

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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## Prayer Flags

In Tibet, Nepal, and India, it is common to see strings of brightly colored flags tied outside buildings. These yellow, green, red, white, and blue flags flap in the wind outside homes, restaurants, and temples. But why are they there?

These flags are more than just decoration. They are known as Buddhist prayer flags. If you look closely, you will see writing and symbols printed on each flag. The flags are covered with prayers and wishes for good health, compassion, and peace. Each of the five colors represents the five basic elements: yellow for earth, green for water, red for fire, white for air, and blue for space.



People believe that as these flags blow in the wind, their prayers and good energy are carried across the countryside. People also believe that happiness, long life, and good fortune will come to those who fly these flags and to anyone nearby. This is the reason they are flown in so many places.

Prayer flags developed from an ancient tradition in India that dates back thousands of years. In the beginning they were just solid pieces of cloth. Only later did people begin to add the symbols and writing. The writing is most commonly printed using a wood block print.

Over time, the wind, rain, and sun may cause prayer flags to fade and become tattered. However, many people think that even these faded rags are a beautiful sight as they fly in the wind, spreading good wishes.