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Dashain Across Borders: A Festival Reimagined Far From Home

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A festival celebrated on a family calendar can become difficult to recognise on a work calendar. In Nepal, Dashain is associated with visits to elders, blessings, reunions and extended time with relatives. For a Nepali worker overseas, the same day may begin with a commute, a security checkpoint, a factory shift or a meeting that cannot be moved.

A plate of tika may sit beside a laptop. Someone may call home as relatives finish a meal. A family celebration might happen on a different day, in a rented apartment, with friends who have become a second kind of family.

Dashain has always included movement. Migration has given that movement a new geography.

The 2026 calendar, and the clock between countries

The 2026 Dashain festival begins with Ghatasthapana on October 11. According to an announcement from Nepal's Panchanga Nirnayak Bikas Samiti reported by Radio Nepal on October 7, Bijaya Dashami falls on October 21 and the auspicious time for tika is 10:26 a.m. in Nepal. The committee also noted that tika can be received throughout the day.

That single Nepal-time announcement does not mean every family in the world must perform a ritual at the equivalent hour.

Diaspora celebrations depend on local conditions, community practice and family custom. Time zones make simultaneous gatherings complicated; workplaces and school timetables create more immediate constraints.

An adult in the Gulf may have only a brief break for a call. A family in Australia may be beginning its day when another branch of the family is preparing to sleep. For a worker whose employer does not observe Dashain, the festival becomes an exercise in negotiation.

What the ritual carries

The Nepal Tourism Board describes Dashain as a major festival involving the worship of Durga, family reunions and blessings from elders. Rituals vary by region and community, and not all Nepalis celebrate it in the same way. Nepal contains many faiths, cultural traditions and calendars; an inclusive account of Dashain should not confuse a major national occasion with a universal personal obligation.

For those who observe it, the festival's practical gestures are part of its power. A blessing from a grandparent contains words spoken inside a particular relationship. New clothes, shared meals and home visits are important not because each act is unique, but because their repetition connects generations.

Distance interrupts that repetition. A parent may not be able to apply tika to a child's forehead. An elderly relative may be unable to travel. A newly arrived migrant may spend their first Dashain away from anyone who shares the custom.

And yet traditions travel. Ingredients are sourced in new cities, recipes adapted to local markets, neighbours invited, and family gatherings arranged for the nearest free day.

The friends who become festival family

In workplaces abroad, people meet across districts, languages and social backgrounds that might rarely overlap at home. During Dashain, an informal community can form around a shared meal or an invitation to someone's flat.

These gatherings are not identical to a family celebration, and describing them as a replacement would dismiss the pain of separation. They can still be meaningful. Someone who knows the ritual helps another person unfamiliar with the details. A young professional may learn a family recipe from an older colleague. People share news of home and sometimes speak more openly about the difficulties of migration than they would over a formal call with relatives.

There is no need to romanticise hardship. Not everyone has a safe residence suitable for guests, predictable days off or enough disposable income to host a celebration. Some workers spend the day alone. An attractive photograph of a diaspora gathering cannot tell us how inclusive the experience was.

Children inherit a festival in translation

For families raising children overseas, Dashain offers a concrete opportunity to explain heritage. A child may understand the excitement of relatives visiting and receiving blessings while knowing little about the religious or historical meanings that

adults associate with the festival.

Parents can find themselves translating more than vocabulary. They explain why elders matter, why one household celebrates differently from another and why a family tradition can be worth keeping without becoming compulsory.

Children need not reproduce every aspect of their parents' upbringing to have an authentic relationship with Nepali culture. A celebration adapted to a smaller apartment, a school schedule or an interfaith household can still carry family meaning.

A rigid demand for perfect observance may achieve the opposite of what parents hope. Rituals endured under pressure are remembered differently from rituals made welcoming.

The economics of reunion

The World Bank's October 2026 assessment reports remittances equal to 35.8 percent of Nepal's GDP in FY2025/26. Overseas work therefore sustains many household budgets, including the spending associated with festivals and family visits.

But money does not guarantee that a worker can return. Airfares, leave approval, outstanding debt and the cost of extended travel may keep families apart. Others return with hard-earned savings and face expectations to pay for gifts and celebrations. Each family has to balance generosity, personal finances and the

meaning of reunion.

For those staying abroad, there may be a different expense: the emotional work of reassuring relatives that absence does not mean indifference.

A festival that follows people

It is easy to narrate the overseas Dashain as a diminished copy of the festival at home. That misses the creativity with which people maintain their lives. A family call can bring several countries into one room. An improvised gathering can turn a stranger into a friend. A child may discover that a ritual matters because someone took time to explain it.

Still, the old desire remains: to stand before an elder, receive a blessing and share food without checking the clock.

On October 21, some families will gather in Nepal. Others will look at a screen and promise to meet next year. The distance between those celebrations is real. So is the thread that connects them.

Planning a visit home? See rediscovering Nepal from abroad and the holiday checklist for Nepalis abroad.

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