.611 of the total population, followed by Maithili (12.30%), Bhojpuri (7.53%), Tharu (5.86 %), Tamang (5.19%), Newari (3.63%), Magar (3.39%), Awadhi (2.47%), Bantawa (1.63%), Gurung (1.49%), Limbu (1.47%), Bajika (1.05%). The remaining 80 languages are spoken by less than 1% of the total population of Nepal and represent the small socio cultural groups. Some of these languages are in danger and some are in potential danger of disappearing. (Dilli R. Dahal “Cultural and Religious Diversity: Dialogue and Development” P.17). This gives a clear picture of linguistic diversity that has further enriched the culture of Nepal.

Both the tangible and intangible cultural heritages are spreading all over the country. Historical monuments and places, temples, objects of arts, artifacts etc are belonging to tangible cultural heritages. Pashupati Nath temple, Budhanilkantha temple, various goddess' temples scattered in different parts of the country, old palaces, birth place of Lord Buddha etc are some example of tangible cultural heritages.

Intangible cultural heritages associated with different groups of people and beliefs vary from place to place and group to groups. Many festive events, rituals, performances, arts, artifacts passing from generation to generation and having auspicious or historical significance, etc can be considered as intangible cultural heritages. The chariot of Living Goddess Kumari, chariot of Machhendra Nath, customs of different groups and for different events, different performances, dances, folklores, musical instruments and traditional skills are the intangible cultural heritage of Nepal and Nepalese people.

5. Religion

Constitutionally Nepal is secular country. Though the majority of people follow Hindu religion all the religious communities respect all other religions. In fact, Nepal is the land of cultural diversity, harmony and solidarity. According to the Population Census Report 2002 published by CBS Nepal, 80.6, 10.5, 4.1, 3.5, 0.4, 0.01, 0.02 and 0.03 percent people in the total population are following Hindus, Buddhists, Islam, Kirata, Christian, Jain, Sikh and other religions respectively. Though it is a land of religious diversity, the harmonious relation can easily be seen during the occasion of the festive events, rituals that all other groups of people from different religions equally participate and celebrate them.