

### Interesting Facts About Nepal's Living Goddess Kumari

There is no place on Earth with more interesting religious rituals than [Nepal](#), the homeland of the living goddess. 'Kumari' is a young girl who is considered to be the incarnation of divine female energy and who is highly respected by thousands of devotees throughout Nepal.

Unlike statues and icons that were utilized for worship in the temples, the Kumari is a young woman chosen by God for worship, and she participates in various religious ceremonies. It is no wonder that the ritual has always fascinated not only the worshippers but also the researchers and visitors for many centuries.

There is also an interesting story behind the phenomenon of the Living Goddess, involving the legends from ancient times, religious ceremonies, customs, and even modern-day disputes.

From the time the little girl was picked up to the challenges she has to overcome after returning to normal life, the Kumari ritual is an intriguing aspect of Nepalese culture.

### The Origins of Nepal's Living Goddess

The term 'Kumari' originates from the Sanskrit language and usually signifies either a virgin or a young girl. On the other hand, Kumari in Nepal symbolizes a prepubescent girl worshipped as the living manifestation of the goddess Taleju.

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### The Taleju and King Jaya Prakash Malla Story

There exist several legends about the origins of this unique practice, including the one regarding King Jaya Prakash Malla of [Kathmandu](#) and the Taleju goddess.

#### The secret nightly meetings and the famous Tripasa (dice game)

According to tradition, the goddess used to come to visit the king at night and play the traditional game called Tripasa in order to give royal guidance to the king on issues relating to the kingdom. However, this was supposed to be completely secret.

#### The broken promise

One night, when the king's wife discovered the secret meeting and entered the chamber, Taleju



disappeared, feeling betrayed.

### **Taleju's command to find her in a young girl**

While leaving, she gave instructions to the king that if he wanted to keep getting her blessings, he had to find her in the form of a young girl from the Shakya community.

### **How the Malla Kings Institutionalized the Tradition**

Although there are still some doubts as to its origins, the tradition was fully established during the Malla dynasty. The Malla kings are known for playing an important part in creating the ceremonies surrounding the tradition.

### **Construction of Kumari Ghar in 1757**

The tradition gained great strength during the rule of King Jaya Prakash Malla, who then built the famous Kumari Ghar in [Kathmandu Durbar Square](#) in 1757. The Kumari Ghar now houses the Royal Kumari and is one of the symbols of Kathmandu culture.

### **Why Both Hindus and Buddhists Worship the Kumari**

Among the unique things about the Kumari is the fact that both Hindus and Buddhists worship her. In the case of Hindus, they view the Kumari as a living manifestation of 'Taleju Bhawani', which is one of the many forms of Goddess Durga.

On the other hand, Buddhists perceive her as 'Vajradevi', one of the most divine female goddesses.

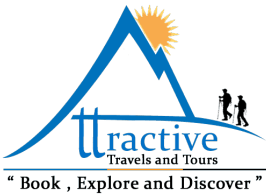
### **The Sacred Selection Process**

Among the unique customs in Nepal, one is that of choosing a new Kumari. The selection starts as soon as the current Kumari has attained the age of puberty, loses too much blood, or cannot proceed with her duties anymore.

### **Beginning the Search for a New Kumari**

When the need for one comes up, the senior priest, astrologers, and religious authorities initiate the process for finding a new Kumari, using the same ancient traditions used to choose the right girl.

### **Eligibility Requirements**



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Not every child is eligible to be a Kumari.

Children must be from the Shakya community, a Buddhist family that has roots in the tradition. Background information on the family is reviewed to confirm that they are eligible.

Girls are usually chosen when they are quite young, from two to six years old.

### The 32 Sacred Perfections (Battis Lakshanas)

One of the most well-known features in the selection process is evaluating individuals for the **Battis Lakshanas**, which are known as the 32 sacred perfections. It includes:

- Eyes like a lotus (????? ?????????? ????)
- Neck like a conch shell (??? ????? ??????)
- Voice like a duck (??????? ?????? ????? ??????)
- Lion-like chest (????? ????? ?????????? ?????)
- Flawless skin (????????? ??? ?????????????? ?????)

### Astrological Examination

Religious authorities analyze the horoscope of the candidate against certain astrological criteria. A positive outcome suggests that the child will be spiritually suited for the role of God incarnate that she is going to be.

### The Recognition Test

In the test, the candidates must be able to recognize those objects that belong to the previous Kumari.

This ritual aims at determining whether there exists any spiritual connection between the two Kumaris and, hence, a transfer of divinity.

### The Kalratri (Black Night) Ceremony

Possibly the most well-known stage in the selection process is that of the Kalratri or Black Night ceremony.

Traditionally, the candidates are put through a very tough experience meant to test how fearless and calm they are. The reason for this is that it is believed that only the true incarnation of the goddess will not be frightened by anything.



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This ceremony is possibly the most widely talked about and controversial element of the Kumari custom.

### Confirmation by Priests and Religious Authorities

Once the candidate has been selected, priests conduct ritualistic ceremonies to confirm and establish the girl as the newly elected Living Goddess.

The Living Goddess is taken to the Kumari Ghar, from then on starting the life of the most sacred deity of Nepal.

### Life as Nepal's Living Goddess

Life as the Living Goddess of Nepal is both sacred and highly ritualized. Traditions that have been followed for hundreds of years have formed the basis of this role, which is focused on the Kumari system.

The chosen child, the Kumari, symbolizes the divine power in human form and is highly regarded by her devotees. The majority of her time is dedicated to the performance of various rituals in the historic building called the Kumari Ghar.

### Major Festivals and Public Appearances

While the Kumari remains within the Kumari Ghar for the majority of her time, she is actively involved in some of the most important [festivals in Nepal](#).

#### Indra Jatra

Indra Jatra is the most important festival related to the Kumari.

During this festival, the Royal Kumari exits the Kumari Ghar and participates in a procession on a chariot through Kathmandu. Many people gather to get this sight and seek blessings from the Living Goddess.

Traditionally, the kings of Nepal have been blessed by the Kumari on this day. Now that there is no monarchy in Nepal, the President of Nepal receives this blessing.

#### Dashain

Dashain is another big festival linked to the Kumari.



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The festival involves worship of the Kumari by linking her to Goddess Durga. Some other rituals at the Taleju Temple, which remains inaccessible to everyone else, are performed for her during the festival period.

### The Kumari as a Living Oracle

According to many devotees, the Kumari delivers divine messages through her expressions and actions.

#### The Meaning of Kumari's Expressions:

- **Smiling:** Indicates blessings and prosperity
- **Crying:** Interpreted as a warning of misfortune
- **Trembling:** Associated with serious difficulties
- **Remaining expressionless:** Viewed as a favorable sign

### The End of a Kumari's Divine Reign

The period during which a Living Goddess reigns as a Kumari does not go on forever. According to legend, the goddess Taleju remains inside the body of the Living Goddess only until she attains the age of puberty.

The first menstrual period is taken to be a clear indication of the leaving of the divine presence from the body of the Living Goddess, thus ending her reign as the Living Goddess. The loss of considerable amounts of blood due to a wound or sickness could also be viewed in the same manner.

Once this occurs, the search for a new Kumari begins, and the former Living Goddess returns to ordinary life.

### The Myth That Former Kumaris Could Never Marry

This myth has been responsible for years of fear and insecurity among those who were once known as living goddesses. Because of this myth, many thought that it would be extremely hard for them to get married.

But throughout history, it became obvious that superstition had nothing to do with reality, since lots of former Kumaris have gotten married, had kids, and led normal lives.

In the meantime, the myth is becoming less popular but is widely known as one of the Kumari legends.

### Chronological Timeline of Nepal's Royal Kumaris

Name	Timeline	Tenure Period	Context
Hira Maiya Shakya	1922 – 1923	1	Earliest reliably recorded Royal Kumari of Kathmandu
Chini Shova Shakya	1923 – 1931	8	Longest pre-WWII tenure; survived to marry (2 daughters)
Chandra Devi Shakya	1931 – 1933	2	Married and raised two daughters
Dil Kumari Shakya	1933 – 1942	9	Served through the WWII era; married, had 3 children
Nani Shova Shakya	1942 – 1949	7	Married; 6 children — dispelling the marriage death myth
Kayo Mayju Shakya	1949 – 1955	6	Married and had two children
Harsha Lakshmi Shakya	1955 – 1961	6	Felicitated by KMC in 2015 for cultural contribution
Nani Mayju Shakya	1961 – 1969	8	Served 8 years, married, had 3 children
Sunina Shakya	1969 – 1978	9	Felicitated by KMC 2015; married, had 2 children
Anita Shakya	1978 – 1984	6	Felicitated by KMC 2015; served through political transition to democracy
Rashmila Shakya	1984 – 1991	7	Selected at age 4, Authored 'From Goddess to Mortal' (2005/2012)
Amita Shakya	1991 – 2001	10	Longest-serving Royal Kumari of the modern democratic era (pre-republic).
Preeti Shakya	2001 – 2008	7	Enthroned just days after the royal massacre of June 1,

Matina Shakya	2008 – 2017	9	2001. First Royal Kumari of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.
Trishna Shakya	2017 – 2025	8	Selected Sept 27, 2017 at age 3. Served 8 years. Succeeded Sept 2025
Aryatara Shakya	2025 – present	–	<b>Selected Sept 30, 2025 at age 2 years 8 months. Current Royal Kumari</b>

### The Most Fascinating Case in Kumari History: Dhana Kumari Bajracharya

Chosen as **Patan's** Kumari in 1954 when she was still very young, she remained as Kumari for decades. Being quite different from other Kumaris, who were replaced due to reaching puberty, this case involves an especially prolonged period of worship.

Despite the fact that she was eventually replaced, some devotees have never stopped worshipping her. In terms of Kumari history, this particular case has gained much popularity among experts.

This case can be seen as a perfect example showing how significant this role can be, both spiritually and personally.

### The Future of Nepal's Living Goddess Tradition

Among the major issues surrounding the tradition is that fewer girls come forward to take up the role. In some communities, not as many families are willing to offer their daughters to be chosen as before.

On the other hand, the majority of the population agrees that the living goddess tradition is worth preserving, since it holds special importance to the culture of Nepal.

Such disagreements have sparked a debate about how the tradition should change with the times, without losing its spiritual and cultural value. Various reforms in terms of education, money, and social integration have been proposed, and further modifications are expected to occur in the future.



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### Conclusion

The Kumari ritual is still one of the most exceptional rituals in Nepalese culture and tradition. From her mythic origin during the time of the Mallas up to her selection process and her current annual festivals, the Living Goddess is undoubtedly one of a kind in Nepalese society.

To some, the Kumari is a powerful manifestation of divine force. Unlike everyone else, she is an incarnation of the rich and proud cultural heritage that the country still succeeds in preserving despite the rapid pace of the modern era.

Regardless of the approach taken, the history of Nepal's Living Goddess will never stop being intriguing.

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### FAQs

#### Who is the goddess Kumari?

Kumari is the term used to refer to the prepubescent girls of Nepal worshipped as a living incarnation of the goddess.

#### At what age is Kumari chosen?

A Kumari is selected at an age of around 2-6 years. Certain conditions have to be fulfilled to be selected as a Kumari.

#### Which Kumari never got a period?

Dhana Kumari Bajracharya is often mentioned when it comes to Kumari, who had been serving their role for too long due to not experiencing any menstrual period during her tenure.

#### What happens if Kumari cries?

Crying is a big sign that is often associated with the prediction of misfortune or other problems.

#### Why can't Kumari walk?

Due to the significance and importance of the position of Kumari, walking is not considered ideal. So, a chariot is brought for Kumari in public processions.



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