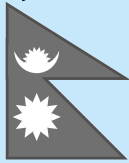


## About my Country...



Nepal

Mongolia



In this space, we ask a foreign student at Kochi University to tell us a little about their country. This is a new column idea for the *KU Campus News*. We hope you enjoy getting to know a little more about where some of our international students come from. Often, we have perceptions of people and countries that are a little different from reality, so we hope this new column is informative for students.

# Nepal: A Glance at a Proud Nation

By Richa Sharma

Wake up in the morning, open your windows and you are welcomed by the scene of snow-capped mountains! What a beautiful way to start your day. For me, that's Nepal.

Nepal is sandwiched between the two giant nations of India and China, and has a diverse landscape ranging from the humid Terai plains in the South to the glorious Himalayas in the North. Pagoda-styled temples are the most featured monuments that one can see in every street and junction all over the country.

Most Nepalese women wake up early in the morning and take a bath followed by their routine puja (worship) in the sacred space inside their house, a corner that best faces towards the East. Some women also go to pray in the temple nearby. Usually, prayers are done for the happy and healthy life of their family members. People also do puja in the evening before cooking their dinner.

Women often can be seen in a Saree (a garment consisting of a length of cotton or silk elaborately draped around the body) and a Kurta Sulwar (a loose collarless shirt worn usually with cotton trousers), which are comfortable and can be bought locally. However, they also have their own cultural dress usually worn during their festivals. Despite that, nowadays people have more and more started adopting

Western styles. But women mostly are to be dressed in modesty keeping their arms and legs covered.

While most people are involved in Hinduism, followed by Buddhism, all other religions are equally respected. Rich in cultural diversity, we celebrate different festivals throughout the year. There is a famous saying about Nepalese culture and traditions that 'there are more temples than houses in Nepal, there are more gods and goddesses than the people of Nepal, and there are more festivals than days in a year!' Most festivals carry religious values, social understanding, arts demonstration, social involvement, religious tolerance, and legendary myths behind them.

Dashain and Tihar are the most auspicious festivals celebrated by all Nepalese people over the world. Celebrated for 15 days, Dashain falls in September or October depending on the Lunar Calendar. The festival symbolizes the victory of good over evil. It also emphasizes families gathering and celebrating together. Shortly after Dashain comes Tihar, a five-day festival often regarded as the festival of lights and color. Each day of Tihar is celebrated in the name of Crow, Dog, Cow, Ox and Brother. Crow is believed to be the messenger of god, Dog represents faith and honesty, Cow is regarded as the goddess of wealth and prosperity, where on the final day Brother is worshiped

to ensure long life, and to thank him for the protection he provides to their sisters.

In this 21st century, we still believe in the existence of god. Nepal is the only country in the world where a Living Goddess called Kumari is worshiped.



Kumari is a century old tradition of child deities being chosen and worshiped by both Hindus and Buddhists.

Though not so popular outside the country, Nepalese cuisine is defined by Daal Bhat and Tarkari (lentil soup, rice and curry) usually eaten by the right hand. We don't feel that we have eaten a proper meal without having it twice a day. And, of course, loved by most Nepalese people is a dish called Mo:Mo, Tibetan-style dumplings with a blend of Indian spices. Besides that, there is a variety of cuisines based on cultural and geographical diversities.

We Nepalese are quite patriotic, sometimes overly filled with patriotism. We are proud of what we have and what our ancestors have done for us. We are also very proud of the numerous features of Nepal like world's highest peak, Mt. Everest, the land where the light of Asia Buddha was born, the only country in the world which was never colonized, the only country with its unique flag, the country also known as 'Land of Yetis', and the endless stories and deeds of the fearless Gurkha!

Although there is often a shortage of basic necessities and conveniences, which are taken for granted in most developed countries, we manage to live a comfortable life and stay happily with whatever we have.



# Mongolia: Land of Blue Skies

By Tuul Chingesdalai

Mongolia is one of the largest countries in land mass, ranking 19th in the world. The total land area is about four times bigger than Japan but the population is 40 times smaller – it's only about the same as Shikoku's population. Mongolia is located in Central and East Asia, nestled in between Russia and China.

I was born in the small city of South Gobi. Many of the *KU Campus News* readers likely know about Mongolia because it is famous for beautiful nature, its great history, and nomadic culture. Actually, I don't feel like I have enough knowledge about these topics, but I would like to introduce a little about Mongolia's



nomadic culture based on my own experiences.

I was raised in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar from the age of two. The national economy is strongly related to

the activities held in this city. More than half the population now live in Ulaanbaatar in order to get jobs and education. When I was child, Ulaanbaatar wasn't that developed. My parents still were university students when they got married and they lived in Ulaanbaatar but I was raised by my grandparents in South Gobi, some 600 kilometers away, so my parents could concentrate on their studies. My dear grandparents had raised sheep, goats, and cows although they were not completely nomadic people,



having lived and worked in the city when younger. After their retirement, they decided to raise domestic animals on their own, and so when I was a child, my most favorite time of year was my summer holiday, when I could go back to South Gobi and play with my cousins and, of course, the sheep and goats.

In the city, my parents were so busy and I was left to my own devices watching TV or playing with my toys. But when I could visit the countryside, there were many interesting activities such as feeding and caring for the animals. There was so much to do! In the morning, my very first work was to milk the goats. After that, the animals grazed on the grassy plains. Sometimes, me and my cousins followed them for hours. This is one of the nomadic manners needed to help control the animals. Then, around 6 pm, the animals return on their own and, after feeding them, they are put in their barn.

For anyone now reading this article, I would like to recommend that you visit my country in summer to see the famous summer festival called 'Naadam' which is held in July. In 2010, it was inscribed on UNESCO's

Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. 'Naadam' is held all over the country for three days. The main events of traditional wrestling, horse racing, and archery are held during the first and second days leaving you free to visit the countryside on the third day. You can even stay with nomadic people in their house called a 'Ger'. This is the traditional Mongolian house that looks like a large

portable tent. The body is made from wood covered by sheep fur. Every 'Ger' contains furniture and a small kitchen and stove. Smoke produced by the fire escapes through a window in the center of the roof.

I am definitely sure there are many unexpected experiences that you will enjoy during a summer trip to Mongolia. I hope this article encourages you to visit my country.

