

Halwai People of Nepal

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https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/16905/NP

Introduction/History

The Halwai people group, also known as the Palma Halwais or Rajkarnikar, are part of a Newar clan and were the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. They are an unreached and unengaged group, with about 81,000 people. The traditional occupation of the Halwai people is making candy and sweets, known as "mithai." ¹

The Halwai people are typically well respected socially because of their services to the community and the ritualistic importance of these actions. The Halwai play a key role in celebrations such as marriages and childbirths because of the importance that sweets have for these festivals.²

¹ "Rajkarnikar." Wikipedia. August 30, 2014. Accessed March 1, 2017.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajkarnikar>.

² Russell, Robert V. The tribes and castes of the central provinces of India, volume III of IV. Vol. III. United States: The library of Alexandria. Accessed February 28, 2107.

The primary language of the Halwai people group in Nepal is Maithili. If they can read Nepali or Hindi they can usually also read Maithili. ³

Where are they located?

The Halwai people are located in parts of southern Nepal as well as the Kathmandu Valley and its surrounding cities, Patan and Bhaktapur. Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, is the largest city in Nepal and provides many resources for the Halwai people. It is home to several major pilgrimage sites for some of the world's religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism.⁴ A large number of Halwai also live in India.

What are their lives like?

The primary occupation of the Halwai has traditionally been sweet making. Though this occupation has been declining, there are still sweet shops throughout Nepal. Most Halwai are well off, especially those who live in urban areas. ⁵

The Kathmandu Valley has a mild climate most of the year. The average

³ Simmons, Gary, and Charles Fennig. "Maithili." *Ethnologue Languages of the world*. 2017. Accessed February 27, 2017. <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/mai>.

⁴ "Rajkarnikar." *Wikipedia*. August 30, 2014. Accessed March 1, 2017. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajkarnikar>.

⁵ "Halwai ." *PG India* . Accessed February 27, 2017. <http://www.peoplegroupsindia.com/profiles/halwai/>.

temperature during the day is around 64.4 degrees Fahrenheit, while in July averages are as high as 84.2 degrees Fahrenheit. Nepal experiences a rainy season during the months of June through August, while the months between November to February are dry and cold.⁶

Earthquakes are a recurring natural disaster in Nepal. Pollution such as human and animal waste, and agricultural runoff have damaged some of the environment in Nepal and the places in which the Halwai people live.⁷

The Halwai people are mostly vegetarian. Wheat, rice, lentils, and seasonal fruits and vegetables are a large part of their diet. On occasion they enjoy puri, which is a deep fried wheat bread, potatoes and rice pudding.⁸

The Halwai typically use modern medicines except in the case of minor injuries or illnesses. In those situations, they often use traditional medicines.

The Halwai believe in educating both boys and girls.⁹

⁶ Mansfield , Katherine . "Kathmandu." New World Encyclopedia . Accessed February 26, 2017. <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Kathmandu>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Halwai ." PG India . Accessed February 27, 2017. <http://www.peoplegroupsindia.com/profiles/halwai/>.

⁹ "Halwai ." Indapedia. Accessed February 28, 2017. <http://indpaedia.com/ind/index.php/Halwai>.

Marriages among the Halwai people take place within their own communities.

The Halwai practice monogamy and allow divorce.¹⁰ Brides dress to match the traditions of the Hindu religion. A bride smears vermilion powder along her hairline; wears glass bangles, toe-rings, and nose rings; draws a colored dot on her forehead; and decorates her hands with henna ink.

What are their beliefs?

The primary religion of the Halwai people is Hinduism. They worship all the major deities such as Shiva (the destroyer), Durga (Shiva's wife), Rama, and Hanuman. Krishna, who is the most popular incarnation of Vishnu, is also a family deity of a large number of Halwai.¹¹

Along with this, the Halwai celebrate all major Hindu festivals such as Holi, Diwali, Ramnavmi, and Janamashtami.¹²

What are their needs?

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Halwai." PG India . Accessed February 27, 2017.
<http://www.peoplegroupsindia.com/profiles/halwai/>.

¹² Ibid.

The Halwai people in Nepal need stability and continuity within their government.¹³ Some also need continued aid as they recover from a 2015 earthquake.

Though the Halwai may be financially well off, there is still a need for the gospel to spread among them.¹⁴

Prayer Points:

- Pray for God's story to continue throughout Nepal.¹⁵
- Prayers for more gospel recordings to be distributed throughout Halwai communities. ¹⁶
- Pray for peace between the people of Nepal and its government. ¹⁷
- Pray for God to send missionaries to the Halwai people. Pray that they would encounter people of peace.
- Pray for the Halwai people to come to Christ without any type of syncretism taking place.

¹³ "Nepal." Global Recordings Network. Accessed February 26, 2017.
<http://globalrecordings.net/en/country/NP>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ C, G. E. "Halwai People of Nepal." Global Prayer Digest. September 24, 2011. Accessed March 2, 2017.
[http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/index.php/issue/day/Halwai-People-of-Nepal-/
/](http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/index.php/issue/day/Halwai-People-of-Nepal-/).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

- Pray that missionaries who go to Nepal can contextualize the gospel appropriately.