

# THE NEWARS

*An Ethno-Sociological Study of  
a Himalayan Community*

*By*

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M.A., Ph.D.



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*Dedicated*  
*to*  
**DR. G. S. GHURYE**





**THE NEWARS**



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## PREFACE

**T**HE Newars had attracted my attention as early as the days when I was a student of M.A. They are a distinct community in the cis-Himalayan region with a high degree of material culture and a complex social organization, which set them apart from others.

However, very little has been studied in the past about these people. In the 19th century some European scholars like Brian Hodgson, H. A. Oaldfield, Col. W. Kirkpatrick and a few others had collected a good deal of data on them, but there is still a dearth of literature on the subject. Moreover, these writers were not trained anthropologists or sociologists. Perhaps the only work that can be said to be of some sociological value is the paper by Professor K. P. Chattopadhyaya, entitled *History of the Newar Culture* (JRASB, vol. IXX, 1923). But this is, however, a collation of facts available from published literature. Professor Chattopadhyaya himself had then felt the need for a detailed monograph on the Newars based on actual field work. The present work which is the outcome of a field investigation that I carried out in the Valley of Kathmandu in 1957-58, I believe, fulfils that need in a small way.

Originally, the material as presented here was collected for the preparation of my Ph.D. thesis, submitted to the University of Bombay in 1959, under the guidance of Dr. G. S. Ghurye, now Emeritus Professor of Sociology. The material as it stood in the thesis-form had to be cut down to the requirements of publication.

During field work, I became a participant-observer,

without ignoring the other techniques of gathering data, whenever I could profit by them. Though the Valley of Kathmandu as a whole was my field, I concentrated particularly on the town of Kathmandu and the village of Panga for an intensive study of urban and rural differences. Three hundred families were sampled from these two areas for a detailed study of marriage and the family among the Newars. Furthermore, to find out the regional variations in Newar socio-cultural life, field observations were made in Tarai and the hills with an eye on the process of interaction between the Newars and the ethnic groups among whom they live.

Of late many Western scholars have been attracted by Nepal. And this is a happy augury for the study of the Himalayan peoples, the understanding of whose cultures has become significant politically as well. The results of some of these investigations, which cover the Newars also, have been published subsequent to the period of my field work. I have as far as possible attempted to refer to them so as to make due note of such facts as I had overlooked during my field work.

Readers' attention may be drawn to the restricted use I have made of the terms *Gorkha* and *Parbate*. The first term has passed on in common military parlance as referring to those ethnic groups from which soldiers are recruited, while the term *Parbate* is commonly taken to denote those who are hill-born. In contrast to such usages, I have used these terms alternately to designate as a whole the speakers of the Nepali language who include the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. This manner of usage is quite consistent with what the Nepalese take these terms to stand for.

I owe an immense debt to many organizations, institutions and individuals, who have made this work possible. Especially, I thank the University of Bombay for giving me a Research Fellowship for this study.

To my esteemed teacher, Dr. G. S. Ghurye, now Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Bombay, I owe the deepest gratitude for his valuable guidance without which this study would not have taken its present shape. As a humble token of my sense of gratitude, I have dedicated this book to him.

I would also like to record my thankfulness to Dr. K. M. Kapadia, Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Bombay, for the constant encouragement I have been receiving from him all these years.

Special thanks are due to Messrs. Purandas Shrestha, Ratandas Shrestha, the late Govinddas Shrestha, Viswanath Prasad Agarwal (of Messrs Ganpatrai Hanuman Prasad Firm), Poet Chitradhar, Thakurlal Manandhar, Kedar Bhakta Shrestha, Hari Bhagat Shrestha (of Panga village) and many other Newar friends who have helped me in a variety of ways.

Mr. S. Devadas Pillai, my friend and former research colleague, who has gone through almost the entire manuscript and the galleys and made valuable suggestions, especially in the second half of the book, has high appreciation from me.

My friend, Mr. L. A. Mehta, has helped me in many ways during my studentship and it is my pleasant duty to thank him.

This note of acknowledgements would be far more incomplete without a word of thanks to my enlightened publisher, Mr. G. S. Pohekar, who has always shown more than casual interest in the publication of this book.

Banaras Hindu University,  
Varanasi,

October, 1964.

*Gopal Singh Nepali*





## 1. INTRODUCTION

**V**ARIOUS ethnic groups live in the hill region of Nepal. Broadly speaking, they can be divided into two distinct groups according to their racial and linguistic affinities — the Gorkhas or Parbatias who speak an Indo-Aryan language, Nepali; and the speakers of Tibeto-Burman group of dialects. The Nepali speakers, according to the 1952-54 Census Report, numbered 40.14 lakhs forming 48.7 per cent of the country's total population. The Tibeto-Burman speakers total about 18.19 lakhs (22.1 per cent) and are divided into numerous mutually exclusive dialect-groups with their own respective cultural traditions. Barring the Newars, all of these Tibeto-Burman speaking groups have typical mongoloid physical characteristics and are comparatively on a lower state of culture. But the Newars stand out quite distinctly with a high level of cultural achievement, as represented by a complex civilization with an urban bias, which they have evolved in the Valley of Kathmandu.

The 1952-54 Census of Nepal puts the total population of Newars in the country at 3.83 lakhs of which, as many as 2.26 lakhs live in the Valley of Kathmandu. Thus they constitute 55 per cent of the population of the Valley of Kathmandu. It is still the centre of their cultural acti-

vities. It is their homeland to which they have the greatest emotional attachment. Before we deal with the question as to who are the Newars, it is necessary that we have a brief resume of the ecology of their habitat and its history.

The Valley of Kathmandu occupies the tract between the basins of the rivers Gandak and Kosi lying in latitude  $27^{\circ} 42' N$  and longitude  $85^{\circ} 36' E$ . The Valley is a low, flat and oval plain situated at a height of 4,388 ft. above sea level, and covers approximately an area of 218 square miles. All around it stand the high sand-stone ranges of the Himalayas. To its south lies the grand Mahabharat Range which is a continuation of the Sivalik Range; towards its north, stands the Sivapuri Range; while the Kakani and Mahadeo pokhari Ranges seal it off from the western and eastern sides, respectively. Thus encircled by the high ranges which rise between five and eight thousand feet, the Valley presents a little world by itself, and in the past this kind of isolation was primarily responsible for the undisturbed flowering of the Newar culture.

The surface-level of the Valley is irregular. It is due to the two spurs that encroach upon the otherwise flat plain. The rivers have also been responsible for the alternation of high plateaux and low plains. The rivers, swift and swollen during the rainy season, have much cut up the soil along their banks resulting in their deep-lying beds, many feet below the surface level of the Valley. These rivers, numerous but dry during summer, are the life-line of the Valley. They form a net-work to drain the different parts of the region. Among these rivers, the main ones include the Bagmati, the Vishnumati, the Hanumante and the Manohara. Besides, there are a number of rivulets which act as feeders to these big rivers, but remain dry during the major part of the year. All these rivers and rivulets rise from the surrounding hills and make their way towards the central region of the Valley. The

river Bagmati, after collecting waters of all these rivers, flows toward south, follows the base of the Chandragiri hill which is a part of the Mahabharat Range, and finally quits the Valley through a gorge at Phirping for her onward journey toward the Indian plains. These rivers are not at all useful for navigation. But they are of great importance for the inhabitants even though they have little irrigational value. They enter into the religious life of the people. Every river has its myth, tradition and folklore and these figure prominently in the cultural life of the Newars.

The geology of the Valley is little known. We have however, some information that the Valley differs in this respect from the surrounding hill-regions whose geological character is similar to that of the other parts of the Himalayas.<sup>1</sup> The soil of the Valley is arranged into horizontal strata, containing no pebble. Beneath it occur beds of peat and phosphatic blue clays which provide the traditional manure. Geologists suggest that this could never have been possible without the Valley having been once a lake of standing water. Mineral ores are not found, though tradition refers to the existence of metal mines in the past.

The type of flora in the Valley and its surrounding regions is that of temperate forest of the Central Himalayan region. Within the Valley itself vegetation is much wanting, except in the hills of Swayambhu, Pashupati, Gokarna and the southern extremity of Bhatgaon. The trees that are to be mostly found in the Valley include Oaks, Maples and Pines. The bamboo trees are also found in abundance. There is, however, a comparative absence of fruit-trees. The tropical trees like mango, neem and bel are also rare. The absence of bel tree is to be especially noted though there is a great demand for its leaves as an offering to lord Pashupati; and its fruit as an essential ritual-object in the mock-marriages of the Newar girls. These things are largely imported from elsewhere. Tropi-

cal fruits like bananas, mangoes, tamarind, guavas, custard-apples and oranges are imported from the plains and from the Valleys of Noakot and Pokhara. Towards the southern vicinity of the Valley, the sal-tree is found in abundance, which supplies timber and fire-wood to the local population. These forests are, however, of not much use for commercial exploitation owing to want of navigable rivers.

With regard to fauna, the Indian type of animals are quite rare. Birds are plentiful. The reptiles are all of the Himalayan type. Fishes are rare. The wild animals include the Rhesus, Bat, Short-tailed Mole, Panthers, North-Indian Matir, Bears, Flying-squirrel, Nepal Rats, Magpie, Tree-pie, tits and vulture. Leopards are found in the surrounding jungles. A notable animal which abounds in the Valley is the Jackal. The mountain-fox and the wild dog are also reported to be found. Since lack of pasture does not permit a pastoral economy, milch-cattle are not found in abundance. Goats and buffaloes, which are consumed in the Valley are imported from the 'tarai'. To the south of the Valley, however, a large variety of fauna is found in the dense forest of the 'tarai'. These include tiger, wild elephant, rhinoceros, wild buffalo, antelope and the different species of the deer, among which the swamp-deer or 'Bara Singha' is especially notable. To the north of the Valley, a variety of fauna is found on the higher hills among which are the Yak, wild-sheep, musk-deer and Tibetan Raven.

The climate of the Valley is excellent, resembling that of southern Europe, though from June to October the humidity is great. The table below gives the mean temperature, daily maximum and daily minimum observed at random between 1917 and 1938.

TABLE I

Month	MEAN OF			
	Daily Maximum C°	Daily Minimum C°	Highest in the month C°	Lowest in the month C°
January	18.1	2.3	24.4	— 2.8
February	20.1	4.4	28.3	— 1.1
March	25.2	7.4	33.3	— 1.7
April	28.8	11.4	35.0	4.4
May	29.6	15.8	36.1	9.4
June	29.3	19.3	37.2	13.9
July	28.7	20.4	32.8	16.1
August	28.6	20.2	33.3	16.1
September	28.1	18.7	33.3	13.3
October	26.7	13.6	33.3	5.6
November	22.7	7.6	29.4	0.6
December	18.8	3.2	28.3	— 1.7
ANNUAL MEAN:	25.4	12.0	37.2	— 2.8

Source : Director General of Observatories, Government of India, New Delhi.

There are four main seasons similar to those prevailing in India — winter, summer, autumn and spring. Winter starts in November when the temperature begins to fall considerably. During the months of December, January and February, when cold is severe, the air is cloudless and bracy; in the morning cold is excessive and visibility becomes poor due to mist till 10.00 or 11.00 a.m. During the day there is bright sunshine, pleasant to warm oneself in the sun. The nights are again very cold, there being, however, no snow-fall in the recent years.

After February, cold begins to decline and by the end of March spring ushers in. It brings blistering

winds. This period is also very cool and one needs a blanket to cover oneself at night. During April, June and July, the Valley is comparatively hotter during the day and one starts perspiring while walking in the sun. But after sun set, and also in the morning, it is quite pleasant. The nights are again cool. Autumn ushers in by the end of August and continues upto mid-October. As stated earlier it is part of the cold season.

Monsoon brings heavy rains to the Valley. If the rains fail the local peasants fall into distress. The total annual rain-fall is 1,417.2 millimetres. Of this nearly half occurs during the months of July and August. During the rains the atmosphere is comparatively cooler so much so that one feels quite chilly even at mid-days. The lowest rain-fall (19.6 m.m.) occurs during the months of January, November and December.

Unlike in the past, the Valley is now linked with India both by air and land-route. Owing to the newly constructed metal road, about 70 miles in length, it has been rendered possible for jeeps and lorries to reach Kathmandu from the 'tarai' within a single day. This road rises roughly to a height of about nine thousand feet at Siva-Bhanjyang before the descent begins on the other side. Most of the merchandise goods are transported to the Valley by means of this road. In addition, four important towns in the 'tarai', namely, Nepalganj, Bhairava, Birganj and Biratnagar are connected with the Valley by air; and there are daily air services by means of which Kathmandu can be reached within half an hour. Besides, Kathmandu has also a regular air-service linking it with Patna and Calcutta. Such a new development in transport and communication has brought the inhabitants of the Valley much closer in space and time to the outside world.

On the northern side the routes which admit accessibility to Tibet are still most difficult. There are three passes, viz., Kuti (21,544 ft.), Rasua (6,000 ft.) and

Mustang (14,700 ft) which have always been the traditional gateways to Tibet. The Kuti pass is only 90 miles away from Kathmandu and is the shortest route to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. Rasua is comparatively wider and, therefore, suitable for employing mules and horses for transport purposes. In 1782, the Chinese had invaded Nepal through this very pass. This route is still the most frequented one and the Tibetans use it for coming to Kathmandu in connection with both trade and pilgrimage.

To sum up, the main physical features of the Valley are that it is a great alluvial plain whose surface level has a gradual slope toward the central diameter; that the surface level is, however, not uniform; that it has a network of rivers which forms the drainage system of the Valley; that the soil contains phosphatic elements which are responsible for its high fertility; that its climate and temperature are excellent; that it has a heavy rainfall; that it has a valuable forest around it, which supplies timber and fuel; that it has no pasture which results in the scarcity of cattle-wealth; and finally that it is surrounded by the high ranges which gave it comparative isolation from the outside world in the past.

## II

It is only the Valley of Kathmandu which may be said to have some history. The history of the other parts of the country is not much known. In the early times this Valley had played a great role in the political and cultural life of the country. In those days the term 'Nepal' was applied to this Valley only and not to the country as a whole as it is done now. Its close proximity with the plains in the south where the republics of the Sakyas had once flourished vests it with the special historical significance. Therefore, what we know as the history of Nepal is in fact that history of the Valley of Kathmandu. When the legendary and semi-legendary facts are checked with

the aid of inscriptions, calophons and the travellers' accounts, a connected account of history emerges, though some confusions of chronology have yet to be set right. The early history of the Valley is purely mythological; the period upto the 10th Century also does not have a continuous history; but from the 10th Century onward the history of the country is revealed with sufficient continuity and clarity.

Nepal does not find ample references in the Hindu scriptures of India. However, when we come to the days of Kautilya (321-296 B.C.), we find for the first time a reference to the term Naipalikam. Kautilya in his Artha Sastra mentions Nepal as a country notable for a special variety of blanket called 'Bhingisi'.<sup>2</sup> It has been suggested that the term must have evolved out of an earlier term 'Nipa' which finds its reference in the Mahabharat.<sup>3</sup> Robert Shafer, after examining the views of Silvain Levi and Lassen, agrees with the latter that at least the first part of 'Nepal' could be derived from 'Nipa'. But the last part of the word '-la', he believes, may be of Tibeto-Burman origin.<sup>4</sup>

After Kautilya, Nepal is next mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta (326-75 A.D.). It is included as a vassal along with two other Himalayan countries.<sup>5</sup>

Kalhan in the 12th Century alludes to a battle fought between Jayapida of Kashmir and King Varmadeva of Nepal at the river Kali-Gandaki.<sup>6</sup> The external sources are thus not very useful for ascertaining the antiquity of Nepal.

But the legendary accounts preserved in the local Hindu and Buddhist literature in Nepal suggest a far distant antiquity when the Valley of Nepal was a big lake which was the abode of serpent gods (Nagas) ruled by the serpent King Karkotaka.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it was called 'Nag-Hrid' or 'Naga-Vasa'. During such early periods,



referred to as 'Satya Yuga', the lake which lay within 'Sumeru' was a great object of sanctity. Numerous ascetics from India used to come to it on pilgrimage. In the legends all such personages are termed as Buddhas who preceded Sakya Sinha, the last mortal Buddha. Among these ascetics one was Maha Manjusri who, curiously enough, is said to have come from China, along with his female consorts—Mokshada and Barda. He is further said to have cut a passage through the mountain to drain the waters of the lake. He is also credited with the discovery of Swayambhu and the goddess Guheshwari. He gave Nepal her first king, Dharmakara, to rule over the newly reclaimed land.

Another version of the legend tells us that the name of the country was derived from a great 'Rishi' called 'Ni' who installed a cowherd as the ruler of the country on the commencement of 'Kaliyuga'.<sup>8</sup> The Hindu part of the legend narrates that it was not Manjusri but Vishnu who cut the passage with his discus to drain the lake-water; the two goddesses Barda and Mokshada are indentified as Laxmi and Saraswati, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest dynasties which seem to have ruled over the country are narrated in the traditions as belonging to the Gopalas and the Abhiras, who came from Gujarat.<sup>10</sup> They were succeeded by a second horde of the Abhiras who perhaps came from northern India. According to Kirkpatrick, the latter race had already established their rule in the surrounding region before they entered Nepal. These Abhira Kings bore the surname of 'Singh',<sup>11</sup> while the former, of 'Gupta'.

Tradition asserts that the Kiratas from the east displaced the cowherd dynasties and established their rule with the capital at Gokarna. It is held that there were 27 or 29 kings whose reign extended over a thousand years. S. K. Chatterjee says that the names of all these kings are non-Sanskritic.<sup>12</sup> Authorities are however in-

clined to place the Kiratas before the Abhiras while it is conceded that long before their coming into the Valley, the Abhiras had already set up their rule to the south of it in the 'tarai' regions of Janakpur and Simraun Garha.<sup>13</sup> What is of interest to us is not the chronology, but the possibility of the assimilation of these two peoples, which possibly provided the foundation of Newar culture in the Valley.

The Kiratas were attacked from the West by the Somavamsi Rajputs. The last Kirata King Gasti (110 A.D.) was finally defeated leading to the establishment of Somavamsi dynasty in the Valley. But the rule of this dynasty endured only for a short while. Bhaskar Varma, the last King in this line, had no son; and, therefore, on his death the throne passed on to his son-in-law Bhumi-Varma who established the early Lichhavi dynasty. Of this line, Mana Deo (C. 464-491 A.D.) was an illustrious king. His kingdom is believed to have covered a large territory extending a little farther than the Gandak in the west and as far as Kosi in the east.<sup>14</sup>

During his reign Nepal appears to have had an intimate contact with the Imperial Guptas. King Bhaskar Varma is generally believed to be the father-in-law of Chandra Gupta. The last King Sivadeva in the line married his daughter to Amsu Varma, a Vaishya-Thakuri chief who established a diarchy along with his father-in-law. Authorities are of the view that the era relating to Emperor Harsha Vardhan (606-647), a contemporary of Amsu Varma, was introduced into Nepal by the latter.<sup>15</sup> If that is so, Amsu Varma, since he is identified as a Vaishya Thakuri, may be a consanguineal relative of the Emperor who sent him to manage Nepal. It is made plausible by an event which suggests attachment of Amsu Varma to the Imperial interest. For, on the death of Harsha Vardhana of Kannauj, he seems to have brought 7,000 horsemen to support a Chinese attack on Arjuna who

usurped the throne of Kannauj.<sup>16</sup>

It is possible that during the period of Amsu Varma or even earlier Nepal had acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of Emperor Harsha Vardhana of Kannauj.<sup>17</sup> But on the death of the Emperor, Amsu Varma proclaimed his independence.

The reign of Amsu Varma is important from the point of view of another development. By this time the barbaric life in Tibet had given way to the emergence of political consolidation under the strong leadership of King Song-tsen-Gam-Po. His invading armies conquered upper Burma and Western China. He also invaded Nepal. He compelled the emperor of China and Amsu Varma to marry their daughters to him. The two queens brought Buddhism into Tibet from their respective natal countries. Nepal became the main source of Buddhism for Tibet. The form of Buddhism which prevailed in Nepal was adopted by the King as the State religion.<sup>18</sup> Thus Amsu Varma's period was marked by the close contact with Harsha Vardhana on the one hand and with Tibet, on the other.

On the death of Amsu Varma, the Lichhavi sovereigns again grew powerful, except for a short period when Jishnu Gupta, an Abhira chief, who proclaimed himself as 'Somawanya Bhushan' established the second diarchy in Nepal. Soon after his death, the Lichhavis again became effective rulers. During the beginning of the 11th century, the Nepalese throne was captured by the Thakuris of Noakot who, like the Lichhavis, assumed the surname of 'deva'. The Noakot Thakuri dynasty continued upto 1078, when it was displaced by a collateral descendant of Amsu Varma.

The rule of the early Lichhavis was marked by the flowering of Hindu civilization in the Valley. Most of the Kings were the followers of Siva and Vishnu, though Buddhism was allowed to flourish and given

state patronage. Art and architecture found ample encouragement. The society of the Valley, though divided into Buddhist and Hindu, was basically a Hindu society with the common Hindu deities at the bases of its two religions. Perhaps it would not be incorrect to suggest that during the 7th Century Nepalese Buddhism from the point of view of the common man, had not totally differentiated itself and had existed as a sect of Hindu religion, no matter what it meant to the monks who lived in the monasteries.

Toward the close of the 12th Century, a new line of dynasty emerged on the throne of Nepal. This was of the Mallas. The first king of this dynasty was Arimalla Deo (1207-1216 A.D.). The Mallas continued to rule till the first quarter of the 14th Century. However, during the reign of Ananta Malla, the nominal suzerainty of the country passed on to the Karnatakas. The powerful chief, Nanya Deo who called himself a Karnatic prince is said to have brought with him the Newars as soldiers in his army.<sup>19</sup> Probably, Nanya Deo was an army chief under the Chalukyas. During those days the Chalukya emperor, Someshwar III, appears to have extended his control not only over Nepal but also over many of the regions of North India, including Simrawn Garha.<sup>20</sup> These Karnatakas, it is believed, were Marathi or Kannada speaking barons or military chiefs from the Deccan who followed the victorious arms of Vikramaditya between 1040 and 1069 A.D.<sup>21</sup>

The beginning of the 14th Century saw a great political confusion in north Bihar. In 1323, Emperor Tughlak Shah led his victorious forces into Tirhout. Hari Singh Deo, a descendant of Nanya Deo, who ruled over Tirhout, was defeated by the Imperial forces. He, therefore, fled Simraun Garha, his capital and escaped to Nepal and conquered it. The arrival of Hari Singh Deo resulted in a fresh assertion of Hinduism and the introduction of

the people from the plains. Hari Singh Deo and his successors, like their predecessors were content to be the nominal heads of the State, while the actual rule rested with the Mallas themselves.

Shortly afterwards, a new king by name Jayasthi Malla appears on the scene to the total oblivion of the Karnataka line. It is generally held that his claim to the throne of Nepal was established through his marriage with Rajalla Devi, a Karnatak princess. This king was a great patron of art and a firm believer in Hinduism, while he was liberally tolerant towards Buddhism. During his reign Sanskrit and Newari both received state patronage for literary development. Besides, he was a great reformer. As stated elsewhere, he reorganised the Hindu society of Nepal and also formulated special laws to regulate it. King Jayasthi Malla also took several administrative steps. He standardised weights and measures and assessed the value of land and buildings in the Valley.

Towards the close of the 15th Century, the Kingdom of the Valley was split into three principalities among the sons of Yaksha Malla. Rajya Malla ruled over Bhatgaon; Rana Malla over Banepa; and Ratna Malla over Kathmandu. These three lines continued till 1769 when they were attacked by the Gorkhas from the West. With the conquest by the Gorkhas, a new chapter of history began, marking an end of the Newar power.

The Gorkhas had their capital in the town known as Gorkha in the west. Legend relates that the ancestors of the Gorkhali dynasty came from Chittor during the 12th Century. Some Rajputs had fled their country after the attack by Allauddin Khilji. It is said that some of them took shelter in the Himalayan region. Of them, one group came to the 'tarai' and the western hill region of Nepal where they set up numerous petty principalities after subjugating the local Khasas and the tribes such as the Magars and Gurungs. They bore the surname of Sen,

Shah and Rana. Of these, there were 24 petty states in the Gandak region alone, and one of them was the Gorkha line which ruled under the title of Shah. Originally they ruled in Noakot and later annexed the town of Gorkha wherefrom they derived their group appellation. In this line was born Prithvi Narain Shah in 1742. Long before he was quite grown up, Prithvi Narain Shah took to conquering the surrounding regions including the Valley of Kathmandu. After years of heroic resistance, the Valley of Kathmandu fell to his armies in 1769.

Having obtained complete possession of the Valley, Prithvi Narain Shah became the first sovereign of the Gorkhali-dynasty. By 1795, long after the death of Prithvi Narain Shah, the dominions of Nepal extended from Bhutan to Kashmir and from Tibet to the borders of the British Provinces.

In 1792 a commercial treaty was signed under a special circumstance between Nepal and India. The Gorkhas had previously been converging on invasion of some of the parts of Tibet. As a result of it, the Emperor of China sent an army against the Nepalese. The Chinese reached as far as Noakot, within 25 miles of Kathmandu. It was against this background that the commercial treaty was signed which enabled the Nepalese to secure aid from the British. By the time Col. Kirkpatrick reached Noakot to mediate between the Chinese and the Nepalese, the latter had already concluded a peace treaty, which amounted to acknowledging the suzerainty of China.<sup>22</sup> This was the first time when a British Officer was allowed in the country. In 1801 another treaty was signed with the British to replace the former one which had become defunct. This provided for the appointment of a Regent in Kathmandu. Between 1804 and 1812, relations between the Nepalese and the British worsened on account of border questions. In 1814, war was declared and in 1816 the treaty of Sugauli was signed. Under this treaty Nepal

had to give up claims to the territories which lay to the west of the Kali river and east of the Mechi river. As a result, the regions of Kumau, Dehra Dun, Almora, Simla etc., became part of British India.

While Nepal's friendly relations with the British gradually improved, the political condition inside the country was very unsatisfactory. Family feuds between the Thapas and the Pandes continued for years together for gaining control over the office of the Prime Minister. During such hectic years court intrigues resulting in the death of many persons marked the internal politics of Nepal. Finally, Jung Bahadur emerged victorious by planning the Kot massacre in which almost all the important nobles and sardars were put to death. Jang Bahadur became the first Rana Prime Minister. After his death, the office passed on to his brother Ranaudip. But Ranaudip and his two sons were put to death by the sons of Dhir Shamser, a cousin of Jung Bahadur. Bir Shamser, the eldest son of Dhir Shamser assumed the post of Prime Minister to be continued by his brothers and descendants till the revolution of 1951.

While such politics went on in the Valley, the local inhabitants, the Newars, had no interest in the quarrels among their rulers. Since the fall of the Newar Kings, they were merely content to lead a peaceful life with employment in many of the high civil posts. They accepted the life as a matter of fact. This characteristic of the Newars to accept a new conqueror without any express protest had always marked their history in the past. But there is one significant difference between the Gorkhas and the earlier conquerors. The earlier conquerors who were the political masters were themselves assimilated in due course into the Newar culture; the Gorkhas, have however, continued to maintain their separate entity. They have, at the same time, made Newar culture as a part of the greater Nepalese society. It is perhaps due to enough

number of women among them, that they have sustained their separate existence, unlike their forerunners.

### III

The term Newar is applied to designate a number of former ethnic groups who have, through centuries of interbreeding, been welded into a homogeneous community with common traditions of language and other social heritage. It is, therefore, a gross over-simplification to regard them as belonging to one single racial origin. Baines and Risley have, therefore, rightly called them as a national tribe or caste.<sup>23</sup>

Socially, culturally and emotionally, there is a wide gulf between the Newars and other communities of Nepal. It is with the Gorkhas that they come into serious ideological conflict. The attitude towards each other is amply reflected in some of the proverbs current in Nepali. For instance, the Gorkhas say: 'Babu dushta ra Newar ishta kaela pani hunna' (A father can never be an enemy, so a Newar can never be a friend); 'Ye Newar pate, babu lai do-bato ma kate' (A Newar would not mind hacking his father at the cross-roads). These two proverbs are indicative of the stereo-typed attitude of the Gorkhas toward the Newars. Another adage hints at the so-called extreme timidity of the Newars. It runs: 'Bagmati pari syal karayo, buigal-ma gai talwar jhik-chha'. (When a jackal howls across the Bagmati, the Newar runs away in fright to the topmost floor of the house and there he pretends his bravery by brandishing a sword). Another proverb expresses contempt for the food habit of the Newars. It runs: 'Rango-ko tauko khaye-ko huna-le, yinee heru-ko swar larbaraya-ko'. (Because they eat buffalo's head, their pronunciation of Nepali words is faulty). It hints at the Newar's failure to pronounce 't' and 'd' as palatal and dental, respectively.

The Newars, on the other hand, retaliate by calling



the Gorkhas as 'Pakhe'. That is to say, the Gorkhas have no material culture of their own to boast of. They are uncivilized. An adage runs: 'Magar-ko-lwang-lwange sraddha'. It means that in the 'Sraddha' of a Magar (Gorkhas are included by implication), there is nothing, except a few cloves. These are enough to show the cultural conflict between the two major communities – the Newars and Gorkhas. But owing to the accepted relative positions, these attitudes do not create a conflict in relation to the other ethnic groups. The Newars, because of their high culture and economic means, are not matched by the other communities who lag behind in civilization.

In disposition the Newars are peaceful and cheerful. Their women are as industrious as their men. Women sit at the shops and the freedom they enjoy speaks significantly of the Newar social organisation. The Newars may be regarded to be highly emotional but dislike engaging themselves in physical fight. Their peaceful nature has been regarded by the Gorkhas as not being a virtue, and that is why some of the adages have been coined to scoff at their so-called timidity. It is on the assumption of their timidity that till 1950, the Newars were denied employment in the Nepalese army.

The Newars are at present spread all over Nepal. Though the Census Report of Nepal (1952/54) places their population at 3,83,184, allowance may be made for not including in it some of the Newars who might have written Nepali as their mother tongue. Table I gives their regional distribution in Nepal:

It will be seen from the table that within the territory of Nepal the Newars are unevenly distributed. Their population is the least in the 'tarai' region and the densest in the Valley of Kathmandu. They are more in Eastern than in Western Nepal. Such a pattern of population distribution can be attributable partly to economic reasons and partly to their ethnic characteristics.

TABLE I

Regions	Area in Sq. miles.	Density	Total Population	Newar Population	Percentage of 5 over 4
1	2	3	4	5	6
Eastern Hills	10,114	169	1708,816	76,514	4.50
East Inner tarai	1,829	103	188,204	3,518	1.90
Eastern tarai	5,115	353	1803,445	8,089	0.40
Kathmandu Valley	218	1,885	410,871	225,819	55.00
Western Hills	2,977	108	3211,383	53,976	1.70
Centre Inner tarai	2,445	98	239,677	12,568	5.20
West Inner tarai	714	125	89,315	38	—
Mid-Western tarai	1,307	266	348,179	1,618	0.50
Far-Western tarai	2,843	83	235,189	1,044	0.40
All Nepal	54,362	152	8235,079	383,184	100.00

Source : Nepal Census Report, 1952/54

In the eastern region, they live in the district headquarters\* or in important urban centres. For instance, they are mainly to be found in Sindhuli Palanchouk (13,723), Kabre-Palanchouk (25,058), Dolakha (10,122), Chissankhu (5,817), Manjhirat (2,791) and Bhojpur (6,507), Dhankutta 6-thum (3,921), Dhankutta 13-thum (5,317), and Ilam (1,636). The main ethnic groups which provide the human environment in the eastern regions, as we move toward the east from the Valley, are the Tamangs, Rais

\* The district-wise population is shown in brackets. These are unpublished figures and were obtained in 1957 from the Nepal Census Office. They are, however, subject to revision.

and Limbus in order of their ethnic locations. This part of the Nepalese territory is the stronghold of the last two tribes which are split into a number of sub-divisions and which together constitute the Kirata race whose antiquity dates back to a remote period of Indian history.

In western Nepal, however, the Gorkhas predominate. In this part of the country the main ethnic groups among which the Newars have to live are the Gurungs, Magars and Chhetris (former Khas). The Gurungs and Magars are located in central Nepal just west to the Valley of Kathmandu. They have a marked preference for a certain type of altitude; the former always occupying a higher altitude extending upto the snowy region. The latter dwell in the central temperate zone to the south of the former and extend right upto the inner 'tarai'. The Chhetris are mostly concentrated in the far western Nepal. Here again the Newars dwell only at the district headquarters. These include: Noakot (5,818), Dhading (6,024), Gorkha (5,632), Tanhau (9,594), Lamjung (1,841), Kas-ki (5,352) and Syanja Noakot (6,766), Palpa (5,785), Baglung (2,167) and Gulmi (2,829). As we move still further west, and through the districts of Dailekh, Jumla, Doti, Baitadi and Dandel Dhura, which are the predominant centres of the Gorkhas, we find that the Newars are significantly few and sparse. This part of the country is barren and as such, there is little scope for the trading proclivity of the Newars.

Coming towards the south just below the eastern hills, the important places in the plains where the Newars are to be found are Birat Nagar, Sindhuli Garhi, Udaipurgarhi and Birganj. But in none of these places do they number over 3,000. Another region in this part of the country where their numbers are significant is the town of Makwanpur where their population is 12,061. This is a place which lies on the route to the Valley of Nepal from the 'tarai' and, therefore, is of great commercial import-

ance. From the eastern 'tarai' and inner 'tarai', when we move toward the western 'tarai' the region (just below the western hills), the only place which is of importance from the point of view of Newar population is Butwal. Here the Newars number about 2,551. Butawal lies on the route to Palpa, the head quarters of the western hills. Therefore, this place serves as an important link between India and Western Nepal for commercial purposes. In other places of the 'tarai', they are hardly to be found, particularly in those regions where there are little commercial possibilities.

Within the Valley of Kathmandu, their main homeland, the Newars form the highest percentage to the local population. They not only retain to this day their numerical superiority but also the predominance of their culture. The following table gives the population of the different ethnic groups in the Valley. This is based on mother-tongues as provided in the Census of Nepal, 1952/54.

Languages	Population	Percentage
Nepali	161,330	39.26
Newari	225,819	54.96
Temang	18,048	4.64
Gurung	505	0.12
Magar	810	0.19
Rai & Limbu	115	0.03
Indian & European	2,143	0.53
Bhote-Lama	396	0.10
Danuwar	318	0.08
Others	387	0.09
	410,871	100.00

Of the total population of the Valley, the Newars constitute as much as 54.96 per cent. The only ethnic groups whose numbers are next significant are the Nepali speakers (39.26 per cent) and the Tamangs (4.64 per cent). It is not possible to give the percentage increase of

these ethnic groups as no Census data have been compiled in the past on such lines. It is, however, to be noted that Brian Hodgson in his time had estimated the population of the Gorkhas and the Newars in the Valley to be at 3600 and 225000, respectively.<sup>24</sup> The Gorkha population was then mainly composed of soldiers. Thus it appears that the Nepali speakers have enormously increased their population. The rapid increase of the Gorkha population may be attributed mainly to the practice of polygyny, along with the practice of contracting morganatic marriage with the Newar women. In contrast, the Newars not only generally restrict themselves to monogamy, but also feel reluctant under social pressures to accept wives from the other ethnic groups. Besides, the special laws which are still in existence in theory, forbidding the non-Gorkhas from taking wives from the Gorkhas and the freedom for the latter to take wives from the Newar castes may have perhaps enabled the polygynous Gorkhas to add to their population. Formerly, the 'tarai' people of Indian origin were totally barred from taking up permanent residence in the Valley. Such restrictions having now been withdrawn and the Valley being the main centre of employment for the Nepalese, it is attracting migration from all parts of the country, and therefore, the Newar population is exposed to the threat of still further reduction in its proportional strength in future.

As regards the spatial distribution of the Newars in the Valley, they are mostly concentrated in the towns of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon and in such big hamlets as Kirtipur, Panga, Themi, Sankhu, Thankot, Tokha, Phirping and Nagarkot. The following table shows their spatial distribution in terms of urban and rural areas.

	Number	Percentage
Urban Population :	1,35,754	60.20
Rural Population :	90,065	39.80
Total :	2,25,819	100.00

Thus it would seem that urban dwelling comes natural to the Newars.

In the three towns, namely, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, they form 68.44, 78.44 and 97.74 per cent of the local population, respectively. Thus Kathmandu is the most ethnically mixed zone where the Nepali speakers form a percentage of 28.32. In other towns the percentages of the Nepali speakers are: Patan (19.82) and Bhatgaon (1.91). The Tamangs dwell in and around the vicinity of the Valley. Being on the lowest rung of the cultural ladder, they exert little influence on the life of the Newars. Their low economic condition, combined with a high social distance between them and the Hindus, leave them with the status of labourer, and as an unclean caste.

Outside the territory of Nepal the Newars are largely to be found in the three main centres — Darjeeling (including Sikkim), Bhutan and Lhasa. According to the Census Report of India, 1951<sup>25</sup> the total speakers of Newari in the first named district was 19,368. In 1911, their number was 6,980.<sup>26</sup> Thus during the last forty years they appear to have doubled themselves in these regions.

Nearer home on the border town of Bettiah in the State of Bihar, there is reported to be a colony of Newar Christians whose forefathers had to leave the Valley of Kathmandu during the second half of the 19th Century. Not much is known about them as their manners and customs are reported to have totally changed under the influence of Christianity, their adopted faith.

The numerical strength of the Newars in Tibet is not known. The present writer's effort at obtaining the population data from the Indian and Nepalese Consulates in Lhasa bore no fruit. Sir C. Charles Bell in 1924 had, however, estimated the Nepalese population in Lhasa to be between six and seven hundred. Since the only Nepa-

lese, barring the staff-members of the Nepalese consulate, who go to Lhasa are the Newars, we may take this figure as representing their population. But here again we have to take into account a significant fact. According to the Nepalese rules of marriage a male progeny born of a Nepalese by union with a Tibetan woman was until recently recognised as a Nepalese, whereas the female progeny was a Tibetan. Therefore, it is not improbable that the number of Newars might have been larger than what Bell had estimated during his days. At present, though reliable data are not available, a Newar friend of this writer, who owns a trading house in Lhasa estimated the present population of Newars in Tibet at around 20,000.

If we look at the nature of the distribution of the Newars outside the Valley of Nepal, we find that this is governed by certain factors. In the first place, unlike the Gorkhas, the Newars do not like to be rooted out of their social environment. Only under stress of special circumstances do they take to migration; whereas the Gorkhas may migrate to any place and set up their homes. The Newars do not appear to be much attracted by the 'tarai' region, except a few among them, mainly the Shresthas and the Manandhars, who have trading and land interests in the 'tarai'. Like other hill people, the majority of the Newars dread the hot climate. Besides, the dependence on a complex institutional net-work dominated by feasts and ceremonies hardly encourages a Newar individual to be torn out of his own social setting so as to live in an alien land and make life emotionally miserable.

As regards the eastern and western hills, the climatic factor does not come into play as much as in the 'tarai'. Yet the eastern region has more Newars than the western region. The western region is much influenced by Gorkha values and the Newars' sense of social inferiority cannot be minimised. But in the eastern region the

situation is different. This part of the country being the stronghold of the Kirata tribes, the Newars can easily assume the local leadership and occupy a far superior position of prestige in the local society. It is made all the more possible by their better economic and educational conditions. Being mostly tradesmen, the Newars are very often the local money-lenders and have some economic control over the local tribal people.

The same factor explains the concentration of Newars in Darjeeling and Sikkim, and Bhutan. Apart from such social considerations, economic reasons also play a major part in the Newars' coming to these regions which lie closer to the Tibetan capital where they have trade and commercial interests.

The Newars present a pleasant appearance and their women-folk are especially noted for beauty. One authority had described them as taller, slimmer and more swarthy in complexion than the Gorkhas who are of low stature with good muscular chest and limb development.<sup>27</sup> Newars can easily be distinguished from the other ethnic groups of Nepal by their typically long, oval, delicate and pulpy face. Their thin shoulders stand in contrast to the hardy mongoloid tribes of Nepal who generally have muscular and fleshy shoulders and limbs. The Newar nose is well formed and quite high bridged. Generally the Newars do not have pronounced cheek-bones; nor oblique eyes, though the eyelids may be fleshy. Despite such general characteristics, there is a great range of variation which moves from totally mongoloid to totally non-mongoloid. Other bodily characteristics also appear to vary from one region to another. Variation is also seen between the different castes.

With regard to anthropometric measurements, we do not have enough data. Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach had carried out measurements in 1952 on 75 Newar individuals (51 males and 24 females) in the Valley of Kath-



mandu.<sup>28</sup> Taking into consideration the measurements for head, nose, stature and facial angles, she found that men have C.I.79.78, N.I.79. 14, St. 1577, F.I. 87.35. Between the Newars of Kathmandu town and Holchouk (they are Du(n)-yeeya(n) ), the men of the former region have C.I. 80.52, N.I.74.39, St. 1575, F.I. 91.54 and the latter C.I. 79.63, N.I.84.39, St. 1564, F.I. 84.53. That is to say the Du(n)-yeeya(n) have longer head, broader nose and are shorter in stature. On the whole she describes the Newars as mesaticcephalic, mesorrhine and mesoprosopic. We may, however, point out here that these data are not sufficient to throw light on the racial affinities of the Newars, since these not only relate to a restricted number of individuals but also overlook the caste-wise measurements.

The origin of the Newars is a controversial question. From their history and traditions we are given to understand that the present Newar population is a complex of many ethnic groups. The traditions of the individual castes as set out in the chapter on caste fully suggest that the present Newars are drawn from the Abhiras, the Kiratas, the Lichhavis, the Vaishya Thakuri and the Karnatakas, apart from the fact that there might have been some ethnic group which provided the foundation for the present Newar type. It is very difficult to say who were the forerunners of the present Newars.

How the term Newar came to be applied to these people is not fully ascertainable. The views held by a few authorities in this respect seem to be based on the etymology of the terms 'Nepal'. It is generally suggested that the term Newar came into existence in order to designate the inhabitants of Nepal. Sunit Kumar Chatterjee<sup>29</sup> who holds such a view says that through the current practice in Newari language of interchanging 'p' and 'l' respectively for 'w' and 'r' 'Nepal' became Newar. Babu Ram Acharya, a noted Sanskrit scholar and historian of Nepal, holds somewhat a similar view. He suggests that the term

Newar might have originated from the term Nepar. He thinks that Nepar might be the autochthones of the Valley, who probably belonged to Austro-Asian race. According to him it is quite natural linguistically for Nepar to become Nebhar and then finally Newar.<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to rely on such phonetic interpretations. Moreover, if 'Newar' came into existence, as Chatterjee says, to designate the inhabitants of Nepal owing to the phonetic characteristic of Newari, one may also make a note of the current practice in Newari to designate people by reference to their habitat. At present the Newars designate the inhabitants of a region by adding 'ai' or 'mi' suffix to the name of the country. For instance the inhabitants of Khope (former name for Bhatgaon) are called 'Khopai', the inhabitants of Ya-La (Patan), Yalai, the inhabitants of Ya(n) (Kathmandu), Yemi; the people of Sanga, Sangami, of Kirtipur, Kipumi and of Panga, Pangami. Consistent with this practice, the people of Nepal, should have logically been called Nepai or Nepami and not Newar.

Newar tradition as set out in the Ancient Chronicles of Nepal gives a different origin of the term and this has been mentioned earlier while dealing with the history of the country. It ascribes the currency of the term Newar to the coming in of the Karnatik prince, Nanya Deo. It further relates that the original Newars were drawn from the Nayars and were Brahma-Kshatriya. Looking to the fact that nowhere do we find the reference to the term Newar earlier than the period of Nanya Deo, we have some reason to believe the traditional explanation. This explanation gets support from the current practice of the Gorkhas who, while referring to the Newars, say 'Niyar'. Whatever may be the truth, the possibility of the derivation of the term Newar from Nayar may not be ruled out, though Silvian Levi has rejected such a traditional explanation.<sup>31</sup> It is not unlikely that when the Chalukyas of the South invaded north-India, they had in their armies

men from the south. The Nayars being a military people during those early days,<sup>32</sup> it is possible that they constituted the bulk of the Chalukya soldiery. The present Shresthas among the Newars are traditionally connected with Nanya Deo and they too were known once to be soldiers in Nepal. We may, therefore, suggest that the term Newar may have come into vogue with the introduction of the Shresthas. In this regard it may be noted that the dolicho-cephalic Newars form a percentage of 15.7.<sup>33</sup> The cultural similarities between Malabar and the Valley are quite numerous and these are the additional factors which lend support to the traditional explanation. One among such is the similarity between the group of temples in Malabar and Nepal. Especially the ancient Siva temple, the Mahadeva Kovil of Beypore, south of Calicut, as pointed out by Percy Brown, is a deliberate copy of the double roofed Nepalese temple-architecture.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the geographical names in the Valley such as Godavari and Gokarna, and the great veneration shown by the Newars for serpents and the cult of Naga, bring the South-west India and Nepal culturally closer. Hodgson has pointed out that 'Wa-vel-va', come and 'Sumaka', sentences are perfectly the same in form and meaning in Newari and the people of Nilgiri.<sup>35</sup> Besides, we should like to point out here that the wooden pulveriser used as agricultural implement by the Newars, it is understood, is similar to that now being used in Malabar. In Newari it is called 'Khatta Muga'. The first word is definitely a Malayalam word which connotes pieces of earth. A similar implement, we are informed, is called 'Katta Kol' in Malayalam. Thus it would seem that some of the items of culture of the Valley bear a close similarity with those of South-west India. The institutions of marriage and family and religion, as have been described later, also suggest some traces of resemblance, however remote these may be. But a definite conclusion regarding the extent to which

the Nayars have contributed to the racial composition of the Newars will have to be awaited until some more detailed anthropometric work is carried out on the Newars, especially on the Shresthas.

Though there is ample ground to believe the traditional origin of the term Newar, it is not to say that the main contribution to the racial formation of the Newars is restricted to Malabar. Allowing enough scope for intermingling with the Mongoloids which would explain some pronounced Mongoloid traits, the complex of the physical traits of the Newars given earlier approximates to Ghurye's Western type.<sup>36</sup> The traditions of the Newars also point out migrations from the regions where the Western type predominates. Cultural similarities between the Newars and the whole south-west India are to be amply found.

But the tradition that Manjusri peopled the country suggests a very early migration from China. But how far reliance may be placed on this tradition is difficult to say. That Manjusri came from China is disputable, since the same deity is worshipped as Manjusri and Saraswati. However, this may suggest some early migration of the mongoloid people who intermingled to effect mongoloid modification in the Newar type.

Who were the autochthones of the Valley and what relationship they had with the ancestors of the Newars is not known. From the very early times the Kiratas have been regarded as the inhabitants of the Himalayas.<sup>37</sup> Their antiquity dates back to the Rigvedic time. Their references in the subsequent Hindu literature, Epic and Classical, both show an early influence of such mongoloid people. Saletore and Shaffer both have identified these ancient people with the Rais and Limbus who now dwell in the eastern province of Nepal.<sup>38</sup> The traditional account of the Kiratas' rule over the Valley during the time of Gautama Buddha and Asoka is consistent with the tradition of Rais that their forefathers came originally from a lake

whose waters had dried up.<sup>39</sup> In this connection it may be pointed out that the Gorkhas have a tradition that the Newars are the descendants of Kichak, the Minister-General of Birat. We may also mention that Birat Nagar, a place of considerable importance in the plains is quite near to the Valley of Kathmandu. When we take this into account with the tradition as reported by Hamilton, which identifies the Kirat with Kichak,<sup>40</sup> we find some ethnic affinities of the Newars with the ancient Kiratas.

Another ancient tribe which invites our attention in this connection is the Murmi. It is a purely Mongoloid tribe and has its stronghold to the north of the Valley. They are also numerous in and around the Valley. Like the Kiratas of the east, they hold 'Kipat' land which has been handed down to them from time immemorial. They have been identified linguistically and geographically by Robert Shaffer with the ancient Tamara along with the Gurung and Thaksya.<sup>41</sup> The Murmi who live in and around the Valley appear to have longish face and seem to be influenced by the Newars. At the same time the Mulmi section among the Newars suggests to be drawn from the Murmi, though there is a wide gulf, linguistic, physical and cultural. Attention may be invited to the fact that Bhimsen, the epic hero, is regarded as an important deity both by the Newars and the Tamangs. We, therefore, find that the Kiratas and the Murmi are not without their close ethnic affinities with the Newars who perhaps owe much to the former. The round and small eyes very often to be seen among the Jyapoos and others suggest such a contribution from these mongoloid tribes.

A third racial element is also suspected in the present Newar type. In the next chapter it will be seen that authorities are agreed to the view that the Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayas show a substratum of Munda element. Among the present languages, some like that of Rais and Limbus still retain the characteristic pro-

nominalisation, whereas the others have totally abandoned it. The Newari language is found to contain such traces. This gives rise to the suggestion that some people allied to the Austro-Asian might be the autochthones of the Valley, who subsequently disappeared bequeathing their culture to the other people who supplanted them. Our attention is particularly drawn in this connection to some evidences other than linguistic. The overwhelming cult of Bhairava and Bhairavi in the religion of the Newars may be noted. The Du(n)-yee-ya(n)'s connection with Akash Bhairava and the tradition identifying the latter with Eklabya, the Bhilla prince, are the facts of additional significance. The Duneeya(n) along with the Balamis who also live in the Valley, suggest themselves as the earliest people of the Valley.

From Du(n)-yeeya(n), we come to Danuwar and between them the difference may be only of time. Vansittart lists Danuwar among the aboriginal races such as Kusuwar, Botya, Kumbha, Brahm, Manjhis etc., who were found in the lower hills.<sup>42</sup> At present the Danuwar number about 9,138 and are to be found in the eastern hills and east inner tarai,<sup>43</sup> but just close to the Valley. We are informed on enquiry that they have a tradition that they are the descendants of Karnatakas and call themselves Karnatak Vamsi.

Another tribe showing affinity with the Newars is the Pahari who disappeared from the Valley but are to be found in the lower hills in the east. The Pahari language has been described as a sub-dialect of Newari.<sup>44</sup> The same language under two different names suggest affinities of Newars with the Pahari. The Pihi or Pahi section of the Jyapoo may be the former Pahari. Farther down in the tarai live the Tharus who bear some cultural similarities with the Newars.

Another ethnic group which is important to note is the Hayu or Vayu who are on the road to extinction.

According to Campbell, their tradition tells that they originally came from Lanka, having left the country after the defeat of King Ravana. The Rakshasa King Ravana is still their hero.<sup>45</sup> They remained for a long time in Dakkhin (south) and came to Simrawn Garha in the days of its glory. Hodgson had noted them as living in the state of nature north of Sindhuli<sup>46</sup> which falls on the way to the Valley from Simrawn Garha. The comparative absence of the cult of Rama among the lower castes of Newars and the current belief that Ravana had undertaken penance at Gokarna in Kathmandu Valley to please Gokarneshwar Mahadeva suggest some sentimental attachment of the Newars to this mythological King.

Some of the cultural features connect the Newars with the Khasis and the Palaungs of Shan States. The Newar rituals of presenting betel nuts ('Gue-Sake-gu' and 'Gue-Kae-bu') show similarity with a Khasi custom. Leela Sachadeva observes: "Khasi etiquette requires exchange of 'Kwai' (betel-nut) as a mark of good breeding, and if one fails to observe it he fails in good manners..... No social function is complete without it. The reception at the social gathering starts with it and social etiquette demands that 'Kwai' should be offered and taken for a correct leave-taking at the end. In the marriage ceremony, on the southern slopes of the Khasi hills, the exchange of 'Kwai' by the groom and the bride is a major part of the celebration....." As in marriage, so in divorce, betelnut is used to symbolise the main objects of the ceremony.<sup>47</sup> Strangely enough not only is the ritual use of betelnut greatly common among the Newars, but also the Newari term 'Gue' is very nearly similar to the Khasi term 'Kwai'. Yet another cultural similarity with the Khasi is the settlement of dispute by water ordeal, which once had existed in the Valley. Hodgson<sup>48</sup> reports about a means of settling disputes in Nepal which is very

similar to that of the Khasis as described by P.R.T. Gurdon.<sup>49</sup>

The ritual of disposing of the dead body of girls who die during their first menstruation (ceremonial or biological) surprisingly resembles the practice among the Palaungs of the Shan States. Mrs. L. Milne says<sup>50</sup> that if a Palaung woman dies in child-birth, her body is hurriedly washed and dressed in new clothes, coins are tied to the wrists and the usual food and other things are placed beside her in a new mat which is wrapped round her body. She is then lowered through a hole which is cut on the flooring boards of the room where she died. She further reports that in front of the coffin, a man walks carrying a lighted torch, even if the sun is shining brightly. As will be seen later the girl dying during her first menstruation is brought down by the Newars to the ground floor through the holes cut on the floors. The carrying of the lighted torch is also in practice. The Palung Valley situated to the south of Kathmandu raises the question whether it has anything to do with the Palaungs of Shan States.

Thus it will be seen that the Newars are a people of diverse origins as their traditions reveal. While the pronounced mongoloid traits in them are contended, the sum total of their physical and cultural traits mark them out from the mongoloid people on the one hand and the Brahmanic Gorkhas on the other. Their affinities with the people of South-west India are suggested not only by their culture, but also by their traditions of migrations. We may, however, warn that a more detailed investigation is necessary before we come to any definite conclusion.

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## 2. ECONOMIC AND MATERIAL LIFE — I

IF you ask a Gorkha what occupation he likes most, soon the reply comes—"Employment in the army". Though agriculture is the primary basis of livelihood at home, his preference is entirely for a job in the army. If a similar question is put to a Newar, he would say, "trade". Such occupational interests of these two communities which are totally oriented towards two different directions constitute the basic difference in their temperament relating to livelihood. However, this pronounced proclivity for trade is largely confined to the upper strata of the Newar society, whereas, the martial quality of the Gorkhas penetrates throughout their society. The bulk of the Newar population as represented by the Jyapoos has its occupational interest rooted in agriculture, and trade comes to it only as the second primary occupation. The Jyapoos take great pride in being called a *Kisaan* or *Kisani* in preference to the former appellation which has rather come to be associated of late with the idea of a labourer. Agriculture, therefore, is the primary means of sustenance for these people. The habitat also helps or even imposes this condition which affords the cultivation of all kinds of cereals. How agriculture influences the life of the Newars may be seen not only from

the festival of Machhendra Nath which is regarded as the greatest of their festivals but also from the numerous rituals in which the importance of agriculture is amply reflected. Such importance can also be seen by the nature of the Newar settlements in the Valley of Kathmandu. Each settlement is surrounded by agricultural fields. Even an urban centre like Kathmandu commands such fields still at its south-western side.

Land is classified in many ways—according to the productivity of the soil which depends on the irrigability of the plot and according to the system of tenure. According to the first, there are three types of lands—*sem*, *dome* and *awl*. *Sem* is that type of land which is situated on the higher elevation and which is not subjected to irrigation; such lands are mainly used for the dry crops. *Dome* is an intermediate variety which has some possibility of irrigation; and the *awl* is the best type of land, which is flooded by the rivers and small streams. The last two types of lands are used for the cultivation of summer crops, mostly paddy. Again from the point of view of crops, there are two kinds of lands, *Khet* and *bari*. The first is for the cultivation of paddy and wheat, whereas the second for dry crops such as millets. The system of ownership gives rise to three principal varieties of lands—*raikad*, *birta* and *guthi*. *Raikad* land is owned by the state and there is no intermediary between the tiller and the owner. *Birtas* are tax-free lands, mostly owned by the non-cultivating land-owners who give it for tillage to the peasants either on a rental or crop-sharing basis. A sub-variety of *birta* is called *nole* which requires, apart from the payment of rent, the supply of free labour by the tiller to the owner.

The *guthi* variety of land is also a rent-free land consecrated to socio-religious purposes. The incomes accruing from these are utilised for the furtherance of religious and social interests. Most of the *guthi* lands owned by

the Newars are associated with the *Sana-Guthis* and *De-wali Guthis* and their numerous sub-varieties. Therefore, the ownership in this respect is confined to caste and consanguineal groups only. It is such landed property of the *guthis* that provide the expenses for the Newar feasts and festivals.

The amount of rent paid for the use of land varies according to the quality of land. The *awl* type of land brings the highest rent. The maximum rent to be paid for this type is about a quarter and a rupee per '*ropani*'; and for the most inferior land, the *sem*, the rent is minimum. It is about three-fourth of a Nepali half-rupee. The traditional mode of payment of the rent used to be in terms of crops, which is still practised in many cases. The payment of cash toward rent is a recent innovation in the Valley, though it has existed in the *tarai* since long. Even for the payment of cash, the amount is calculated on the basis of crops. At present it is fixed at one rupee per four *pathis*. As for example, if a tenant paid 20 *pathis* in the past as rent, he now pays rupees five only in terms of cash.

Whatever may have been the system of land ownership and its succession among the Newars in the past, now-a-days it is not different from that of the Gorkhas. It is based upon agnatic principles. It is owned in two ways — collectively, in the form of *guthi* lands as already stated and also individually. As regards inheritance, it passes through father to son. Male relatives within three degrees of consanguinity inherit in preference to daughters.<sup>1</sup> Children in lawful wedlock take a larger share than the others whose share comes to 1/6 of the former. Children of different wives take per capita and not as representatives of their mother;<sup>2</sup> unmarried daughters also get an equal share. But on marriage their shares revert to their brothers. In the *guthi* type of land an individual has only the right to have a share in the crops. Such

lands are cultivated and looked after by each of the member-families by rotation on behalf of the 'guthi' institution.

Agricultural prosperity in the Valley of Kathmandu, largely depends on the rains. The rivers are not so useful as they go dry during the summer season. With the oncoming of rains, they become useful and form an irrigation network. The value set upon agriculture is primarily due to such heavy rainfall. The Newar peasants are quite skilful in tapping the rain-water into large catchments located on the flat tops of the hill and directing it into numerous narrow channels to irrigate their fields. During the rainy season and if the rain is timely there is, however, hardly any need for water to be collected in tanks, because all the rivers in the Valley get swollen and flood the low lying lands. Besides the countless streams force their way down the Valley from the higher elevation of the surrounding hills. Such streams are made to irrigate the terraced fields lying on the slopes.

When the rain fails, the hill-top-reservoirs wherein rain-water of the preceding year is collected are the only sources for keeping the fields wet. But now-a-days, these tanks have been taken over by the Government to provide drinking water to the local population. Therefore, the failure of rain poses a great problem to the agricultural needs of the Newars. To find a solution of such a problem is beyond the power of human effort in the existing circumstances. The only hope is god and especially Machhendra Nath, the guardian deity of Nepal, which presides over agricultural prosperity of its people. This is how the Newari peasant thinks.

For a good harvest, the rains should start in the beginning of 'Asadh'. The general belief is that the transplantation of paddy must be completed by the fifteenth of 'Sraavan'. Not even a single Newar is prepared

to prolong it beyond that date, since it is believed to bring ill-luck upon the person concerned. If the rain is behind, the anxiety of the Newar peasants, therefore, knows no bounds. The invocation of gods and goddesses pre-occupy the activities of the peasants leading to the artificial rain-making rituals.

The ritual of asking for rain from the gods goes by the name of 'la-pya-ke-gu'. It is a collective event in which the entire village participates\*. As for example, in Panga the date and the timing are decided upon in a meeting of the lineage-heads, '*Thakalis*' of the various agnatic groups. On the appointed day, a person of the Pore caste goes round the village beating a drum and announcing the decision to hold '*La-Pya-Ke-gu*'. From every household two *manas* of flattened rice, *bajee* and half a rupee are collected to meet the expenses. Then in the afternoon all the male residents assemble at the central square of the village with their respective caste musical instruments to take out a procession to the temple of Machhendra for worship. The procession is arranged into five groups, each of them visiting a different godling associated with the village welfare. On such occasions, the '*Kaha(n)*' musical instrument, also known as '*Indra-Baja*', is most essential.

The procession first proceeds to the temple of Ganesh in the village, where worship is done and a ram or goat is sacrificed on behalf of each of the *Sana Guthis*. From there they then break off into five different groups as mentioned earlier. Having propitiated the different godlings of the village they meet at a place near the village and then proceed together to the Bungamati for the worship of Machhendra Nath. After worship a shirt is offered to the deity. Then the members of the procession engage themselves in the water throwing ritual; first at the idol of Machhendra and later among themselves.

\* This is the practice in the Village of Panga.

While returning, the procession proceeds to the Tau-dah tank, believed to be the abode of Karkotaka Naga which is to be worshipped by a Gubhaju priest (a Buddhist). Subsequently as the main part of propitiation, a pair of silver and gold serpents are dropped into the tank and the people hold the belief, as stated elsewhere, that as soon as these metal snakes are put into the water, they become alive.

The members of the processions return home shouting the slogans, "O Lord Mahadeo, give us rain". It is to be noted here that the slogan is in Nepali language and not in Newari. Finally when they enter the village they hold the ritual of water-throwing again. For this purpose every house will have stored water in big copper vessels and kept them on the balcony as well as at its entrance. The latter is meant for the use of the members of the procession. All the inmates of the house, mostly the females, throng up at their respective balconies and throw water over the moving procession below. The latter also throws water up toward the balcony. After such exchange of water-throwing in each locality, the procession again visits the village-godlings and finally disperses on reaching the central square. In the evening a big feast is held under the auspices of the different 'Sana Guthis' in which even a small child participates. It is commonly believed that after such rain-making ritual, there is sure to be a rainfall.

There are also other traditions observed in connection with the praying for rain. One among these is the milking of cows on the dry bed of the river Bagmati. The milk is used for preparing 'Kheer' and offered to the Sadhus. Worship of the Nagas and the performance of *hawan* at the temple of Pashupati are some of the additional recourses adopted for dispelling the draught.

The method of cultivation is quite simple. It does not involve the use of plough; nor the elaborate stages



as found in India. It requires only human labour with the help of a digging hoe called 'Ku'\* in Newari. The implements and tools besides the *Ku* include the large digging hoe (*Kuki-cha*), the spud (*Khurpi*), the wooden pulverizer (*Khatta-Muga\**), the hatchet (*Pa*), the sickle (*In*), basket (*Khumu*), the bangi-pole (*No* or *Nole*) and the winnowing fan. It is to be noted that, although the non-Newar farmers such as the Magars and Gorkhas are very particular in using the plough for cultivation, not only in the Valley but also over the hills where the level of the fields is not so much suited for the purpose the Newars stick to their tradition of the non-employment of the plough. The handling of plough by a Newar is enough for him to be excommunicated from his caste. Such a cultural trait is definitely not due to the compassion for animal, since the Newars are known to be great consumers of animal flesh; and animal sacrifice is the core of their ceremonial and religious life.

Again the non-employment of plough does not appear to be attributable to the influence of Buddhism. The Buddhist Newars do not differ from their Hindu brethren in the sacrifice and consumption of animals. Chatto-padhyaya thinks that the non-employment of plough was in the early history the result of technological backwardness as the plough was not known to the inhabitants of the Valley.<sup>3</sup> This was, he says, subsequently kept out by strong conservatism and probably due to some hostility towards the people in contact who possessed the necessary knowledge. He gets support for this from no less an authority than the Chinese traveller Huen Tsang who stated that the Valley people were ignorant of the use of oxen.<sup>4</sup> Whatever be the truth in this statement, I would like to suggest that if not the primary factor, at least the

\* In Nepali, it is called **Kodali**.

\* The word 'Khatta' bear a close sound-resemblance with the Malayali word 'Katta' which connotes large pieces of earth. The Malayali peasants have a similar tool called 'Katta-Kol(h).

most important force that made the plough agriculture an unknown operation in Nepal was the past social ambition of the Jyapoos, the cultivating class. It is well known that the great Lichchavis who ruled over India as the Guptas had some lowly brethren who by all consensus of opinion are identified with the Jyapoos. So they shunned the plough, since such occupation would have been against the status of the Kshatriya. The present non-employment of oxen may seem to be the continuation of such a feeling.

Despite the fact that the plough is not used and that the agricultural operation is simple, a Newar farmer is an expert cultivator. He raises more crops than an Indian farmer if both were to be assigned the same size of plots in their respective regions. B. H. Hodgson, while observing in his time remarked that the Newars were the best cultivators in Asia<sup>5</sup>. In the same plot, the Newar farmer raises at least two main crops and two subsidiary ones. He never allows the field to lie fallow for more than a month or two. His skilfulness lies in mixed-farming. As for example, during the paddy season, in addition to the main crop, he raises vegetables such as potatoes and tomatoes on the outer-rings of the plots, which would have been otherwise wasted. In winter, the same field is used for the wheat cultivation, immediately after the paddy harvest. Similarly in the dry plot (*bari*) a variety of crops such as maize, pulses, sugar-cane and *Kodo* are raised, but always making a selection of two crops only at a time.

The traditional source of manure for a Newar peasant is the black clay called *kali-mati*. This clay is dug out from beneath the field and spread into heaps over the fields just before the monsoon and levelled at the time of digging the fields.

Another principal source of manure is the animal and human excrement. Since cattle are rare in the Valley

this type of manure is largely supplied by the human population. Human excrement, therefore, has a value in the Valley. The Chyame (scavenger) collects it and supplies in the fields on requisition by the Jyapoo farmers for which the normal rate of payment is half a rupee per Kerosene-oil tin.

Cultivation is of two kinds—plain cultivation and terraced cultivation. The latter is adopted on the sloping fields. Such fields are divided into plots which appear like terraces. About a foot high embankment is raised at the bottom line of each of the fields so as to retain water in it. When sufficient water has been retained in the field lying at the higher elevation, the lower field is irrigated through the inter-connecting outlets. This irrigation system is carried to the lowest plot so as to distribute the available water properly.

Coming to the agricultural operation, it starts with the digging of the black soil. This operation takes place during the months of Falgun and Chaitra. By the time Jaistha approaches, the wheat crop is ready for harvest. Immediately after its harvest, maize and pulses are sown in the *Bari* or dry lands. In many cases the outer rings of the plots are reserved for the sowing of the black soyabean. At the approach of *Asadh*, there is a little rain which renders the turning up of the soil easy. While the men do the digging, the women break the soil and level the field with the wooden pulverisers (*Khatta-Munga*). The paddy seeds are sown at the same time in a plot especially prepared so as to allow the seedlings to grow into about half a foot high. Toward the middle or the last week of the same month, when there is enough rain, transplantation of the seedlings begins. The uprooting of the seedlings is a taboo for the women and it is the men only who do this job. The women then plant these seedlings into the main fields.

Rice transplantation marks an occasion when co-

operation among the members of the different classes and castes is manifested. When one has finished one's own rice transplantation, he goes to help his neighbours for which he or she gets a rupee per day in addition to the mid-day feast. It is also a time for mirth and gaiety. All social distinctions are overlooked and the workers sit together in the same rows to eat their mid-day meals. Buffalo-meat, flattened rice, (*Bajee*) and country beer, (*Tho(n)*) constitute the principal items in the menu. It is here that Newar farmers differ from the Gorkha farmers who do not serve liquor at the mid-day meal. Again, there is another cultural difference between the two communities. The transplantation of paddy in the case of the latter is accompanied by agricultural songs which are, however, rarely to be met with among the Newars.

After the work of transplantation, the Newar peasants undergo the purificatory rite called '*sinja Benke*'. The belief involved in it is that during the transplantation period, a person's caste is polluted, as he has to eat his mid-day feast along with others, ignoring caste distinctions. Such laxity in caste restriction is not to be met with among the Gorkhas. An additional feature which marks the Newar transplantation work off from that of the Gorkhas is the equal distribution of work between the two sexes; whereas in the case of the latter, the work is almost entirely done by their female-folk, except the ploughing. This is so at least in the Valley of Nepal.

The fifteenth of *Sravan* marks the completion of the transplantation. Like human beings the fields are also believed to be subject to the influence of evil spirits, which lead to the propitiatory activity on this day known as '*Byancha Janake*', described elsewhere.

In the second half of *Sravan* the farmers are engaged in stamping out the weeds as also the cultivation of '*Kodo*'. In *Bhadra*, the maize crops are harvested and

side by side weeding is continued in the paddy fields. In the month of *Ashwin*, some of the Newar farmers harvest the '*Khanj*' paddy which ripens earlier. This is also the time when the excess water is drained out of the paddy fields. The main harvesting of the paddy is however done during *Kartik*. This month, together with the month of *Margsir*, is marked side by side by the cultivation of wheat. It involves, digging of the field, and the weeding and sowing of wheat. During '*Paush*' and '*Magh*', the farmers engage themselves in the cultivation of vegetables among which potato, palak, cauli-flowers, cabbages, radishes are to be especially noted. Thus the whole year the Newar farmers are busy in agricultural work.

Paddy is processed into two kinds of rice. These are '*hakuwa*' and *tauli*. The *hakuwa* rice has a ritual value for the Newars and it is generally believed that, when cooked, it increases in quantity. For its preparation, the paddy stalks, when cut, are allowed to remain in the fields for about a fortnight. Afterwards the farmers go to the fields and separate the grains from the stalks by beating them against the ground. Unlike in north India, the Newars do not employ bullocks to crush the grains out of the stalks. The process of separating the grains is itself a ritual which has to be accompanied in the middle with the eating of samai. The paddy stalks are also offered '*samai*' and *tho(n)*. These are believed to represent goddess Laxmi. After the winnowing, the paddy is filled in baskets and carried home.

The person who carries the paddy home never stops on the way, as it is the belief that it should not be placed anywhere other than in one's own house. On reaching home, the man bringing the first load of paddy stands at the door for the ritual-welcome. The chief lady of the house puts a *teeka-mark* on his forehead and offers flowers to the grains before it is carried inside.

Despite the capacity for hard labour and skilful

cultivation the Newar farmers are not quite well off, though they are well dressed and well housed. The total produce of the year is hardly enough to meet the domestic requirements after making deduction for the rent of the land. In the Panga village, there are only a few families who reported to me to be self-sufficient. The misery is much more enhanced by the traditional necessity of providing the feasts of the year.

Of the 49 farmer families, about whom data are available regarding the size of the holding and annual produce, only eight (18.38 per cent) reported that they had enough for the year. The average land per household, including the 'bari' comes to 8.06 'ropani'. The average yield per ropani comes to paddy: 2.42 *murhis*; wheat: 0.26 *murhi*; and Millet: 0.24 *murhi*. Roughly speaking, an individual consumes at least six *murhis* of rice in a year, whereas the gross yield per individual comes to only 3.67 *murhis*. When the quantity of grain to be paid by way of rent is taken into consideration, the total produce falls still shorter of the total annual requirement. Such deficit is not due to the poor annual yield, but due to the smaller size of the holding.

Besides, in most of the cases the Jyapoo are merely tenants and not the owners of the land. The majority of the land in the Valley is the free-hold variety, 'Birtas' owned by the richer section of the local inhabitants and in many of these cases, the Jyapoo farmers have to share with their landlords half the annual produce.

The growing population, on the other hand, is making greater demand for residential sites as a result of which, extensive farming is becoming a remote possibility. The hard-working capacity of the Jyapoo Newars, however, enables them to make for the deficit by taking to side occupations such as weaving and spinning, carpentry and working as casual labourers and porters for which they have to throng into Kathmandu town.

Handicrafts constitute the third main group of occupation which give livelihood to the Newars. It includes metal-working, carpentry, house-building, weaving, oil-pressing and liquor distilling, pottery and many others. These occupations still continue to be the hereditary means of livelihood for the special groups. Artisan work can be distinguished into two categories – one relating to religious objects and another to domestic use. The first three (excluding iron-working) are confined to the three upper castes of the Newars. In these the Newars have a monopoly and competition from others is rare. This is because there are no such specialised groups of craftsmen among the other ethnic groups of Nepal. They, therefore, cater to the needs of all the people in the Valley. They are found earning their livelihood as goldsmiths and workers in copper and bronze metals even in the far distant places in the country.

Weaving now-a-days does not constitute the main source of livelihood. It is a household occupation which is being followed by all. In the villages every Jyapoo and Shrestha household owns its own spinning-wheels and looms. It helps to supplement the family income. So far as the Jyapoo are concerned, they have a preference for the home-spun cloth; especially their women-folk always wear clothes spun in their own households. But weaving is, however, receiving a set-back owing to the increased cost of imported cotton and free import of Indian made cloth which is cheaper and of good texture. With regard to the technique of weaving and spinning in Nepal it has been briefly summarised by K. P. Chattopadhyaya<sup>6</sup> from the original source and this description is still applicable to the Newar's weaving apparatus. It is still quite common to observe only the females working at these looms. The importance of spinning and weaving is reflected in a Newar ceremony. As mentioned elsewhere one of the dowry-articles which the parents have to

present to a daughter at her marriage is a spinning wheel. Though weaving is not pursued by the high caste Newars of the urban centres, its traditional importance in the ceremony still exists even among them.

Iron-working is an important source of livelihood only for a particular caste of Newars known as the Kow. He mostly makes agricultural implements and household articles. The demand of the latter type of articles is gradually being replaced by the imported ones. Therefore, the only work that the iron workers have to do now is to supply the agricultural implements and do the repairing work.

Pottery, tile-making and brick-making are another set of hereditary occupations. The Newar potteries are of innumerable varieties and the skilfulness shown in them cannot be competed by any other local group. This occupation thrives because there is still a great demand for earthenware in the Valley. The earthen pots have a variety of use both for ceremonial and domestic purposes. The Newars of lower economic groups use earthen pots for almost all domestic purposes.

The process of pottery-making and the potter's wheel are the same as found in India. The fine variety of clay found in the Valley gives an advantage to the potters for making articles of durable quality. This occupation is more concentrated in the region of Themi and Bhatgaon from where the potter-cum-dealer goes to the other regions to sell his goods. Generally the mode of payment is in the form of foodgrains for which the potters show a special preference.

Another important occupation which follows in the scheme of hierarchy is oil-pressing. It is an important occupation only for the Manandhar caste which is known in its occupational capacity as Salmi. Mustard seeds are obtained from the Jyapoo farmers. These mustard seeds are first baked and then oil is pressed out of them. The



oil-mill is jointly owned by the member-households of the locality where it is situated. Unlike in India, the mill is not driven by the bullock or any other kind of animal labour. Human labour is the only power to drive these mills. It is perhaps this that necessitated the joint partnership in this occupation. The significance of the oil mills is such that even the localities are named after them.

As in other spheres of Newar life, the oil mill too is subject to the influence of evil spirits. So a mill is always protected by a buffalo's skull hung above the entrance. Periodically it is offered worship and a buffalo is sacrificed on the '*Dashehera*' day. The oil mill functions as the fulcrum for intra-household solidarity of the co-operating households.

Milk-selling is, curiously enough, becoming gradually an important occupation of the unclean caste, the Kasai, who has, besides, his main occupation of selling the buffalo meat. Though the former Ahirs or Abhiras who are now known as Hale or Gua (corrupt form of Guala) are the traditional cattle breeders and milk-vendors, their main occupation is now agriculture. The Gorkhas, especially their agricultural section, generally keep their own cows and, therefore, as milk-men there is no separate class or caste among them.

Leather-working as a means of livelihood has passed into the hands of the Sarki, who belongs to the Gorkha group. Kullu, the Newar leather worker, can earn his livelihood by merely attending to the skinning of dead animals and by repairing shoes. They are unable to withstand competition from the Sarki.

Occupations such as shaving, domestic services and washing of clothes are sectional, and give livelihood to a few persons. Domestic service is mainly confined to the Jyapoos. There being no practice among the Newars of

employing a domestic servant, it is not an important means of livelihood. Work as casual labourer, palanquin-bearer and porter are some of the subsidiary occupations which are monopolised by the Jyapoos. Tailoring is a subsidiary means of livelihood for the Vanras and the Kusle.

Lastly a very important means of livelihood, not of hereditary nature, is that of employment in the Government services. Till recently, when the normal practice was to employ people in the Government services mostly from among the local residents of the Valley, the Newars enjoyed a special advantage, since most of the clerks and officials were drawn from their community. This was all the more rendered comfortable owing to the preference of the Gorkhas for the military service, which was denied by law to the Newars. A change having come over in the political set up of the country, government services are now open to all the people drawn from the remotest part of the country. The formerly existing easy situation is no more to be found and such means of livelihood are now-a-days a matter of serious competition.

Nevertheless, the comparative greater facility for education in the Valley, coupled with the good financial capacity to educate one's sons and daughters, and the advantage of being local, give the higher class Newars an easy access to employment in the Government services. This occupation is therefore next in importance only to trade. Besides, the professional means of livelihood as teachers and doctors are some of the new avenues opened for those Newars who can afford such specialisations.

The structure of hereditary occupations as described above is rapidly undergoing change. Such a change does not lie so much in the abandonment of one type of hereditary occupation in favour of another as in acquiring a new type of secular occupation under the changing political

and social set-up. The legal privileges of dominating one social group by another are no more available and with the abolition of the state recognition of caste-hierarchy there is absolute occupational mobility, except among the priests and the untouchables. Educated classes of Newars are more in favour of the secular occupations. The metal and wood-working occupations being in the hands of the higher castes, the specialisation and the great skilfulness acquired in these fields are bound to languish, since they have the best opportunity and means for higher education which naturally favours an intellectual and modern type of occupation. The process of traditional knowledge and expertness being handed down from father to son in matters of arts and architecture is threatened, since educated men have a tendency to despise such hereditary avocations.

From occupation we come to the settlement of the Newars. The Newars are a community of urban disposition and whether they live in the towns or in the villages, their settlements always reveal an urban character. In the Valley of Kathmandu, the settlement is built on high grounds or on the flat tops of the hills which are not useful for agricultural purposes. The important settlements such as the towns of Kathmandu, Patan, Bhatgaon and Sankhu are in addition located on the banks of the rivers. The settlements are mostly spread without any particular pattern with regard to direction. They are generally lengthwise with a narrow main street which is intercepted at both sides by lanes running parallel to it. The streets and lanes are paved with bricks or stones. A Newar village can be easily spotted out by its houses with brickwalls and tiled roofs, which are linked with one another by common walls. The clustering of houses and their physical compactness are the features reflective of the Newars' gregarious living. Very rarely could the Newar houses be seen scattered like that of the Gorkhas

Settlements are also an indication in Nepal of the ethnic compactness of the different communities.

At the approach of a Newar village an observer is struck by its three main important features : the village 'pati', (public resting place) which stands at each of the approaches to it, the *bhau-pwa*, a window-like opening on the roof of the house and the tanks 'Daha'. The 'patis' are especially important during the festival times when the deities are made to rest there before they are brought inside the settlement. Each settlement has generally a few tanks, or atleast one, for the use of the inhabitants for bathing and washing the clothes.

The settlement is divided into a number of parts known as *toles*\*. As for example, the Panga village is made up of thirteen toles. An alternative term *Khel* is also used to designate such various parts. In the town of Bhatgaon which represents the typical Newar urban settlement an alternative term used for the tole is *Chhe* which in Newari means 'house'.

In each settlement there is generally a temple each of Ganesh, Saraswati, Bhairava, Narain and Mai (mother goddess) which form part of the village life. In addition there is a Chaitya located in each tole or locality. Each tole has its own pati which is used as a common resting place and for the holding of tole-concerts. Every locality has an important place called *Chhwasa* on the crossing of two lanes where the objects connected with the evil spirits (please see Chapter on religion) are thrown. Another important feature of the Newar settlement is the prescribed route for the funeral procession and the spot known as *Murda-Do-pat*. Quite close to the settlement there is the crematory ground where the corpses are burnt. The location of cremation is marked for each caste separately. Each settlement has a central square for the purpose of collective events, social and religious.

\* Compare it with the tola used in the Bihar villages.

The Newar settlement is also marked by the residential compactness in relation to caste, though it is in a flux in Kathmandu town. Each caste or group lives in its own tole and more often than not the tole is named after it. The pattern of caste location closely follows the principle of social distance. Generally in the centre of the settlement lives the priest of the presiding deity, surrounded by the top caste Newars such as the Chhatharia and the Shresthas. They are again encircled by the Jyapoo caste, which is followed in turn by the low castes according to their gradations. An untouchable caste does not have its residence located within the village boundary, but at a little distance away. As for example, in the Panga village in the centre live the Shresthas; and the Jyapoos around them. The barber lives on the eastern outskirt; the blacksmith on the northern; and the Kasai on the south-eastern. The Pore lives a little distance away to the south of the settlement proper. Outside the Valley of Kathmandu, the Newar settlements are market settlements. They are mostly, spread out alongside the road in an oblong way at places where the two high-ways meet. The ground floor serves for running the shop whereas the upper floors are used for residential purposes. Generally, such settlements are called *Hatia* by the local non-Newars and it is connotative of the market character of the settlement, since 'hat' etymologically means a market place.

Dr. Oaldfield has given a very good account of the lay out of the towns in the Valley in relating to the different castes, which had existed during the reign of Newar Kings.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the urban features of the settlement as marked by the skilful architecture, brick-houses of many storeys and streets and lanes laid with stones, which suggest their high material culture, the Newars appear to be ignorant of the need for drainage. It is not explainable

as to how such an important aspect of the city settlement as the drainage has slipped away from the body of their knowledge regarding material culture. Dr. Oaldfield during his times observes, ".....stagnant gutters on each side of the road, running immediately below the house-fronts do the duty of scavengers and into them most of the filth and refuse of the adjacent buildings find their way".<sup>8</sup> Even today, the quadrangle of the house, known as *Chuka* is the ideal place for throwing refuse and filth as it was in the good old days. Such quadrangles also serve in the majority of cases, as places for throwing stool. On enquiry with a municipal councillor of Kathmandu it was gathered that as a result of the deposition of filth, through inconsiderable years, these quadrangles had been filled up as high as the level of the first floor, about eight to fifteen feet in height. Now they have been cleared at great costs. The towns of Kathmandu and Patan have now been brought under underground drainage systems. But so far as the other places are concerned the settlements still retain their traditional utter disregard for sanitation.

In the villages, the lack of drainage does not create a problem, though it is much desirable to have it. The settlements being located on high grounds, rain water is quickly passed down. But the deposition of filth in the inner yards is still a disturbing feature. As compared to the towns many of these inner yards do not serve for throwing the night-soil into them. The night-soil being highly prized by the agriculturists, the inhabitants go to the fields to attend to nature's call.

As to the organisation of the community, the traditional features are still to be seen in the Newar villages. The Shresthas are regarded as the leaders of the community and they are looked upon as a model for imitation. In the former days each village had a *Dware*, four *Pra-dhans*, four 'Nayakas' and from five to ten 'Maharias'.

They were the village officials. The Dware and the Pradhans were not only entrusted with the collection of revenue but were also concerned with the maintenance of law and order in the villages under their respective jurisdictions. In contrast to *Dware* who used to be appointed by the Government, the four Pradhans used to be the land-owners of the village. The village council also included seven representatives of the local community.<sup>9</sup>

The houses of the Newars, both in the towns and the villages are built of Kilburnt bricks and tiles. They are generally not less than three storeys high. Each floor is designed for some specific purpose and has a name. The style of the houses as also their compactness, in a large measure, distinguishes the Newars from the other ethnic groups. In contrast, the Gorkhas have their traditional houses made of mud-walls and thatched roofs, containing only the ground floors, just as we find in the villages of north-Bihar. In the Valley of Kathmandu, they live in the Newar houses so far as the towns are concerned.

The Newar type of house is generally rectangular with low ceiling which hardly allows a tall man to stand erect. The roofs are generally sloped on two sides, but the single sloped roofs which rest upon the backwalls are not rare. Such single roofed houses are considered to be inauspicious and their construction is, therefore, as far as possible, avoided.

The walls of the house are plastered with a special kind of clay in which the Valley abounds and which serves the purpose of white-wash. Windows are located only in the front-walls. These windows are huge wooden structures full of ornamentations. For the different floors, there are different types of windows each of which has

its own purpose and shape. The other three sides of the walls contain only holes to admit light and air.

The ground floor is called '*chheri*' which consists of a site for shop, facing the road, and a *verandah* engirdling the inner court-yard. Such a *verandah* serves as a store-house or cattle-stable. When the family *Shradha* is performed it takes place on the ground floor. The first floor is called *mata(n)* divided into several living rooms where the guests and visitors are conducted. This floor does not have a large window but only a large rectangular wooden net-like structure called *Tika-Jya* in the front, which admits light and air inside. At the same time it is meant for privacy since no body can observe from outside through such a window. The second floor, is called *chwata*. It contains several rooms in a row with separate entrances and are used as bed-chambers for the married couples of the family. It also contains a huge central window over looking the road and projecting considerably out from the surface of the walls. Such windows are generally three in number and are dictated by religious motifs. They are believed to represent the Buddhist triad — Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. They are simply known as *Jhya*. Traditionally such windows are much favoured by the Jyapoo Newars. Although the cost and the great labour which go into their construction have now made their use prohibitive, the Jyapoo Newars nevertheless make it a point to search for an old one whenever a new house is to be built. In the case of richer sections of the Newars, modern buildings are becoming more popular, though, with their cemented walls and floorings, they are ineffective in a place like Kathmandu where climatic conditions have to be taken into account.

The topmost floor is called '*Buiga*' where the Newar kitchen and the family deity are located. It consists of a large space, especially meant for holding the family



feasts. Strangers are rarely admitted to this floor as the kitchen comes under the operation of caste rules. It may be pointed out here that in contrast to the Newars, the Gorkhas preferentially have their kitchen located on the ground-floor. Traditional preference for cooking the food in earthen vessels\* and not cleaning outer-surfaces of such cooking utensils also lead to the practice of having the kitchen located at some remote place where strangers cannot reach and pollute the cooking utensils.

Communication between the different floors is effected by means of step-ladders leading to an opening in the floors which can be closed by the horizontally sliding trap-doors. But now-a-days modern houses contain doors on every floor.

Each house has a figure of Ganesh carved out above its entrance. Just in front of the house, there is a circle marked on the ground called *Pikha-Lakhu*. It represents, as we have noted elsewhere, Kumar, brother of Ganesh.

Newar houses do not have a drawing room to receive the family guests. Each married couple receives its guests in its own sleeping-cum-sitting room. It is rare to find modern furniture in a Newar house and sitting arrangement is on the ground itself. It is carpeted and a thick cotton mattress is spread over it. The room is kept neat and tidy. Besides, it contains a big wooden box, the traditional cosmetics such as *Jwalah-Nhaikah*, *Shina Mhu*, *Kakicha* (comb of bamboo sticks), *Thakucha* (broom-like brush for the hair), *Chika-Mhu* (hair-oil pot) and *Deva* (a large brass lamp). The room also serves for keeping the wife's dowry articles. The Jyapoo farmers have simple rooms — not so well carpeted with cotton beds. They use only straw mattress. The dowry items are, however, also found in their case.

\* This may not be now applicable to the richer classes of the Newars who use metal utensils. But the Jyapoo still have a great preference for the earthen vessels.

The use of modern furniture is now-a-days gradually making its appearance in the city of Kathmandu and elsewhere, where education has influenced the people. Despite this fact, the bias is still towards the traditional life. It is not explainable as to how the people who are so well-versed in woodwork so as to attract a wide acclaim have some how or the other overlooked the use of furniture. It is perhaps again the concept of function which looms large in our minds in this connection.

Coming to house building, it is subjected to a series of rituals. The house is associated with the similar idea as is involved in the birth of a child. The artisans and the workers are organised into **different groups** each of which has its own *Nayake* or leader. First a site is selected; and on some auspicious date a worship is offered to it, which includes, sacrifice of a goat or a duck, and offerings of rice, flowers, *samaibajee* and *tho(n)*. Such propitiation is necessary because the mother-earth, as the belief goes, has to be compensated for the wound that is to be inflicted on her person. On the next auspicious date, the foundation-stone is laid with the offering of a duck's egg, a coconut, a yard of cloth and five betelnuts. Thereafter the head of the *Dakarmis* (house-builders) initiates the worship. Inside the foundation-site he places five brass-vessels (five or nine metals). Then a silver tortoise is also placed in it. The five brass-pots are covered with five bricks after which the ritual of *Baw Pee* is held. This ritual consists in offering some mass-pulse, black soyabeans, *Chhyapi* (a kind of vegetable), a little by-product of *tho(n)* in an earthen pot to the spirits which are believed to haunt the foundation-site. A little of these items is scattered over the four corners of the site. This completes the ceremony connected with the foundation-work.

The next stage of ceremony is called *Kharu-Puja*, worship of the door. It takes place on the completion

of the ground floor. A goat is sacrificed to the door to be followed by the worship of the *Sikarmis* (carpenters) by their leader. Then the 'Sika-bu' ritual takes place and the different parts of the goat's head is distributed among the different *Sikarmis* and *Dakarmis*. In it, the right eye is taken by the head of the *Sikarmi*, the left eye by the head of the *Dakarmi* and the tongue by the house-owner. Thereafter a feast is held. With such feast, the 'Kharu-Puja' is over.

The *Neena Puja* takes place each time, when a floor is completed. It is meant for the worship of *Tham* (pillars for supporting the ceilings), *Neena* (beam) and *Dalin* (the floor). Again a goat is sacrificed and the usual worship and feast are held. It is followed by the '*Thaima-Puja*' which takes place at the time of the construction of the roof of the house. Besides the usual items of worship, it requires *salt*, *imu* (beshop-seeds) and ginger. It may be noted here that these items are also needed at the time of *Macha-Bu-Benke*. The usual belief connected with this worship is that this serves as the *Benke* (which is the birth purificatory rite) of the house since like a child, it is born when the roof is completed. The previous worship is regarded as worship to the child in the womb of its mother.

The covering of the roof of the house with tiles again involves a ceremony in which the married daughters and the children of the house-owner's family have to fulfil certain functions. The other relatives who are required to be present on this occasion are the '*Fukee*'\* members. The married daughters and children bring with them *tho(n)*, *Bara*, *Chhoila*, *Saga(n)* and new saris. Each of the married daughters ties the saris to the house and gives wine and *tho(n)* to their parents and the other relatives before the feast starts. After the feast, they offer '*Saga(n)*' to all the guests. The ceremony gets over with

\* Blood relatives on the male side.

the presentation of a turban to the father and a blouse to the mother by each of the married daughters. The saris are later taken away by the Dakarmi and Sikarmi. Some times these saris are returned to the owner of the house on payment of eight annas and one pice and is known as *Chyan-Chhaga(n)*. The owner of the house has to present turbans to *Dakarmi Nayaka* (head of the masons), *Sikarmi Nayaka* (head of the carpenters) and to each of the *Jyamis* (workers).

When the house is ready for occupation, the *Bau-Biye-gu* ceremony is performed with a view to pacifying the nine *grahas*. For this purpose nine earthen dishes, each containing *Choka Bajee*, *Ka*, *Thaku-musya*, *urud* pulse, *dried garlic* and *Chhyapi*, a piece of buffalo's lungs and bamboo twigs are worshipped, and a goat is sacrificed. The largest of these dishes is believed to symbolise Bhairava and the rest, the *Ashta Matrikas*. The worship being over, these pots are later placed at the nine cross-roads of the locality. Then follows a big feast in which, in addition to relatives, all the workers participate. After the feast, the *Sika-Bhu* ritual again takes place.

Such elaborate ceremony connected with house-building is not met with among the Gorkhas. They have only two stages of the ceremony—one at the time of the foundation day and the other when the house is completed. These are, respectively, called '*Rudri*' and '*Hawan*.' But these do not require the participation of the kin members; nor are these connected with any ritual feast.

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### 3. ECONOMIC AND MATERIAL LIFE — II

**D**RESS is a much-cared-for item in the Newar's daily life. He is not only fully dressed, but also better dressed. This remark is applicable even to the peasant Newars. In contrast to them, the other ethnic groups of Nepal, including Gorkhas, (except their richer sections) are very scantily dressed inasmuch as the lower garment is concerned. The majority of them have an upper garment known as *labeda* and a 'longoti' to be called a lower garment. The upper garment serves to cover the lower part of the body upto the knees. Over this dress, a long piece of loin cloth is used as a cloth-band round the waist in which the Nepalese traditional weapon, khukuri is fastened. It is the use of *longoti*, which leads the Newars to have a very superior attitude in relation to these people who wear it and therefore the epithet, '*pakhe*' is used by the Newars while referring to these people.

The Newars, on the other hand are well dressed from head to foot. The type of dress with regard to males is common to all the Nepalese. Perhaps it is the Newar's gift to other ethnic groups who wear it. The male upper garment is called *la(n)* in Newari and is the same as *Labeda*. The lower garment is called *Suruwa*. It is a tight trousers, a sort of modification of the Indian tight pyjama which goes somewhat by the same name. The only

difference between these two is that the former is loose fitting whereas the latter is tight. Moreover the Nepalese *Suruwa* is very loose in the region of the buttocks. The Nepalese *Suruwa* is more akin to the lower garment of the males of Saurashtra and Kutch, who, like the Gorkhas, call it '*Suruwal*'.<sup>1</sup> The *Labeda* or *La(n)* is kept in position by a fastening arrangement on one side of the chest by strings. It resembles somewhat the *pasabandhi Kediya* of Gujarat. But the Nepalese variety is totally shorn off the vertical gathers from below the chest, which is a distinctive feature of the Gujarat type. In the Nepalese variety such vertical gathers are replaced by long flaps reaching just above the knees. Over such upper garment the '*patuka*' (cloth belt) is worn. Ghurye says that this type of upper garment was the earlier dress of north India.<sup>2</sup> The richer classes wear in addition coat and waist coat.

The head-dress is confined to males only. There being no custom of covering the head of the females, the Newar women like the Gorkhas keep their heads uncovered. This, however, contrasts with the Gurung and Kirati women who wear *pheta* or *pagari*. The male head-dress is, however, of many varieties, all round shaped. All of these are either called *Topi* in Nepali or *tapali* in Newari. Of these, the *Bhatgawle-tapali* is typical in its material as well as in its black colour. This cap is a speciality of the Newars of Bhatgaon and hence the name. Another variety of *Tapali* is a white one of similar shape and make, except for the material used. It is made of muslin against the background of printed cloth.

The dress of the female is the most distinctive cultural trait as it marks out the Newar from all the other ethnic groups. Such a distinction is made not by the variation in the items of garments, but by their mode of use and colour. Dress again becomes a mark of distinction between the Newar women of different social and economic strata. The garment worn by the women consists of a

*parsi* (Sari), *Misa-la(n)* (long sleeved blouse reaching upto the waist), '*Ga*' (*dupatta* or *shawl*) and *jani* (Patuka) which is wider and longer than the one used by the male. The principle involved in the wearing of the dress seems to be to cover the body completely. In addition, the bosom in the case of higher caste women should be occulted so as not to attract the eyes of the male. This purpose is served by covering the body with the '*ga*'. In the case of the working class women, especially of the Jyapoo section, the '*ga*' is put only at the time of festivals; on the other occasions, the upper part of the body has only the *La(n)*. On moral grounds, the Newari women do not feel the need for the display of bodily beauty, except the portion below the knee. The exposure of the calf muscle is a favourite way of beauty-display.

It is the mode of wearing the '*parsi*', that distinguishes the female Newars from others. The '*parsi*' is put on in such a way that numerous pleats are formed in the front. The end of the *parsi* is not thrown across the shoulder, but tied round the waist. The *parsi* reaches only upto the lower leg. Formerly, it used to consist of forty to fifty yards in length so as to enable a woman to have a gathering of numerous pleats at the front. The tying of '*Patuka*' round the waist, whatever may be its function, mars the bodily beauty of the female. As a result, the body looks shapeless, there being no proper emphasis on the curves. Such a traditional mode of wearing the garments is especially preserved by the Udas women. The Jyapoo women set themselves apart from the other Newar women by their typical way of wearing the *Parsi* and the choice of its colour. Their *Parsi* is short and extends only upto the knee. From behind, it makes an upturned V shape between the legs. This serves to expose the calf-muscles which generally bear the marks of tattooing. Their '*parsi*' is always black in colour and spun in their own household-looms. In the majority of cases no inner garments such as bodice,



brassiere and petticoat are used by the Newar female folk. The modernised Newar ladies of Kathmandu city have, however, now begun to use such inner garments.

With regard to the social and age distinctions to be made by the mode of dress, one relates to girls who have not attained maturity. Till her first menstruation, the traditional dress of a girl consists of a '*Janghwal-Suruwa*' very loose in the rear so as to look like a bag hanging from the hips; and a long sleeved *La(n)* as used by the grown-up female. After the first monthly course she is entitled to wear the '*Parsi*'. The male children wear the '*Suruwa*' and the *La(n)* with *Jani*; and, therefore, in their case, there is no distinction made from the grown up males. But the use of cap serves the distinction. Those male children who have not undergone the ceremony of *Kaita-Puja* have always to keep their heads covered with the '*Tapali*'. This practice is more carefully observed in the region of Bhatgaon than in Kathmandu and Patan.

Occasions also govern the mode of costume; and there are occasions when a particular item of dress is necessary. Especially with regard to some of the castes, it shows not only their cultural affinities with the people living over a much wider region but also a reflection of their past costume. For example, at the time of *Sraddha* or funeral procession, the Deo-Bhaju, the Vanra and the Shrestha Newars have to wear *dhoti* instead of the traditional *Suruwa*. Whenever an aged male relative is to be honoured, he has to be presented with a turban, *Pheta*. And at the time of *Thakali-Luigu*, the Thakali-designate has to wear a '*Pheta*' and each of the relatives has to show respect to him by presenting a turban. Again during a period of mourning, only white dress, containing no linen, is used.

Despite such traditional mode of dress, which is still predominant, there appears to have come a great change among people of the higher strata and with education. With

the advent of democracy which took away all the social restrictions, modern styles of dress appear to be rapidly being adopted. Therefore, the skirts, the Indian style of wearing the *Sari*, the Punjabi *Kurta* and *Surwar* for female are coming into vogue. Perhaps within a matter of a few years the *janghwal suruwa* worn by the female children may totally disappear. The introduction of the cinema is one of the contributory factors for bringing about a new trend in the style of dress in Nepal in addition to the increasing contact with the outside world.

The traditional foot-wear of the Newar used to be made of cloth with a thick cloth or rope-sole and it is still in vogue, though modern shoes are predominantly used.

It is in the matter of ornaments that the Newar women show lavishness. The types of ornaments are so many that it is difficult to enumerate them all. The use of such ornaments, along with the absence of the use of some other ornaments, distinguishes the Newar women from the other ethnic groups. The importance of ornaments can be easily realised by the existence of the Vanra goldsmith among them. Some of the head-ornaments are called *Sinduri*, *Sir-bandi*, *Lu(n)-we-Swa(n)*, *Kata* and *Jyapoo-Sikha*. Of these, the second and the sixth are ritually important at the time of *Yihee*, *Bara* and marriage. The ear-ornaments include *tuci*, *mundari*, '*palawari-tuci*' and *maka-phosi*. The speciality of Newar women with regard to the ear-ornaments is that there are a number of holes bored in each of the ear-flaps for wearing such ornaments. The weight of these is so heavy that the ears bend down towards the front. However, such lavish use of ear-ornaments is found among the married women only. But here again some change is noticed. Many of the married women now-a-days, do not feel inclined to be burdened with these, except one in each of the ears. The popular Nepali ear-ornament *Dhungri* has not so far found favour with them. Significantly, the Newari women do

not use nose-ornaments. An observer will fail to find even a single Newar woman wearing a nose ornament or having a hole in her nose for such a purpose, a culture trait dealt with elsewhere. This culture-trait singles out the Newar women from the women of the other Nepali communities, including the Gorkhas.

Another important feature regarding the ornaments is the popularity of a silver neck-lace worn by the Jyapoo women. It is called '*Wo-Sikha*' and is also ceremonially important. It is also an indispensable ornament for goddess Kumari. The *Tilari* worn by the married Gorkha women is not to be met with among the Newars. It is a cylindrical golden piece put into a glass beaded necklace\* which is worn like the sacred thread and which keeps dangling on the right thigh. It is symbolic of *Suhag* or being married.

Among the wrist ornaments of the Newars are *Luchuri*, *Bahi* or *Baju* and *pancha-ratna-churi*. Leg ornaments are not of many kinds. They might have existed in the past, but they have disappeared now. But the '*Kali*' worn round the ankles is still in vogue. This is a common ornament for all the Nepalese. So far as the Newar women are concerned they wear it till the birth of the first baby. Rings are called '*angu*' but these do not have a distinctive feature of their own so as to merit a special treatment.

While some of the traditional ornaments like *Sirbandi* and the silver-chain have ceremonial significance, the majority of them are indicative of social prestige. The Newar women are very much conscious of the need to enhance their prestige by appearing in such ornaments during the events of social significance. Particularly, while attending the feasts, which provides an opportunity for displaying one's prestige, women make it a point to load themselves heavily with ornaments as far as possible. If

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\* Compare it with the Thali ornament among Malayalees.

a woman does not have her own, she unhesitatingly borrows them from her neighbours.

Tattooing is not much practised except by the Jyapoo women among whom it finds a special favour. The region of the body where tattooing is done is the hind part of the calf-muscle. As the belief runs tattooing is helpful in securing a means of sustenance in the other world after death. For, tatooes can be sold off to buy food.

The hair-style of the Newar male does not differ much from that of the other Nepalese excepting the Bhotias who have their hair plaited into a long pigtail. There used to be, however, in the past certain marked distinctions maintained by some of the Newar castes with regard to hair-style. Thus Dr. Oaldfield observes that the Udas used to wear top-knots of hair on their crowns.<sup>3</sup> The Vanras on the other hand had a different tradition. They used to get their heads clean shaven, removing even the last tuft of hair,<sup>4</sup> called *tupi* or *sikha* which is a distinguishing feature of the Hindus. This was in conformity with their former monastic rules. Such features have now a days totally disappeared and the hair style cannot be taken to be a mark of caste-distinction. The women in the majority of cases tuck their hair into a thick knot behind the head. Some of the ladies among the richer classes, like the Gorkha women, plait it into two pig-tails, falling over the back. The ends of these pig-tails are tied with red ribbons. Some of the women of the higher classes are frequently found in traditional hair-style. In such cases the hair is gathered into a top-knot just above the forehead, a feature which is not to be met with among the non-Newar women. A similar practice appears to have once been the distinguishing feature of the women of Malabar in south India. Dr. M. S. A. Rao writes that the Nayar women used to have such hair style so as to give it the appearance of an expanded hood of a cobra.<sup>5</sup> In the past, the hair-style of the Newar females served for making

the difference in civil status. I was told by many of the Newar ladies that unmarried girls never used to tuck their plaits into a circular form on the back portion of the head. This was a privilege allowed only to a married woman. The unmarried females always used to let their hair plaits fall over the back. Now a days it is difficult to distinguish an unmarried female from a married one on the basis of the hair-style as all of them have their hair-plaits falling over the back. The unmarried Newar girls have started also preferring the bob-cut hair. Another notable change in the hair style is the adoption of a single pig-tail instead of the two. Such features are noticeable especially among the high caste Newars.

Like other Nepalese, the Newars have two principal meals which they call *iyona* and *Beli* or *Byaloo*. The first is taken at about ten O'clock and the second, after the sun-set. There are, in addition, two subsidiary meals corresponding to breakfast, *Kaula* and to the afternoon refreshment, *Diku*. In the principal meals, the menu includes rice, 'Ja', pulse-curry, 'Keh(n)', and one or two kinds of green vegetables among which the most popular ones are potato and rap-leaves, *paka*. At times meat is also included in the menu. Besides, several varieties of pickles of chilli, radishes, potato and cauli-flowers are preferred.

Breakfast, known as *Kaula*, is a luxury which can be afforded only by the richer section of the community. The items it includes are tea, *puri*, *halva* and *Jilebi*, or *jilbi*. In the city of Kathmandu people generally go to the restaurant for this meal. The afternoon refreshment *Diku* generally consists of flattened rice, vegetables and buffalo-meat.

The items of food included in the feast are still of larger varieties. It is not felt here necessary to give such details since they are dealt with elsewhere. It is enough to state that boiled-rice and pulse-curry are never served in a feast. The former is replaced by flattened rice.

It is with regard to meat dishes that the Newars show lavishness. Some of the special meat dishes of the Newars include 'Syapati' *kimila*, *gorma*, *chula*, *chhakula*, *chhoila*, *chhyala*, *taha-kha*, *Na-ga*, *pupala*, *Bulla*, *Lago-lao*, *lapi*, *lakula*, *sanya-khunya*, *sa-pu*, *hicha*, *haiyla*. Of these, *chula*, *chhoiyla* and *tah-kha* are the most popular dishes. The first is a kind of dried meat made into powder and mixed with spices; the second, raw meat mixed with spices; and the third is in a jelly form. The last variety is considered on a par with boiled rice and, therefore, it can be accepted only from the hands of a casteman. Another popular preparation is called *momocha* which is rather a Tibetan dish, but now fully adopted by the aristocratic Newars. It is a kind of *samosa* stuffed with heavily spiced raw meat and cooked in steam, like the south Indian dish *idli*.

A notable feature of the traditional food habit of these people is the consumption of an organism produced by the rotting of meat. I did not, however, come across a single individual eating such a thing. But the consensus of opinion among the Newars themselves asserts that it still forms a favourite dish of the Jyapoos in the Patan area. Some of the high caste Buddhist Newars are also reported to relish it. It is prepared in the following manner: Raw meat is stuffed into half a foot-long bamboo tube, which is closed tightly at its both ends. It is allowed to rot till the flesh is transformed into maggots. These organisms begin to eat one another and finally become a single organism of the size of the volume of the tube. It is boiled in water and cut into pieces.

Sweet-meat is of many kinds and here again the Newars show a high level of culture. In fact, some of the popular Nepalese sweet-meat are the gifts of the Newars. Of these, the sweet called *Punjabi-roti* containing several folds and of the shape of a flat, oblong cap is relished by all Nepalese. The paper-like thin *puri* is another food item

which is worth-mentioning. Apart from these, the traditional Newar sweet-meat which are included under the general appellation of *Lakha-marhi* are of so many varieties that hardly any non-Newar Nepalese can claim a similar speciality. Among these *lakha-marhi*, '*gul-marhi*', *aitha* and *yo-marhi* are items of ceremonial significance.

Apart from the foregoing special dishes, there are a few more which the Newars share in common with the other Nepalese. These are *sinki*, *tamba*, and *gunruk*. *Sinki* is prepared by fermenting radishes; *tamba* is made out of tender bamboo shoots by a similar process; and the *gunruk* by drying leafy vegetables in the sun. When any of these items is mixed with potato and gravy is prepared, it is passionately liked by all Nepalese.

Some of the animal foods are a taboo to the Newars. For instance, wild boars, pigs and rams with long tails imported from India are avoided. The flesh of Yak is similarly considered a taboo, since this animal is regarded on a par with cow. Looking to the Newar food habit, one can say that they have retained to this day a great preference for fermented food. Meat dishes specially come under this category.

Drink comes naturally to the Newars. It is socially as well as ritually indispensable. There are at least three to four varieties of it. Unlike the Gorkhas among whom the consideration of caste prevents them from preparing liquor at home, the Newars socially recognise such preparation. The bad effect of drink is, however, admitted and people do not like their children to indulge in it except on ceremonial occasions when it becomes a necessity. The main varieties of drink are '*aila*' (wine), and '*tho(n)*' (rice beer). The drinks are prepared out of rice, kodo and jaggery.

Some of the problems relating to sanitation and hygiene have been already discussed in some other context. The food appetite is another factor which affects

the health of the people. Excessive eating, especially during the festival period, has been the principal cause for the outbreak of epidemics in the Newar community. The preference for fermented food leads to an unhygienic life during the summer. Especially among the people of lower economic strata, the insanitary condition is acute and, therefore, the rural areas are worst affected whenever an epidemic breaks out.

As regards bodily cleanliness and washing of clothes, the Newars hardly differ from the other Nepalese. Daily bath is not a common feature in Nepal. So far as men are concerned they only clean their teeth and wash their faces. The normal practice is to have bath on Saturdays during the summer; but during the winter not even once in a month do they take bath. The women may take bath on the fourth day of menstruation; but this again becomes unnoticeable among the females of the lower economic strata. The special occasion when people take bath is during the religious festivals. On such days they go to the river. Otherwise, they come to the public water taps.

Washing of clothes constitute a regular duty of the housewives. Except a few wealthy Newars and the educated persons who employ washermen, the majority of the Newars get their clothes washed by the housewives themselves. Women go for this purpose either to the street water-taps or to the nearest 'hitty'. During morning the place where the water-tap is located is seen with women busy at their work. Now-a-days, for such purpose, the locally made soap is being increasingly replaced by those made in India. Among the rural people clothes are washed with 'ritha' (*Sapindus Mukorossi*). A few beliefs regarding cleanliness and bath are quite peculiar to the Newars. Married women are not expected to take bath without the prior permission of their husbands. Red-soil and cow-dung are not to be brought into



the house on Monday, Wednesday and during the whole of *Sravan* month.

The most common disease among the Newars is dysentery which is, however, met with among all the Nepalese in the Valley. It is generally attributed to the high percentage of mica content in the drinking water. Smallpox is another notorious disease and it takes a heavy toll because of the traditional disinclination of the Newars for vaccination. We have described elsewhere as to how the special deity Ajima is dreaded as the goddess of smallpox. Cholera may be regarded as the scourge of the Newars which is entirely due to the food-habit and the scant regard paid to sanitation. In the year 1959 when cholera had broken out in the Nepal Valley, it was reported that it was mostly confined to the poor classes of the Newars. Yet another notable disease is goitre. It is generally found among the Jyapoo Newars. Elephantiasis is again commonly met with among the agricultural people. Malaria, though not prevalent in the Valley, is the most dreaded disease among the Newars of Noakot. Deafness and muteness are also quite common. It is difficult to say as to what is the share of tuberculosis among the diseases of the Valley. Lack of cross ventilation and the low ceiling in houses with little scope for the admittance of sun-light inside may be contributive to a high incidence that this disease should be having. Blindness is also not rare, but most of the people suffering from it have received it from attacks of smallpox.

To take instances from the Panga village with a total population of 2,578, where 85.4 per cent of the households belong to the Jyapoo caste, at the time of enquiry there were 25 deaf cases 10 mutes, 10 cripples, 2 cases of insanity, 12 or 13 persons suffering from goitre, 70 or 78 from elephantiasis, 20 or 25 from hydrocele, two from blindness and only one or two from venereal diseases. All of these afflicted persons belong to

the Jyapoo caste. Elephantiasis appears to be more common among the people in the rural region. I would like to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that the Jyapoos appear to be the main target of these diseases. In the Valley of Kathmandu I had rarely come across any person of the high caste suffering either from goitre or elephantiasis. Venereal diseases are, however, not reported to be rampant. As far as the village of Panga is concerned it is learnt that, barring some solitary instances there is almost none. The Indian Embassy doctor when approached by the present writer attested to the fact that venereal diseases are not common among the Newars. In contrast, according to him, the incidence among the hill people (the Bhotias and the Tamangs) may be estimated to be over 80 per cent.

We now turn to the Newar art and architecture. It is in this sphere that the Newars reveal superb craftsmanship. The monuments extant in the Valley of Nepal are a living testimony to the Newars' skilful workmanship. We have earlier already described the construction of residential buildings. Here we are concerned with the temple architecture and the plastic arts. The main feature of the Newar architecture is the pagoda structure and the ornamental wood carving and painting on it.

The main feature of this kind of architecture is represented by Nyata-pau in Bhatgaon, Talleju temple in Kathmandu, Bajra jogini at Sankhu, and Pashupati temple, in addition to the numerous temples of mother goddess, Chattopadhyay<sup>6</sup> sums up the main features of these temples in the following manner :

- (i) they are built in several stages, each smaller than the one beneath, with
- (ii) sloping roofs and projecting eaves supported by inclined beams.
- (iii) they generally rise not directly from the ground, but from a square terrace.

A significant point to be noted is that, the principal Buddhist shrines are of a non-pagoda style, whereas the Hindu shrines are mostly in the pagoda style. The abundance of the pagoda structures as associated with the Hindu deities and their comparatively rare association with the Buddhist deities suggest that this branch of art received encouragement and patronage from Hinduism. It is, however, strange to note that the artisans associated with it are exclusively from the Vanra and Udas castes, the former being more predominant.

As to the origin of this type of architecture there are three different views: Firstly, that it was adopted from China;<sup>7</sup> secondly it was borrowed from the Asana type of the temple architecture of India;<sup>8</sup> and lastly that it was evolved in Nepal itself, the land of Timber and piety.<sup>9</sup> It is, however, now fairly certain that the pagoda has an Indian origin. Levi has also arrived at this conclusion.<sup>10</sup> The Chinese documents also reveal that during the 13th Century the Mongol court invited 80 Nepalese artists headed by 'A-ni-ko' (called Aruniko in Nepal), a descendant of the royal family to build temples and statues in Tibet and China.<sup>11</sup> In the same passage it is stated that later 'A-ni-ko' was appointed the general director of all the workers in bronze and still later the controller of the imperial manufacturers. The tradition of 'A-ni-ko' lasted for a long time among the Buddhist sculptors in China, and is still upheld in the introduction to a late iconometric treatise, the Tsao-hsiang-gu-Liang-ching.<sup>12</sup>

Now a days the scope for the display of such architectural skilfulness is in a languishing condition. With the overthrow of the royal Mallas, the patrons of fine arts, the Newar artisans ceased to receive encouragement from the Gorkhas who idealised a different branch of human excellence — the art of chivalry. The Newar craftsmen have now shifted over to house-building and

bronze-casting and so far as temple-architecture is concerned, they confine themselves to repairing work only.

In the field of songs, music, dramatics and dances, the Newars are equally skilful. As already stated elsewhere, each caste group has its own '*Nasa-Khala*', an association to train the boys in singing and music. Similarly the numerous types of musical instruments show the interest of the Newars in the aesthetic branch of human activity. Most of the musical instruments are akin to Indian types.

Dances are numerous and these have been amply described in connection with the festivals. These dances take the theme of the fight between the gods and the demons and idealise the triumph of virtue over evil. In the field of dramatics, there exists a tradition among the Jyapooos of staging the '*Jyapoo-Pyaki*'. In a kind of an open air theatre, it is staged in every locality. The theme of the play is associated with religious stories. Whether it is a song or music or dance or drama, the Newar female is characteristically unconnected with it. It is only the Newar males who associate themselves with it. Again all these arts are woven round the religious life of the people and as such they present a contrast to the other Himalayan people, whose folk songs and folk-dances, men and women, besides being equally participated in by are mostly social and take the theme of human love and disappointment, rather than make religion as the basis of expression.

Sports and games of the Newars are entirely of the indoor variety. Though football is a favourite game in the town of Kathmandu, the popular games among the majority of the people are the playing of cards and the '*Bagh-chal*'. The richer section of the community play '*chaupat*' or chess. The boys' favourite games are either cards, or playing with marbles or the '*Khopi*'. The last one is a kind of gambling which involves throwing

a coin into a scoop. All of these games are either a form of gambling or tend towards gambling. The absence of outdoor games and sports is substituted by the numerous feasts, festivals and dances. Among female folk's games the doll is the most popular. In these matters, the Newars do not differ from the other Nepalese of the Valley, who are equally engaged in games which are of the gambling type.

With regard to the Newar's knowledge and traditions relating to animals, plants, their pseudo-meteorological beliefs, astronomy and zoology, the present writer could not collect enough material. There are, however, certain strange beliefs and facts which are worth mentioning here: Black cat, as among the other Nepalese, is regarded very inauspicious. But its placenta is regarded very valuable. It is believed that if a person goes in for gambling with a piece of the placenta in his pocket he is sure to be lucky at the game. The nature beliefs are the same as among the Hindus. The rainbow is believed to be the pipe of Indra who drains water from the ocean to cause rain. The stars are regarded as the different *Rishis* who have attained salvation. The Newars are, however, unique in so far as they distinguish four types of lightnings. These are *Bajra-mala* (thunder-bolt), '*Pa-Mala*' (like an axe), '*Mi-Mala*' (like fire) and '*Gonga-Mala*' (like a cock). In order to protect the house and the articles from the charge of these lightnings, emblems of these are engraved on the houses or on the articles. Generally in Nepal the domestic utensils and the house-tops are engraved with the representations of the various forms of lightnings.

The language of the Newar is called Newari which has a good literature of its own. Hodgson and Sir George Grierson<sup>13</sup> have described it as belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group of the Sino-Tibetan family of speeches.

The Himalayan group of the Tibeto-Burman speeches

thus falls under three sub-heads: (a) Pure dialects which include Newari, Magari, Gurung, Murmi, Sunwari, Lepcha or Rong and Toto etc.; (b) the Eastern Pronominalised dialects which include Rai, Limbu, Yakha, Dhimal, Khambhu, Vayu etc.; and (c) the Western Pronominalised dialects which include Kanauri spoken near Simla, Lahuli and nine other dialects current in that region. The peculiarities of the pronominalised languages have been suggested to be due to the influence of the Austro-Asian dialects, mainly of the Munda dialect. In this connection Grierson remarks, "All these features in which the Himalayan dialects differ from other Tibeto-Burman languages are in thorough agreement with the principles prevailing in the Munda forms of speech. It is, therefore, probable that Mundas or the tribes speaking a language connected with those now in use among the Mundas have once lived in the Himalayas and left their stamp on the dialects spoken at present day".<sup>14</sup>

Even the non-Pronominalised dialects show some trace of the Munda features. The pure dialects like Murmi, Sunwar, Magari and Newari suggest their earlier affinity with that dialect. For example Murmi still retains the method of counting higher numbers in twenties.<sup>15</sup> There also seems to be a tendency to distinguish the subject of verbs by adding pronominal suffixes.<sup>16</sup> Hodgson had included Sunwari in the 'Pronominalised' group, but later Grierson found it to be not so.<sup>17</sup> But higher numbers are still counted in twenties and the short forms of personal pronouns are frequently used as prefixes.<sup>18</sup> Another pure dialect, Magari retains the feature of making a distinction between nouns denoting animate beings and inanimate objects. In addition to this the numerals and the personal pronouns have forms which agree with those in use in the Western pronominalised group. On this basis Grierson remarks that most of the non-Pronomi-

nalised languages once belonged to the 'Pronominalised group', but have in course of time given up such characteristic features under the influence of the neighbouring Tibetan dialects.<sup>19</sup>

Likewise Newari, Grierson says, shows some traces of a distinction made between animate beings and things.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is probable that it was originally a Pronominalised language which in course of time stripped itself of such Munda influence. This is not impossible when we see the Sunwari having come to be a pure dialect from a complex one since the days of Hodgson. We shall have occasion elsewhere to point out some cultural features associated with the Newars which show Austric traits.

Newari has a close affinity with the Pahari dialect. The resemblance between the two, according to Grierson, is so close that the latter has been regarded as a sub-dialect of the former. The Pahari tribe has, however, completely vanished from the Valley, but they are reported to be in good numbers in the Lower hills of Eastern Nepal. It appears that the local Paharis have merged themselves with the Jyapoos with whom they form a section known as Pihi or Pahi.

Of all the Himalayan group of Tibeto-Burman languages, Newari has the oldest literature and according to Sunit Kumar Chatterjee the only rivals of Newari are Ahom and Manipuri.<sup>21</sup> Formerly it had three types of alphabets<sup>22</sup> — Bhanjin Mola, Ranjana and Newari. S. K. Chatterjee says that the Newari alphabet was the local modification of the Kutila or Eastern form of the script current all over North India upto the 7th Century — a script from which also developed the Maithili, Bengali, Assamese and Oriya alphabets. Hodgson says that the older Newari script was a modified form of the Brahmi script.<sup>23</sup> The present Newari is, however, written in Devanagari script and thus it falls in line with the other

Indo-Aryan languages.

About its literature, in the early times, Hodgson informs us that most of the Newari manuscripts during his days were translations of, and comments on, the Sanskrit books.<sup>24</sup> From the early times in Nepal all Buddhist literature used to be written in Sanskrit as a result of which the main inspiration for Newari came from that language. Its closer contacts with North-Bihar and especially with Mithila did not leave it without being influenced by the languages of the regions. According to Hans Jorgenson, in the classical Newari, there are ample loan words from Prakrit and Maithili. In recent times Newari is increasingly under the influence of Nepali and Hindi for loan words.

It is to be noted that in contrast to the other Tibeto-Burman speakers who are prone to giving up their mother tongues, the Newar speakers, have characteristically stuck to their language and speak Nepali only for inter-community and official purposes. Of the total population of 3,92,389 as many as 96.3 per cent still speak their mother tongue and only 43.1 per cent of them are reported to be speaking Nepali as the principal secondary language.<sup>25</sup>

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#### 4. BIRTH AND INITIATION

**P**REGNANCY of married women is a natural desire among the Newars. The belief runs that for a good child to be born, the amorous life of the couple preceding conception must be happy and harmonious. Otherwise, the child is said to be born defective or deformed like Dhritrastra and Pandu of the Mahabharata. A woman who fails to conceive a child lives a torturous life. She is looked down upon by the members of the family and her social status is regarded as imperfect until she becomes a mother. It is therefore natural for her to seek all possible aids to this end, including the supernatural. She consults the *Aji*, the hereditary local midwife who administers to her some kind of herbs to cause conception. At the same time she invokes the mercy of the gods by diverse means. Fasting on Tuesdays in honour of Ganesh and performing Satyanarayana Puja for eleven days commencing on *Sankranti* (first day of the month) are some of the recourses believed to be efficacious. Strange as it may seem, even the orthodox Buddhist Newars like the Manandhars perform the Satyanarayana Puja. I was informed of two other types of worship current among the Buddhists and known as *Ashtami Vrata* and *Nava* the latter lasting

for nine days and directed to the same end. The *prasad* in all these cases is given to the husband to eat.

There is also a special deity known as *Jhata pola* in Kathmandu to whom is attributed the power of bestowing a child. This deity is represented by a long stone pillar which in my opinion is a form of phallic symbol commonly associated with Siva. A woman desiring to have a child goes to embrace this deity. The women of Panga visit Adinath in the nearby region for the sake of a child. There is also a tall stone-idol called Unmateshwar Bhairava with a long penis in an erect posture, which is worshipped for the sake of a child.

Pregnancy involves the observance of a number of don'ts by the woman. These are intended to ensure protection of the child while in the womb. During eclipses, she is advised not to touch her abdomen with her fingers. If she does so the child, it is believed, would have some dark patch on its body. A pregnant woman is forbidden to see or touch the pictures or idols of fierce deities, such as Bhairava and Narsingha Avtar. She is also enjoined not to touch the *Bajra*.<sup>\*</sup> These prohibitions are meant to avoid miscarriage. The wearing of the cloth-belt, *Patuka*, is considered to be ill advised as it tightens the belly and is believed to suffocate the child in the womb. She is also not supposed to touch a rope by which an animal is tied; nor is she to cross it over.

With regard to food, there are no set rules. The pregnant woman is required to eat enough rich food so that the embryo in the womb is properly nourished and developed in due course into a healthy child.

The beliefs regarding work appear to be somewhat strange. Although it is now generally held that a pregnant woman should do only light work, if at all any, the traditional belief of assigning heavy work to her, nevertheless, persists. It is a common belief that if she lifts

\* See glossary.

heavy objects, the child to be born is likely to be healthy and strong. Therefore, the carrying of big water pots is generally recommended to her. Another explanation associated with such a practice is that it causes smooth delivery.

In matters of sexual intercourse, no ritual restriction exists during the period of pregnancy. A man may continue to cohabit with his wife till the delivery time and may resume intercourse twenty days after the delivery.

In the matter of preference for the sex of the child, a son is always coveted. As to the grounds for such preference, almost all the 224 heads of the sample families in my collection returned that the son not only ensures the continuance of the family line, *Kul*, but is also an economic asset to the family; while a girl is a burden, since after her marriage she has to go away to become a member of her husband's family. One head of the family, however, showed the absence of any such preference, which is rather an exception. On the whole, it may be said that, among the Newars the partiality for the son exists. But unlike the Gorkhas, they do not lament the birth of a daughter. Once their desire for a first son is fulfilled, the Newars are prone to wish for a daughter.

The habit of prognosticating the sex of the unborn child is nothing peculiar to the Newars as it is also shared by the other Nepalese. A woman who is agile, bright of face and of charming disposition during the state of her pregnancy is said to bear a son. Sluggishness, worn out look and drowsiness are some of the indications of a daughter. If the child is felt to be on the right side of the womb, it is taken to be a son and if on the left, a daughter.

Twins are not very common among the Newars. In the whole of Panga village only one case was recorded, and in Kathmandu three cases. The Panga twins belong to the Jyapoo caste. But in none of the sample families collected is there a case of it. A belief is current that

twins rarely survive. Regarding fraternal twins, the Newars entertain a strange belief: if the male child is born first, the twins are believed to have been husband and wife in their previous birth and are to be married to each other in this life also. Another explanation in support of the above belief is that a woman who immolated herself as *sati* in her previous life is reborn along with her husband as twins. It was enquired of many Newars whether such twins were really married to each other and they told me that in order to avoid such a situation, the female child of the twins is usually declared as having been born first. But I was also told that, in some cases, they are symbolically married to each other, but never disclosed to the outsiders. For all practical purposes, however, they are treated as brother and sister. If the twins are both males, they are believed by the Hindu Newars to be the reincarnation of Ram and Lakshaman. I could not ascertain the belief regarding the twins, if both of them were to be of female sex.

The belief of the Newars about the influence of the planets and stars on the birth of a child is not significantly different from the other Hindus who consult the Hindu law books. It is, however, significant to record that the life of a child born in either of the months of *Kartik* (Oct.-Nov.) and *Asadh* (June-July) is believed to be full of struggles. A child born under the influence of the *Mul-Nakshatra* is said to cause the death of either or both of its parents. Such a child is usually brought up in its maternal uncle's house and the parents never see its face. The Udas caste does not, however, seem to subscribe to this belief, I was told.

The delivery always takes place in the husband's home. The Newars do not allow a female descendant of the family to give birth to a child in their own homes. Even where a *Ghar Jawain* is kept, the daughter's confinement takes place not in the house of her father. She is sent to a different place. Occasions do arise when a

pregnant woman comes to live in her parents' home after a divorce or a quarrel with her husband. The Newars meet such occasions by sending her to her husband's home during the delivery period. If, however, she is not welcomed there, she is sent to a third place to have her baby. Afterwards, she is brought back by her parents along with the infant. An example from Panga is illustrative of a situation like this. A Shrestha Newar had illicit relations with a Jyapoo woman who consequently became pregnant. The man and his family refused to afford shelter to the pregnant woman and she had, therefore, to return to her parents' home. At the time of her delivery, she was sent to a different house. At the time of this inquiry, the boy was two years old and was living with his maternal grand-parents, while his mother had been remarried to a Jyapoo. Such a special care taken by the Newars as to taboo the deliveries of their female descendants in their homes presents a contrast to the practice of the Gorkhas who do not observe such restrictions. In fact, the Gorkhas generally prefer the first confinement of their daughters to take place in their own house.

Just a few weeks before the delivery, the representatives of the woman's natal home pay her a visit. This custom is known as *Dhau Bajee Nake Wanegu* or going to feed the woman with flattered rice (*Bajee*) and curd, (*Dhau*). It is not known which particular date is selected for this visit. But it is stated that this takes place on the stipulation that the delivery might come off within a fortnight or so. After feeding the woman to her heart's content, the visiting members go away. As regards its significance, it is believed that the child in the womb expects to be fed before being born. Unless the mother is sufficiently fed with *dhau* and *bajee* the child is said to refuse to be born. Another belief is that if they fail to fulfil this obligation, the child will be a glutton with saliva always

dripping from its mouth. It was given to understand through a different source that such feeding is meant to render smooth delivery of the child.

After the *Dhau-Bajee-Nake-Wangenu*, the members of the pregnant woman's parent's family never visit or see her until the news of the birth of the child has been formally conveyed to them.

As soon as the woman is in her travail, she retires into a dark room. Well-to-do families keep a special room for the purpose. In the case of the poor, any room is utilised. A stalk of paddy-straw is spread on the floor. A cotton bed is laid over it. If there is a string suspended anywhere in the room, it is removed. Care is taken to see that the woman does not have any kind of knots in her clothes, hair, bed etc. She is then made to lie down on the bed. The traditional mid-wife, *Aji* is in constant attendance.

The duties of an *aji* include, besides that of a mid-wife, propitiation of *Ajima*, the goddess of small-pox, and massaging of the mother and her child daily. The duration of her services generally lasts until the birth purificatory rites are concluded.

At the time of delivery, and also afterwards, the woman is given a small quantity of mustard oil to drink. During the process of delivery, the *Aji* manipulates the foetus. When the child is born, she cleans the child with luke-warm water and soap. The baby is then wrapped up in a white towel. Pressing the nose, head etc. of the child with a view to shaping them, also forms part of the *Aji's* duty. Afterwards, she proceeds to worship *Aji-Ma*. At the place of worship five heaps, each containing jaggery, *Imu* (corum copticum seeds), ginger, *Bajee*, black pulse and fruits are made. Such offerings are then distributed among the members of the family. These offerings are known as *Sisa-Palu*.

The infant's maternal uncle is the principal person

associated with the event. Immediately after the birth of the child, arrangements are made to convey the news to him. The messenger engaged for this purpose has a ritual role. Among the high caste Newars, the messenger is drawn from the Jyapoo caste. A caste which ranks lower than the Jyapoo has its own messenger to do this work.

The child's maternal uncle comes to know the sex of the child by the nature of material the messenger brings. In the case of the birth of a male child the messenger brings an unbroken betelnut, a complete slab of jaggery, a little quantity of salt, ginger and 'Imu' (corum copticum seeds). If the child happens to be a female, only half the portion of the betelnut and half the slab of jaggery are sent. The messenger is accorded a cordial welcome. He is offered *Saga(n)* to eat which includes a boiled egg, liquor, dried fish, boiled meat and *Tho(n)*. The members of the child's maternal uncle's family take charge of the articles brought by the messenger. But these materials are returned through the same messenger after having made an equal addition to them.

On birth, both the child and the mother are affected by pollution. The rest of the members of the family become impure only when the umbilical cord is cut. Pollution extends not only to the members of the family of birth, but also to all the other agnatic members who worship a common Dewali and who are addressed as 'Fukee' among themselves. The child's father's sister, the mother's brother and the married daughters of the family are, however, not at all affected by birth-pollution.

The umbilical cord is generally cut on the fourth day. There is, however, no strict rule in regard to this. It may be cut on the same day also. The Duniya Newars generally prefer to cut it on the very day of birth. But if the child birth intervenes some important ceremonies or festivals taking place among the *Fukees*, the cutting of the



umbilical cord is delayed until after the ceremony is concluded.

The cutting of the umbilical cord is performed by the *Naini* who belongs to the Kasai caste. Castes lower than the Kasai have their own caste-*Naini*. For cutting the umbilical cord, the Newars taboo Saturdays. The *Naini* comes up to the threshold of the room. The mother and the baby are brought to her. A betelnut is placed on the threshold, and over it the *naini* cuts the umbilical cord. After cutting the umbilical cord, the *naini* has another important ritual to perform. She takes a little water in her hand and drips it into the mouth of the baby. For the rendering of this service she is paid her traditional gift of flattened rice or paddy and a few coins.

The disposal of the placenta and the umbilical cord is also the duty of the *naini*. They are deposited in an earthen pot along with boiled rice, boiled eggs, parched-rice, black soyabean, some pieces of buffalo's meat, ginger and *Shiya bajee* (a special kind of Bajee) and placed at the *Chhwasa*, a place in every locality, where all inauspicious things are thrown away by the Newars.

It is also stated that there is an alternative tradition of disposing of the umbilical cord, which relates to that of a male child only. It is said that if a Newar father wishes to make his son a public servant, he buries the umbilical cord near the walls of the Newar Raja's palaces. On the other hand, if he wants to make him a farmer, the cord is buried in a paddy-field. I was, however, unable to confirm this from the Newars of Panga and Kathmandu town.

Northey and Morris<sup>1</sup> state that soon after the cutting of the umbilical cord, the baby is washed in *Sherbet*. It was hard for me to find in Katmandu Valley any evidence in confirmation of this statement. Most of the Newars whom I met, confessed their ignorance of this

practice. The usual practice at present is, as stated earlier, to clean the child with luke warm water and soap.

There is some kind of restriction on the diet of the woman after delivery. She is not allowed to eat pulses, salt and black soyabean, but is given enough quantity of jaggery, ghee and meat. The restriction lasts till the birth purificatory rite is over.

Two or three days after delivery, the female members of the child's maternal uncle's home pay a visit to the mother and her child. This custom is known as *Macha-Bu-gu-Ka(n)-Wanegu*. For this visit, care is taken to avoid Tuesdays. The significance of such a taboo is, however, not known. The visiting females present some coins to the newly born child; and to its mother half the amount. This ritual of presenting coin is known as *Dachhina-Chha-ye-gu*. The amount presented to the child is appropriated by the *Aji*. The visiting women are then feasted at the instance of the child's father. They return home the same day. But they are again sent by the child's maternal uncle on the following day for feeding the mother with flattened rice, (*Bajee*) and meat (*la*) in which one item of buffalo meat, rice-beer and liquor are essential. This custom is commonly known as *La-Na-Ka-Wanegu* or *Macha-Bu-Swo-Wanegu*.

The birth purificatory rite is known as *Macha-Bu Benke-gu*. It is generally held on the sixth day of the birth in case of the first child and on the fourth day for the subsequent children. Some of the Sivmargi Shresthas of Kathmandu, however, perform this ceremony on the tenth day, after the fashion of the Gorkhas.

It is very significant to note that generally all materials required for the *Macha-Bu-Benke-gu* are provided by the child's maternal uncle. These paraphernalia can be divided into three kinds: (i) those required for the child; (ii) those for general use; (iii) those required for the child's mother. For the child, the maternal uncle

sends a cotton-cap, a shirt, two rings (one of gold and another of silver), mustard oil, one *mohar* (Nepalese half-rupee), a piece each of white and yellow cloth, (*Lu-incha* and *Oha-incha*) a bed-pillow stuffed with black mustard seeds, one cotton padded quilt and a straw-mat. The pillow stuffed with black mustard seeds on which the child's head is placed is designed to ensure proper shape to the head, since such a pillow provides an appropriate cavity for the head to rest. The material meant for the mother include *La(n)* (blouse), *Pursi* (a saree), *Ga* (a shawl) for rough use, and also another shawl of fine linen and a straw-mat. Besides these, the general items contain provision for the feast, among which a buffalo's head, a load of worshipping material, rice, flowers, fruits and a small quantity of vermilion to be used as *Sinha* are important. The Jyapoo porter who brings these articles is treated to a feast. On his return, a load of salt is handed over to him to be presented to the child's maternal uncle in reciprocation of what he had sent in connection with the *Macha-Bu-Benke-gu*.

The sending of these materials by the child's maternal uncle is obligatory only at the birth purificatory rite of the first child. But, if the first child is a female and the second one a male, the maternal uncle has again to send them. The important point to note is that the first male child must have the material for its *Benke* sent by its maternal uncle.

On the *Macha-Bu-Benke-gu* day all the members of the family and other agnates of the child are required to undergo the purification ceremony of *Nisi-Yae-gu* which includes, besides bath, the rituals of *Lusi-Thike-gu* and *ala-taye-gu*. The functions involved in the last two named rituals are performed by the barber. The lower castes manage to get some one from among their own caste to perform such functions. The ritual act of cutting the nails, (*Lusi-Thi-Kegu*) and dyeing the toes and fingers

(*Ala-taye-gu*) as part of the purificatory rites, are peculiar to the Newars and not shared by the Gorkhas\*.

Besides personal purification the house is also purified, an act which is also shared by the Gorkhas. First of all, the floors of the house are besmeared with cow-dung solution. In addition, cow's milk is sprinkled over the floors. This ritual is known as *Sa-Duru-Ha-Ha-yae-gu*. After such preliminaries, the child's parents are made to sit side by side. The child is first placed in its mother's lap. The mother is presented with the material brought for her from the child's maternal uncle's house. The father is also presented with some clothes. The child is then anointed with mustard oil brought from its maternal uncle's house. Some rice is sprinkled on it. The two rings mentioned earlier are put on its fingers. At this moment the *Aji* lifts the child from its mother's lap and places it on its father's lap. This denotes the formal acceptance of fatherhood of the child.

The *Aji*, the mother and the child then retire into the room where the delivery had taken place. The *Aji* once again worships the *Aji-Ma*. At this worship, the objects brought from the child's maternal uncle's house are used. The *Aji* makes five big and ten small heaps in the same way as at the time of the child's birth. She first worships her professional deity and then the *Aji-Ma*. Out of the five big heaps made by her, she takes away two for herself and the rest are left in the room with burning wicker lamps. In the morning the *Aji* takes away the ten small heaps called *Aga(n)-bo* to the street and calls out, "*Aga(n)-Bo-Ka-Wa-Masta*, Come, children to receive *Aga(n)-Bo*". Having distributed the ten shares to ten children, she leaves for her house. The *Aji's* work is now over. For the role she plays in the rites connected with birth, she receives a fixed payment in cash as well as in kind.

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\* Compare this with a similar practice among the people of Bihar.

Next follows the communal feast. The members participating in this feast are classified into two categories. First, *Fukee* members, i.e. all agnatic members united under a common *Dewali Guthi*; and second, the *Mhya-Masta* i.e. the married daughters. For this purpose, it is not obligatory to invite the husbands of the daughters of the family. The communal feast is the clearest manifestation of social solidarity among the consanguineal relatives, including the daughters who have been married away.

After twenty-one days, the woman prepares to leave for her parents' home along with her child. But before that, the married daughters of the household, *Mhya-Masta* and *Bhina-Masta* pay her a ceremonial visit. The woman proceeds to her natal home in a *dooly* sent by her parents, while a Jyapoo woman follows her on foot with the newly born child in her arms. No ceremonial welcome is accorded to her at her arrival. She remains in her natal home for a month or so. While the woman is at her parents' home, her mother-in-law pays occasional visits to her with *Postiga(n)*\*. Another relative who pays ceremonial visit to the woman is the newly-born child's father's sister who comes to present *Pi-Yu-Cha* (a golden bangle) and a necklace of red coral beads to the baby. This custom is known as *Pi-Yu-Cha-Nhaye-Ke-gu*.

Fostering is very rare among the Newars. In the event of a mother's death or her breasts being dry, the child is fed on the breasts of any other female-member of the family. In the majority of cases, however, the traditional practice is to feed the child with *Sattu*\*. In this respect, the Newars culturally differ from the Gorkhas among whom it is the common practice to appoint a wet-nurse on whose milk the child is fed, provided it is economically feasible. Such wet-nurses may be chosen from any clean

\* A special kind of nourishing sweat-meat usually given to the woman in her post delivery period.

\* Fried barley-flour mixed with water.

caste and are called *Dhai-Ama*, suckling mother. A special status is accorded to them as distinct from the other maid-servants. But among the Newars, I could not find a single instance of keeping a wet nurse.

A couple who have failed to beget a child may resort to adoption. Adoption also takes place when children do not survive in the family. Parents of such a family offer their child to be adopted by some one. On adoption, the child belongs to the adopting parents' family; and consequently, its caste also changes. In all respects, the child is treated as if it had really been one's own child.

Parents wanting to adopt a child consult their *Fukee* members, especially so when they live in a joint family. The ceremony is relatively a simple one. The relatives of both the adopting and the real parents assemble at a place; and in their presence a written agreement is made by the latter in favour of the former. The child is formally handed over to the adopting parents with *Kusha* grass and water.

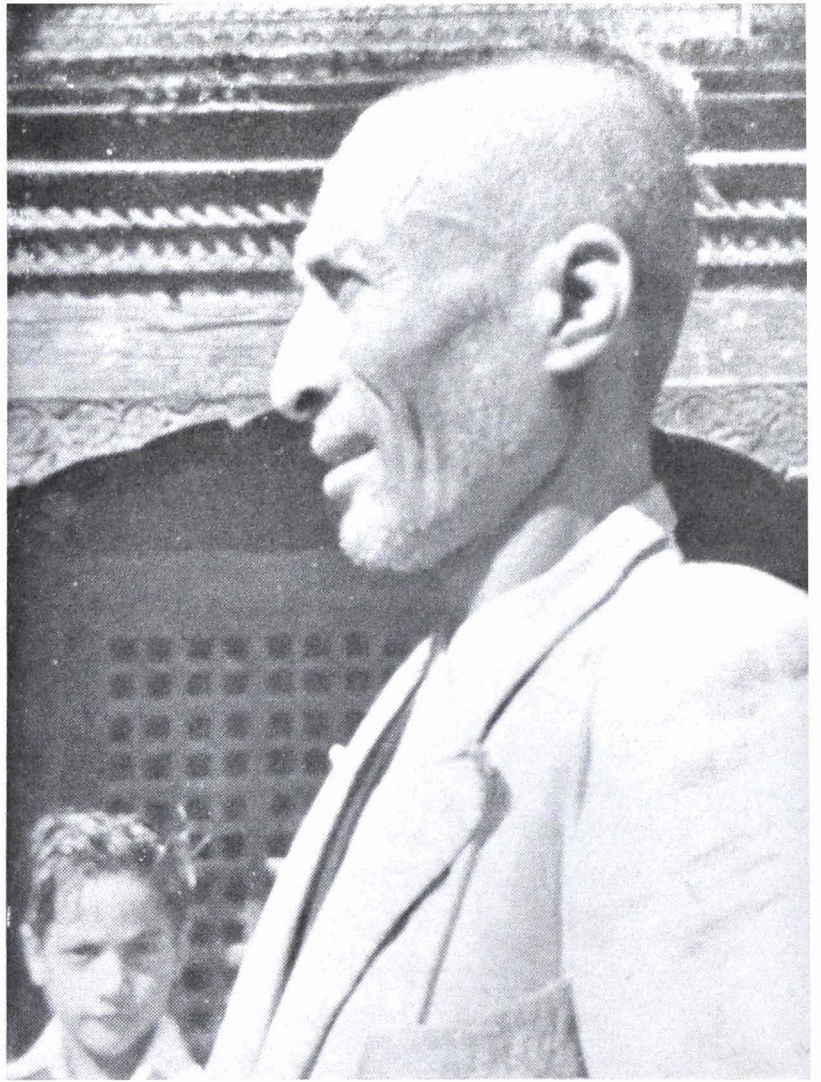
Adoption is generally preferred from among the children of the agnates because they can propitiate the *Kul* deity. A distinction is also made between a child who is adopted before its umbilical cord is cut and the one adopted afterwards. In the latter type of adoption, though the child can inherit property, it cannot participate in the worship of the *Kul* deity of the adopting family. The restriction is, however, lifted, if the child has descended from the same stock.

Inter-caste adoption also does take place. But in such cases if the child is from a higher caste, it is accepted into the caste of the adopting parent. If it is from a lower caste it retains its own caste. In both the types of adoptions, the child can neither perform *Pyan-tha-ye-gu*, or *Sradha* nor propitiate the *Kul* deity of the family of adoption.

Cases of adoptions are, however, extremely rare. I



*A Shreshta Newar*



*Newar farmer women*

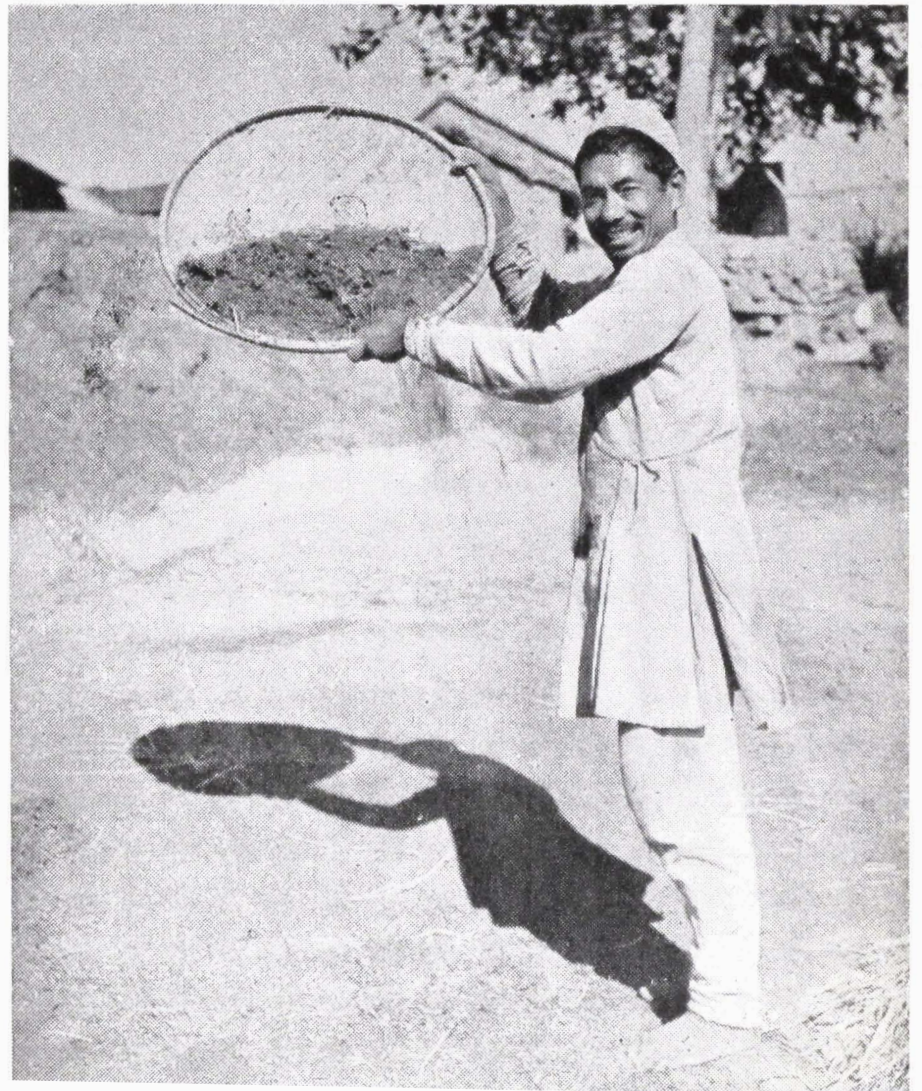






*Thrashing  
paddy*

*Winnowing  
paddy grains.*



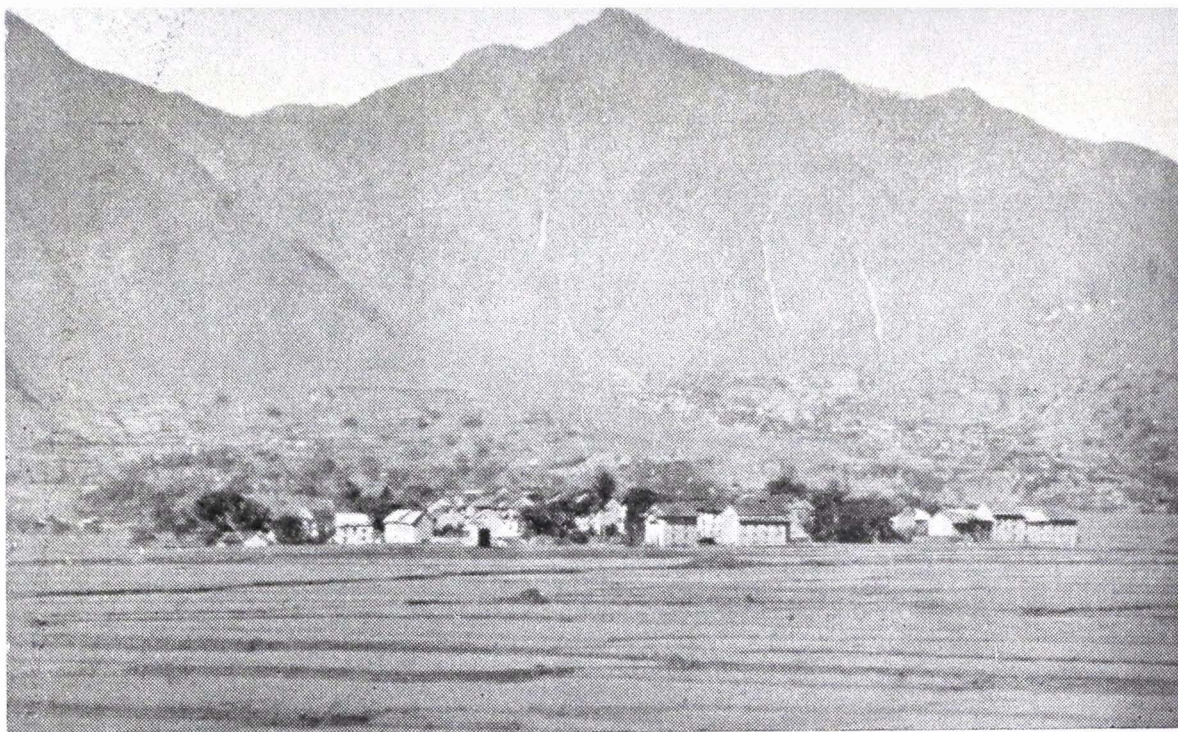


*The potter at  
his wheel*



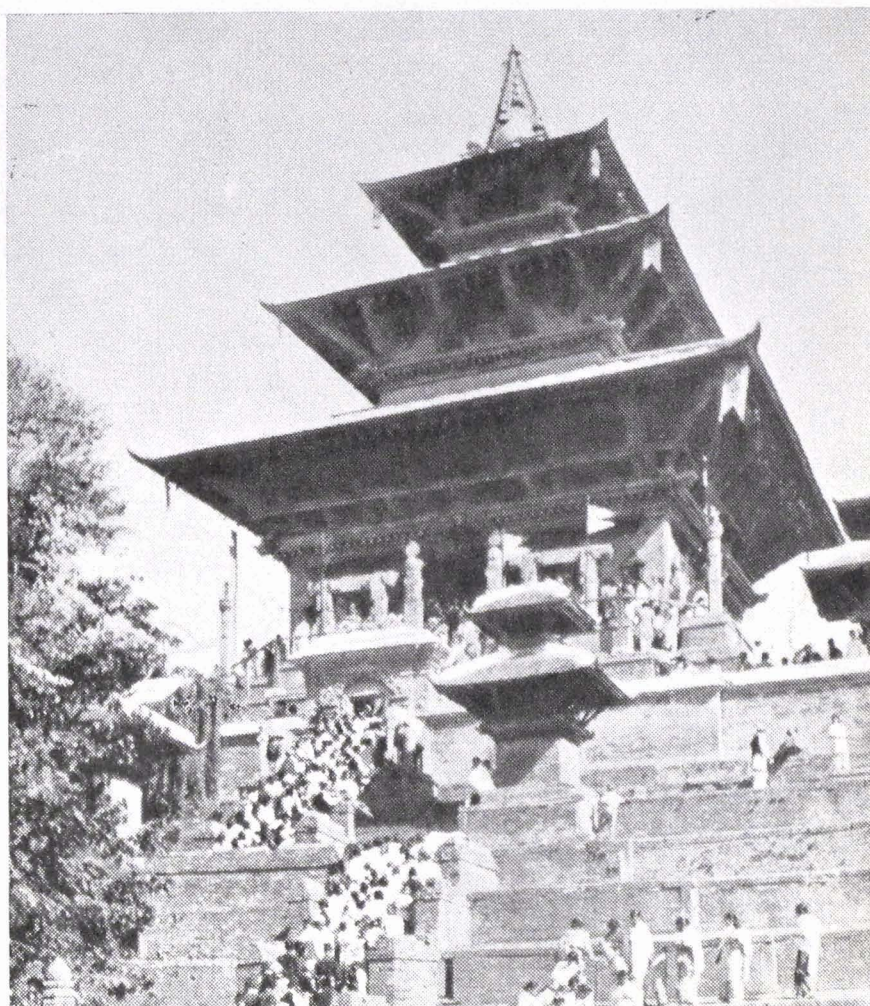
*A thoroughfare  
in a  
Newar village*





*A view of Panga Village*

*The temple of  
Goddess Talleju*





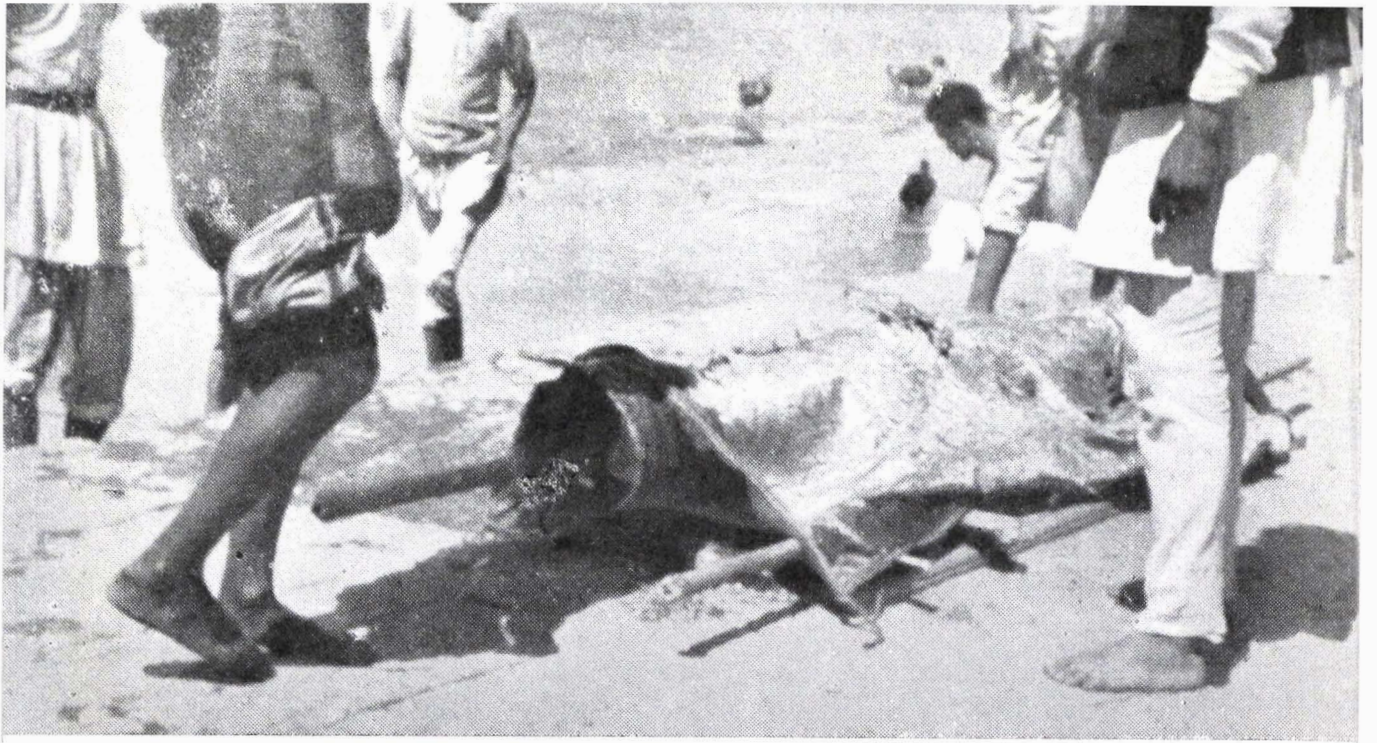


*Girls in the Yihee ceremony where they are married to God Narayan*



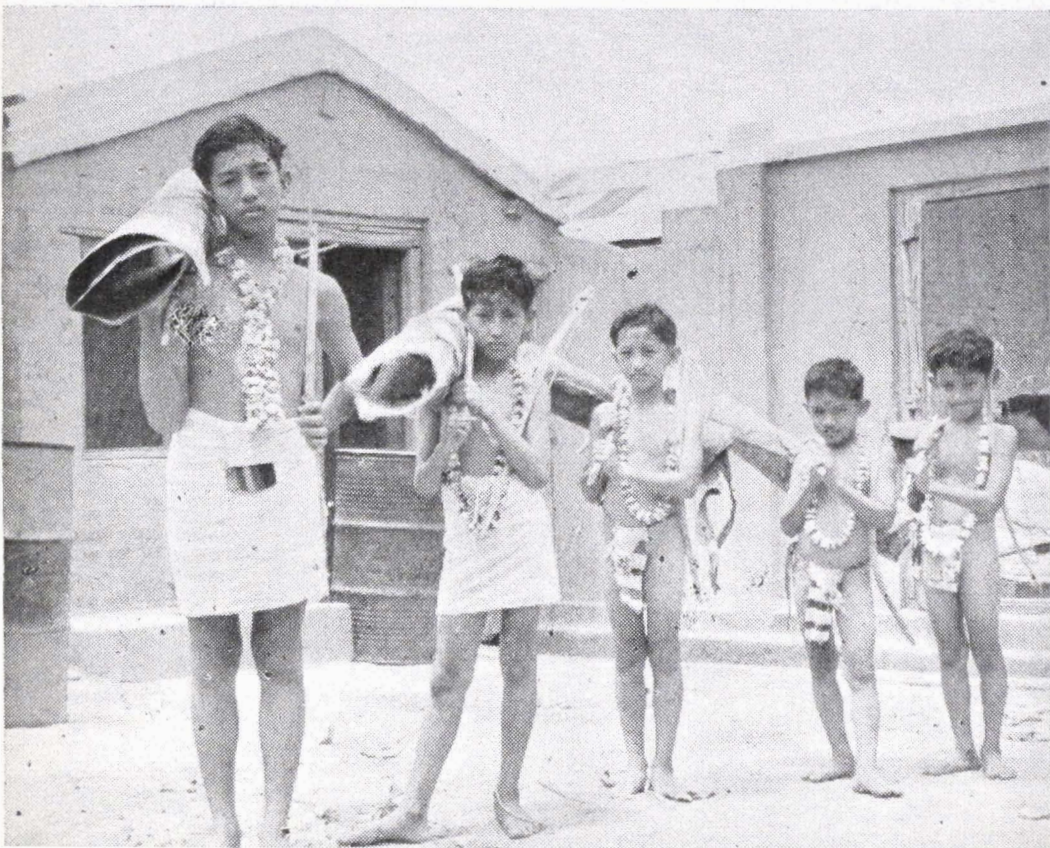
*Mother and  
child basking  
in the sun*





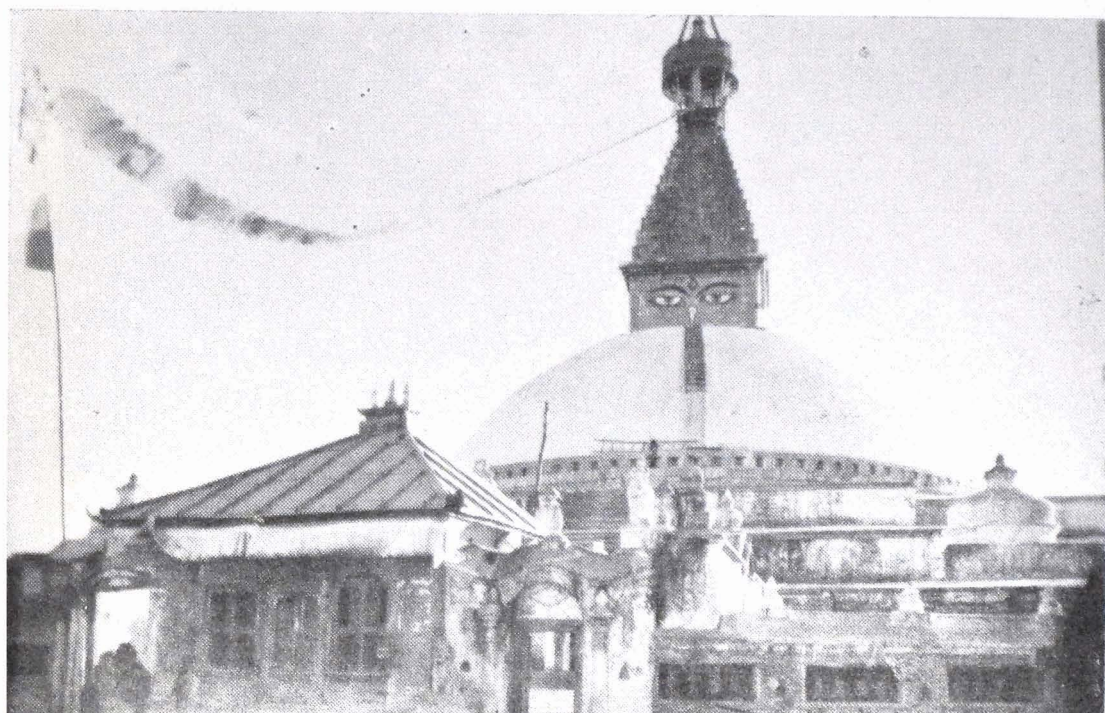
*Corpse on a bier*

*The ceremony of loin-girdling (Kaita puja).*





*A couple at the old-age initiation ceremony, called (Burha Junko)*



*The temple  
Swayambhu,  
Buddist shri*





*Ganesh at Swa Bhagawati*



*Akash Bhairava — one  
of the many Bhairavas*





*God Bhimsen, the epic hero,  
god of wealth*



*The Chariot of Machhendra Nath at  
his festival, which is celebrated with  
great aplomb. Machhendra is the  
god of agricultural prosperity.*





*Two boys in symbolic disguise,  
wearing cow-masks in the festival  
of cow—Gai Jatra or Sa-ya*



*Raising the sky-lamp to mark the  
festival of Akash Deep*





*The 'imprisoned' Lord Indra,  
during his festival, Indra Jatra.*

*Kumari, the  
human goddess.*







*Devi dance*

*A group of people receives prasad after the worship of the Dewali (Lineage) deity. The deities can be spotted in the rear.*





could not come across a single instance of adoption in the 224 sample-families in my collection. Further enquiry in the village of Panga showed that there was no case of adoption there. But a Shrestha Newar in the nearby village of Jakha was, however, reported to have adopted a boy from his own caste. There was one instance of inter-caste adoption discovered in the town of Kathmandu which related to the adoption of a child of a *Deo-Bhaju* brahmin by a *Shrestha*, such adoption being designated by the Nepalese term *Dan*. The *Shrestha* brought up the child as a Brahmin and not as a *Shrestha* and he made a will of all his property in favour of the adopted child. He could have under the custom made the boy a *Shrestha* by caste, if he had so desired.

Teething begins at the eighth or ninth month and all the milk teeth generally appear within a year. If the baby has any difficulty in cutting the teeth or has any other trouble the local physician is consulted who not only gives medicines but also employs magical charms to ward off the influences of the evil spirits and the evil eye, which are believed to cause such troubles. There is a special deity in Kathmandu known as *Wa-Shya-Deo* which is worshipped in connection with tooth trouble. This worship consists of driving a nail into an old tree-butt which represents *Wa-Shya-Deo*.

The child is believed to be very much susceptible to the influence of the evil spirits and the anger of the malignant dieties which are thought to dwell everywhere in the Valley. The Newar woman is always haunted by the mortal fear of her child being attacked by such malignant deities. All the diseases of children are attributed to such evil spirits and deities, chief among which is the *Aji-Ma*. The child is also believed to be constantly exposed to the effects of the evil eye. Hence isolation of the child from strangers becomes the first concern of a Newar mother. To avoid such dangerous effects, collyrium which is known

in Newari as *Aja* is applied to the forehead of the child. The child is also protected by special charms and amulets.

When a child falls ill, the traditional physician may refuse to attend to it unless propitiation is done to please the malignant spirits believed to be responsible for it; or to ward off the evil influence of some enemy. Frequent worships are called for in honour of *Aji-Ma* and her six sisters. *Aji-Ma* is offered dried frogs from the market. Even today, though modern medical facilities are within the reach of those who can afford, they retain the traditional method. The attitude is not peculiar to the Newars alone; it is also common among the other inhabitants of the Valley. The non-Newars of the Valley do not dare question the local beliefs. They fear the local deities as much as the Newars.

Naming does not involve any ceremony such as it is the case with the Gorkhas for whom it is an important ceremonial occasion. Two names are given to a Newar child—one based on the horoscope and another as a term of address. The horoscope name is given by the Joshi. This may take place any time before the birth purificatory rite. The other name may be given any time before the child attains the age of two. In the Kathmandu region, where the Gorkhas are numerous, the Newars utilise the occasion of rice-feeding ceremony for the naming of the child. Naming is usually done by the child's father's sister.

The first initiation ceremony of a Newar child is the rice-feeding ceremony. The Newars call it *Junko*. But to avoid its confusion with another type of ritual known as *Burha-Junko* (old-age initiation), they prefix it with *Macha* meaning thereby 'the initiation of a child after birth'. The Newars of Kathmandu town and its vicinity have side by side adopted the Nepali term *Pasani* to denote the rice-feeding ceremony. But in a region like

Bhatgaon or Sankhu, where the hold of tradition is comparatively stronger, the term *Junko* is preferred to *Pasani*.

The *Macha Junko* is held at different ages for boys and girls. For girls, it is held after the fifth or seventh months, always insisting on odd months; and for boys it takes place in the sixth or the eighth month, the even months being invariably chosen. From a different source a conflicting statement was obtained to the effect that the *Junko* of a male child is never preferred in the sixth month, as it is believed that he will turn out to be a thief. Such a belief is grounded upon the phonetic similarity between the words *Khula* (sixth month of the year) and *Khun* (thief). But I am inclined to believe that there is no strict taboo against holding the *Junko* of a child in the sixth month. Many of the Newars have been found not to consider such a taboo.

An auspicious date for the *Junko* of the first child is fixed in consultation with the Joshi. This may be dispensed with in the case of subsequent children. The lower castes seldom consult the astrologer even for the *Junko* of the first child. Wednesdays and Thursdays are considered auspicious to hold the *Junko* and Mondays and Saturdays as inauspicious, these being regarded as unkind days according to Newar astrologers.

Well ahead of the day of the *Junko* all the relatives of the family are formally invited to participate in the ceremony. The relatives participating in *Macha-Junko* fall into several kinship categories like *Mhya Masta*, *Bhena Masta*, *Daju-Kija-Khala*, *Fukee-Khala*, *Paju-Khala* and minor relatives and neighbours. They bring with them *Dhau-Sagan*. The child's maternal uncle is under the special obligation to send material for worship, clothes for the child and its mother, and some other items, among which a buffalo's head is necessary. These are carried to the child's father's house in a load known as *Koo* in Newari. The articles for the child include a shirt, *Topu*

(cap), a pair of *Kali* (silver ornament for the ankles); and for the mother, a sari, *Dechha*, (blouse); and a *Ga* (shawl) for the child's father.

A day earlier to the *Junko*, the members of the family in which the child is born undergo the purificatory ritual of *Nisi-yae-gu*. The house is also purified with a solution of cow-dung and red-soil. On the day of the *Junko*, family ablutions may or may not be performed. But the child is given a purificatory bath, after which it is brought to the place of ceremony by means of the *Lasa-Kusa* ritual. The *Lasa-Kusa* ritual is a necessary accompaniment to all the Newar ceremonies. In it the chief lady of the lineage-group, the *Thakali-Naki*, holds the *Ta-Cha* (a long traditional iron key) in her hand, by which the boy is conducted to the ceremonial booth, while the second chief lady *Noku-Naki* walks ahead sprinkling water from a *Karua* on the way. While the child is conducted over the water-mark the iron key is always kept in contact with it. The child is made to sit on a *Swastika* symbol with its face towards the east.

The deities to be worshipped include a *Kalash* containing water and *Panchamrit* at the top of which, is kept an earthen dish containing rice, coins and a betel-nut. In the *Kalash* are some flowers called *Dafo-Swa* (n). To the left of the *Kalash* two earthen dishes with *Saga* (n) are placed, and to the right of it is placed the *Sukunda* or the traditional oil-lamp to represent Ganesh with a serpentine handle. There is also the *Thaye-bhu* (a big dish) with a pedestal containing food preparations known as *Chaurasi Vyanjan* which symbolise 84 kinds of dishes.

First, the priest worships the main deities which are necessary in all the Newar ceremonies. These are Ganesh, Bhairava, Kumari and Bajra-Jogini or Kali. Then the child is made to worship the *Guru-Mandal*, a geometrical design drawn in front of him. Thereafter, a mixture of cow-dung, milk and *Duba* grass (*cynodon dactylon*) is

ritually purified by the priest with the chanting of *mantras* and the solution is sprinkled over the child. Also, a little of it is given to the child to drink. Then, two dishes, each containing some flattened rice, black soyabean and ginger are worshipped by the priest as the symbols representing the evil spirits from whom the child has to be protected. These dishes are removed by the *Thakali-Naki* and thrown away at the *Chhwasa* of the locality. While carrying these dishes, she is forbidden to look back or speak or touch any one. On her return, the child is worshipped by the priest. Afterwards, the *Thakali-Naki* also worships the infant. Then the *Thai-bhu* containing the ritual-food is brought. First of all, the *Thakali-Naki* and the *Noku-Naki* take a little of rice on a gold-coin and feed the child five times. This is the feeding of *Panch-grasa*. Among the poor, a copper-coin is substituted for a gold one. The parents and the other members of the family then follow suit. It is a common belief among the Newars that if the child weeps at this stage, it is a good omen.

After the feeding ritual, the child is dressed in the clothes sent by its maternal uncle. Then a big tray containing toys, paddy, bricks, soil, an ear-ring, silver ornaments for legs, a book, a pen and an ink-pot etc. is placed before the child. The child's future career is inferred from the nature of the object it picks up from among these. If, for instance, it picks up the soil, it is said to become a farmer.

The *Thai-bhu* ritual being over, the maternal uncle carries the child in his arms to the temple of Ganesh, where the deity is worshipped. After circumambulating the temple, they return home and the child is offered *Saga(n)* on behalf of the family, which is followed by the offering of the *Saga(n)* brought from the child's maternal uncle's home. Then, all the *Saga(n)* brought by the other

relatives are mixed together and distributed among them. Then follows the feast.

The employment of a Brahmin priest at the time of the *Junko* is not essential for many a caste. The low castes have their own arrangements, such functions being generally performed by their *Thakalis*.

Piercing of the nose is not a culture-trait of the Newars. Persons may some times be outcasted on this ground alone. Not a single Newar man or woman can be seen wearing a nose ornament although it is a very common feature among the other ethnic groups like the Gorkhas, Tamangs, Gurungs, Magars, Rais and Limbus, who are very fond of obtrusive nose ornaments. Ear-piercing is, however, a very unique feature of the Newars, especially of their women-folk. But it does not involve a ceremony.

The tonsure ceremony of the Newars is called *Bhu-Sa-Kha*. It signifies the removal of the hair of birth and thus it is a pollution-removal ceremony. Many sections of the Newars dispense with it. For example, the Vanras, Udas and the Manandhars who belong to the Buddhist group are said to be not observing it. Among the Sivamargi Newars it is, however, essential. Generally it takes place between the ages of three and eleven. On enquiry it was reported that only the male children are initiated through this ceremony.

For the *Bhu-Sa-Kha* ceremony an auspicious date is chosen in consultation with the astrologer. On the appointed day, the ceremony starts with the sacrifice of a hen or a duck to Ganesh. After that *Sraddha* ceremony takes place which is necessary in all the Newar domestic ceremonies. It is a common belief that for any auspicious occasion in the house the invoking of the blessings of the ancestors is most essential. Otherwise the ancestors may be displeased and a calamity may befall the members of the family. In the *Sraddha* ceremony *pindas* of barley are



offered to the ancestors of seven generations both on the agnatic and cognatic sides.

The main function takes place the following day. A ceremonial booth is constructed for this purpose. For the construction of such a booth generally a temple of Ganesh or a *Chaitya* is preferred but it may be constructed even in the quadrangle of the house or in front of it. The worshipping objects as usual include *Jwalah-Nhai-Ka (n)* (traditional bronze-mirror), *Shina-Mhu*, (a pyramid-like bronze-pot for keeping vermilion) and *Sukunda* (bronze lamp). Besides, several heaps of paddy and rice mixture are placed on the floor to represent the *Asanas* (seats) of the different gods and goddesses that are to be worshipped during the function. Such gods and goddesses are of two types: firstly, those who are malignant and whose displeasure is sure to bring some unhappy incidents. It, therefore, becomes necessary to ward off the evil influence of such deities. Such deities include Bhairava, Bhadra-Kali and *Aji-Ma*. The second set of divinities are Ganesh, the Kul-deity, the presiding-deity of the locality, Laxmi and the *Dewali*-deity. In addition, a set of eight mother-goddesses called *Ashta-Matrika* is also worshipped. These different divine personalities are propitiated with the profuse offerings of buffalo meat and liquor, a feature of uniqueness which distinguishes the Newars from the other Hindu communities of Nepal.

On the appointed day for the ceremony, the Brahmin priest officiates at the function. In the case of the Buddhist Newars, his place is taken by a Gubhaju priest. Under the guidance of the priest, the *Thakali* of the clan, or of the family as the case may be, performs the *Sankalpa* ritual. It consists of offering flowers and rice firstly to *Sukunda*, then to *Pancha-Bali* and finally to *Ashta-Matrika*. The *Sukunda*, as we have already noted earlier, represents Ganesh, which looms large in the religious activities of the Newars. This being over, the boy who is to be ini-

tiated is brought to the place of worship through the *Lasa-Kusa* ritual. He sits to the left side of the priest who faces the east. The feet of the boy are worshipped by the *Thakali*. A ritual-garland made of five kinds of leaves, namely, *var* (*Ficus bengalensis*), *Peepal* (*Ficus religiosa*), *Bimri*, Mango and *Palas* (*Butea frondosa*) is offered to the boy. This garland is known as *Pancha-Shikha* which contains a golden ring of *Nava-Ratna* (nine jewels).

Subsequently, arrangement is made for the shaving of the boy's head. But before the barber shaves his hair, the razor to be used in this connection has to be ritually purified. Here the father's sister steps in. She goes with a plate to the barber and brings the razor in it to the priest. The razor having been worshipped, she again takes it back to the barber. Now the boy's mother's brother comes forward and massages the boy's head with mustard-oil, while the father's sister holds the cup of oil to assist the former. After that the mother's brother makes a pretence of cutting the boy's hair. He cuts a few locks of the hair and puts them in the plate held by the boy's father's sister. Thereafter the barber proceeds with his work. Some of the well-to-do Newars get a golden razor to be used by the maternal uncle. After this is over, the barber shaves off the head and the father's sister collects the hair in the plate. The boy, then, offers a ball of sweet-meat to the barber while the maternal uncle pelts at the barber's head with another ball of sweetmeat. Sometimes the hair-cutting ceremony is also the proper occasion for the piercing of ears which is done by the barber. But this is however not ritually insisted upon.

While the above is a predominant practice among the Newars of the Valley, a slightly different tradition is reported to be followed in other regions. For, the Shrestha of Okhaldhunga (to the east of the Valley) have a some-

what peculiar practice with regard to the place to be selected where the hair should be cut. Among them it is reported that the boy is taken to a cow-shed, bound with a rope used for tying the cattle and then his hair is cut by the maternal uncle.

After the barber has completed his work, the boy takes bath and he is then brought to the *Mandap* by means of the *Lasa-Kusa* ritual. The boy is made to worship all the deities under the guidance of the priest. He also offers a little rice to the father's house by throwing it up into the air. This is strangely known as *Griha-Laxmi-Puja*, thus identifying the father's house with the goddess of wealth. Then follows the presentation of new clothes to the boy. The *Thakali* besmears the boy's forehead with *Shinha*, while his wife, *Thakali-Naki*, makes the presentation of the clothes to the boy. Then the *Thakali-Naki* performs the ritual of *Pathi-Lui-gu*. It consists of pouring over the boy's head fruits, flowers etc. three times from a grain-measuring pot called *Pathi*. After that she makes obeisance to the boy by touching his knees, shoulders and head three times and then touching her own head. This ritual is followed by a communal recognition of the new status of the boy in which all the relatives including the *Thakali*, *Thakali-Naki*, the parents of the boy and his maternal uncle offer flowers, fruit, rice and coins to him. Then follows in order the *Brahma-Puja*, worship of the priest and *Neeni-Puja*, worship of the father's sister. In both the cases the priest and the father's sister are presented with new clothes and a few coins. This being over, the *Jwalah-Nhai-Ka(n)* is worshipped by the *Thakali* before he takes it in his hand. He then shows it to the deities and then to the relatives present there. The *Thakali-Naki* on her part worships the *Shinha-Mu* and then picks it up in her hand. Thus all the Newar ceremonies end after the ritual display of these two tradi-

tional objects. The next item of the ceremony is the presentation of *Saga(n)*. The function is rounded off with a communal feast. Meanwhile, the hair of the boy is thrown into a river.

The first initiation ceremony of a Newar girl is called *Yihee* or *Yihee-Munke*. *Yihee* literally means marriage. But now-a-days it is more in vogue for signifying the mock marriage of a girl which closely corresponds to the *Talikettu-Kalyanam* ceremony of the Nairs of Malabar. With the exceptions of the Deo-Bhaju and the *Du(n)-yee-ya(n)* Newars, all Newars observe this ritual. Girls, when they are normally between the ages of four and eleven, undergo marriage with god Narayan. A girl must undergo this ceremony before her puberty. It is also known as *Suvarna-Kumar Vivah*. More popularly, but quite erroneously, it is called marriage with bel-fruit. All the earlier writers on the customs of Newars have described it as marriage with the bel-fruit. My own enquiry has definitely confirmed that the girl is married to god Narayan. The bel-fruit is, however, a necessary accompaniment to the golden picture of Narayan. But it is taken for a witness to the marriage and not in itself the object with which the marriage is performed.

The *Yihee* ceremony is looked upon with high veneration by the Newars. It is regarded as the most strenuous and sacred of all the domestic rituals. It is an event for the display of great religious piety. People from far and wide come to pay obeisance to the girl to be initiated through this ceremony. No other ceremony, perhaps in the life-cycle of a Newar individual, is worked out so minutely as this one. Theoretically, its value to the Newars is as important as the pre-puberty marriage of a Brahmin girl as ordained by the Hindu custom. During the period of my stay in Kathmandu I had made several inquiries with the Newars of different social, economic and educational strata as to why they attached so much

importance to *Yihee* when it had come to be one of the principal reasons for their being looked down upon by the politically dominant Gorkhas who regard it as a non-Brahminic ritual. The Newars reacted sensitively to the very suggestion of abolishing it. They still feel proud of observing this traditional ceremony. The general opinion among them was that so long as *Yihee* was not harmful they did not find any reason to abandon it simply because the people of another culture-group did not like it. Recently, the Newars who form a microscopic minority in the border town of Birganj were reported to have decided to dispense with this practice under the pressure of local opinion. Some of them had even gone to the extent of bypassing the *Yihee* of their daughters. This was adversely reacted to by the Newars of Kathmandu, who decided to boycott marriage relations with such uninitiated girls of this town. The traditional views ultimately prevailed. It is understood now that the *Yihee* ceremony has again been revived by the Birganj Newars. The submission to the traditional views is attributable to the over-riding influence the Kathmandu Newars wield. For marriage relations the Newars of other regions, in the majority of cases, are required to have contact with the Kathmandu Valley, since it is the stronghold of the Newar community. The Newars living outside the Valley are unable to have their say unless they are in a position to get suitable mates locally. Their small number does not, however, allow such local dependence for marriages.

The ceremony of *Yihee* is functionally related to marriage and divorce. It is the ground on which the marriage of a girl with her social husband is not recognised as sacrament, since the ceremony of *Yihee* is taken to mean marriage with god Narayan who is immortal. A Newar girl is, therefore, never believed to be a widow, even if her social husband dies. She can, in theory, remarry as many times as she chooses to.

The custom of *Yihee*, in addition, vests in her the right to divorce. In spite of the manifest dominance of the Brahminic influence on the Newar marriage with the inclusion of Hindu deities for worship, the custom of *Yihee* remains unaffected and it still wields its pristine potent influence on the Newars.

To begin with the description of the *Yihee*: it is normally held on a mass-scale. The usual place of the ceremony is either a temple of Ganesh or a *Chaitya*. Some times, it coincides with the inauguration of a new Hindu temple or a *Chaitya*. It involves enormous expenditure on the part of a girl's parents who take the initiative. Poor parents generally wait for the occasion of the *Yihee* of some wealthy girl to take place, when they send their daughters to participate, seeking thereby to escape the expenses in connection with the construction of the booth and other incidental expenditure. The father of the girl initially arranging the ceremony does not object to other girls seeking initiation. The result is that the number of girls at times is as great as three to four hundred and they may be drawn from the different castes. The ceremony is held in so much veneration that not infrequently, a man of means may come forward to meet the entire expenses connected with a *Yihee* congregation. On such occasions, people from distant places come to partake of the sacredness by witnessing the ceremony and offering new clothes to the girls who are undergoing *Yihee*.

When a girl is to be initiated through *Yihee* an auspicious day is chosen on the advice of the Joshi. A booth is erected. Invitations are then sent to the relatives. The floors of the house and the ground below the booth are washed with a solution of red-soil and cow-dung with a view to purifying them. The girl about to undergo the *Yihee* ceremony takes bath early in the morning. She has to fast on that day. All the members of the house also undergo the ritual purification of *Nisi-yae-gu*.

The actual ceremony sets in early in the morning with the sacrifice of a duck or a goat to Ganesh. Many a Buddha-Margi caste, however, refrain from such sacrificial part of the ceremony. The Newars of poor class substitute a duck's egg for the goat. Then, *Pitha-Puja* is performed. This consists of worshipping eight flags representing different *Pithas* which means different goddesses. These flags are to be later immersed in the river. Then the *Thakali* proceeds to perform the *Nandi-Mukh-Sraddha*. It involves propitiation of ancestors by offering the *Pindas* of *ber*-fruits, bamboo shoots and blades of grass. The dead relatives who are included for receiving such oblations belong to three generations both on the paternal and the maternal sides. All the agnatic relatives of the girl, who are present on the occasion pay their obeisance by showering flowers and rice over the *Pindas*.

The *Nandi-Mukh-Sraddha* is followed by the ritual of wearing the *Sat-Brindika*. For this purpose the girl is brought to the place of initiation through the procedure of *Lasa-Kusa* ritual. She stands before the sacred fire to perform the *Sat-Brindika* ceremony. *Sat-Brindika* means measuring the girl hundred and eight times with yellow thread from head to foot. It is then coiled up and put on the lap of the girl. The *Thakali-Naki* then performs the *Pathi-Lui-gu* ritual. The girl is then showered with flowers and rice as a token of her being in a state of sacredness.

The *Thai-bhu* ritual follows next. It is the important part of *Yihee*. The *Thai-bhu* containing eighty four kinds of dishes is placed before the girl. The girl has to perform the ritual-eating of *Pancha-grasa* (five mouthful). This consists of eating first with each of the five fingers of the right hand and then with all the five fingers together. But before such eating, a little of the food is set aside on a

leaf as the share of the evil spirits and thrown at the *Chhwasa*. With this, the ceremony ends for the day.

Next day the girl is required to undergo the *Nisi-yae-gu* ritual. The *Nauni*, woman barber, who pares the nails and colours the toes of the girl receives as her traditional payment of a piece of raw flesh and a small quantity of mustard-oil. She also receives payment in cash. The girl's father's sister collects the nails in a copper dish for which she is also customarily paid. When the purificatory rite is over, the girl is conducted back to her seat with the *Lasa-Kusa* ritual. She is then presented with new clothes and ornaments along with the *Sat-Brindika* garland which she puts on.

Then follows the applying of vermilion to the girl's forehead. It is called *Sincho-phaye-gu*. Under the Hindu custom, it may be mentioned that the application of vermilion to the forehead of the bride by the bride-groom is of great significance in a marriage. The Newar *Sincho-Phaye-gu* in Yihee is an equivalent of it. But strangely enough, *Sincho-Phaye-gu* literally means the act of parting the hair. This ceremony proceeds as follows: the priest first worships the *Jwalah-Nhai-Ka(n)* and hands it over to the *Thakali*. Similarly, he worships the *Shinha-Mhu* and hands it over to the *Thakali-Naki*. The *Thakali-Naki* takes a little vermilion from the *Shinha-Mhu* and with her three fingers she draws three parallel lines on the forehead of the girl from left to right; then without lifting the fingers, she draws back her fingers along these lines upto the middle of the forehead; from there she moves her fingers straight away up and right through the parting of the hair on the head. The girl then circumambulates the booth three times by virtue of the *Lasa-Kusa* ritual after which she is taken to another place for the ritual of *Phali-Bajee* which involves the eating of *taye*, curd, milk and fruits.



When this over, she is brought back to her seat for the next ceremony.

The next important part of the ceremony now starts. It is called *Kanya-dan*. *Kanya-dan* is analogous to the practice among the Hindus of making a gift of the maiden to the bridegroom. In *Yihee* the girl is similarly offered to god Narayan. This raises the question as to who has the right of so offering the girl. Now-a-days, in most cases, it is the eldest male member among the brother-families of the girl's father, who enjoys this right. But among the more traditional Newars, this right is exercised by the *Thakali* of the 'Dewali Guthi'. At least among the Jyapoo Newars of Panga it is so.

In the *Kanya-dan* ceremony, the gift-maker bends down and touches the feet of the girl, while his wife pours water over the feet. The girl is then presented with new clothes and offered three times a handful of rice by the gift-maker. All the relatives then make a similar offering to the girl in their order. Apart from the relatives, outsiders also may present the girl with clothes or coins.

The next item in the function is the worship of the priest and presentation of clothes to him. Then the girl's father's sister is also worshipped and presented with new clothes. This is called *Neeni-Puja*. The function draws to a close when the *Jwala-Nhai-Ka(n)* and the *Shinha-Mhu* are taken by the *Thakali* and his wife, *Thakali-Naki*, respectively. The *Thakali* displays the *Jwala-Nhai-Ka(n)* to god Ganesh, and other deities, then to the girl and finally to other relatives who are present in the function. The religious part of the function is now over for the day and, subsequently, follows the ritual of *Saga(n)*. Later, a feast is held for all the relatives.

While symbolising the true marriage of a girl, the *Yihee* ceremony confers a new status on her. It is a transition from one type of status to another. The

ceremony, however, is not observed by many of the lower castes such as Kasai, Chyame, Dhobi and Du(n)yee-ya(n).

The puberty ceremony of the Newar girl is called *Barha*. For eleven days the girl is kept confined in a dark room occulted from the sun and the male members. On the 12th day she undergoes a purificatory ceremony to be accompanied by a ceremonial feast. The *Barha* ceremony is observed in two different ways: viz., *Barha-Taye-gu* and *Barha-Chone-gu*. Under the first a girl undergoes the *Barha* before she has her first menstruation. In the second, the ceremony is held when the girl has her first menses. The difference between these two types of *Barha* is that in the former case the girl is regarded as mature before the attainment of puberty, while in the other, physical puberty coincides with the ceremonial puberty. The latter type is gradually coming more and more into vogue.

*Barha-Taye-gu* is observed by a girl when she has already undergone the *Yihee* and when she is between the ages of five and thirteen. It is generally held in groups and several girls are huddled up together in a dark room. The *Barha-Chone-gu*, on the other hand, is a rite to be undergone individually since it is based on the physical puberty. The ceremony proceeds as follows: In both the types of ceremony, a cotton effigy is made, representing the *Barha-Khya*, the she-devil which is believed to possess the girl undergoing *Barha*, and hung on the wall in the room in which the girl is confined. The *Thakali-Naki* continues to worship the *Barha-Khya* for twelve days and daily it is offered a portion of the girl's food with a view to protecting her from its malevolent influence. All the time the young girls from the neighbourhood come to entertain her with traditional songs and music.

The taboo on food is not so elaborate. The girl is denied only salt; the rest she can have.

The *Barha* of a girl renders all the agnatic members of the family impure for eleven days. But her married sisters and other cognates are not affected by such pollution.

On the sixth day, the *Fukee* relatives pay her a visit and feed her with *Chhusya-Mussya*. Her married sisters have also to bring such food articles on this occasion. The maternal uncle is under special obligation to send the eldest married woman of his household to feed the girl with *Chhussya-Mussya*. He also sends her *Kon-cheeka(n)* with which she and other females rub their faces. The girl then applies oil on her head which means the cessation of the salt taboo.

The actual purificatory ritual takes place on the twelfth day, when the girl comes out of her confinement and becomes ceremonially clean. On this day, she and all the members of the *Fukee* families undergo the *Ni-si-yae-gu* ritual of purification. Special care is taken with regard to the girl's bath which should be before sunrise. After these preliminaries, all the members assemble at the girl's place. The girl's eyes are blind-folded with a cotton band and she is conducted either to the terrace of the house or to some convenient place which commands a clear view of the sun, where the ceremony of 'seeing the sun' is performed.

The *Thakali-Naki* again assumes the ceremonial leadership. She performs worship to Ganesh and the sun. Subsequently, the other deities like *Kumari*, and objects representing the evil spirits and the *Kul* deity, all are worshipped. The girl offers flowers and rice to the sun while she remains blind-folded. The cotton band is then removed and the first object she sees is the sun.

After the girl has seen the sun, the *Thakali-Naki* again worships the sun as before, but this time it is also participated in by the girl herself. As usual, the *Jwala-Nhai-ka(n)* and *Shinha-Mhu* are also worshipped. Then

the girl is again blind-folded and the ritual of *Sincho-phaye-gu* is performed by the *Thakali-Naki*.

Then she performs the *Pathi-Lui-gu* ritual. She takes a handful of the mixture of rice and paddy and offers to the girl. This is known as *Barha-Chhui-gu* (removing the pollution of *Barha*), which is repeated three times. She then offers *Ko(n)* (rice-powder) and *Chika(n)* (mustard oil) to the girl separately in two different small earthen pots. Then she presents a set of new clothes and makes obeisance to the girl. This is the first occasion when a girl is given to wear a *saree* in place of the traditional *Surwar*. The presentation of the mixture of rice and paddy and the set of new clothes is repeated by other women relatives in turn according to the order of seniority of age and social status.

On the twelfth day also, the maternal uncle of the girl sends again a set of clothes, some mixture of paddy and rice and *Saga(n)*. The married daughters of the family also come to offer the girl similar materials.

The girl afterwards pays a visit to the temple of Ganesh. On her return, the *Saga(n)* ritual follows. First the *Saga(n)* is offered to the *Kul-Deity*, then to the girl and subsequently to the other relatives, strictly in the order of seniority.

The *Barha* ceremony is brought to a close with the holding of a communal feast in which the *Fukee* members alone participate. This signifies the recognition of the physical maturity of the girl.

If the *Barha* ceremony takes place after marriage on the occurrence of the first menses and the girl happens to be in her husband's house, she is asked to hide herself immediately. News is then conveyed to her parents to make arrangements to take her back. The Newars do not, as a matter of course, allow a bride to live in their house when she is required to be under *Barha* resulting from her first menstrual discharge. The girl is removed to her parents'

home in a palanquin under the cover of darkness. In such instances, however, the ritual of *Sincho-Phyae-gu* is not done by the *Thakali-Naki*, but by her husband who is specially invited to his father-in-law's house. He has to bring *Chhusya-Mussya*, some ornaments and a set of clothes with him.

If a girl under *Barha* dies, her body is disposed of in a peculiar manner within the four walls of the house. She is buried in the ground floor of the house in which she has died. For this purpose, the corpse is not removed out of the room by the usual door-way, but holes are bored through the floors of the house and the corpse is passed down to the ground through these openings. Such houses are believed to be haunted by her spirit and the belief is current among the Newars that those who live in such houses hardly survive.

Menstrual impurity other than the first one is not observed by the Newars as strictly as by the Gorkhas. During menses, a Gorkha woman lives practically in isolation. On the fourth day after her bath, she is considered clean. But still she is not allowed to touch water and attend to religious duties until the fifth day. Among the Newars, on the other hand, a woman during her menses can even attend to the domestic duties including kitchen. The only restriction imposed on her is that she should have her bath before attending to her normal duties. At the most, she is forbidden to come in physical contact with objects of religious worship. The Shresthas with whom this point was discussed testified to this fact. A conflicting statement was, however, given by persons from the Udas and Manandhar castes, who returned that they observe impurity for four days. But it is hard to believe their statements in the light of reliable evidence from other sources that in the majority of cases the observance of menstrual impurity is confined only to the worship of family deity. A few Newars who have come in

close contact with the Gorkhas do follow the latter's tradition in this respect. But such cases are few and far between. *Barha* is not at all observed by many of the lower castes chief among which are the Chyamkhala and the Du(*n*)-yee-ya(*n*).

The initiation ceremony of a boy into adulthood is called *Kaita-Puja* which signifies the admission of the boy into the full-fledged membership of the community. After such initiation, if the boy dies, he is accorded the full obsequial rites as in the case of an adult. The term *Vrata-Vandha* is sometimes substituted for *Kaita-Puja*, particularly by the Shresthas among many of whom, it is the occasion of their thread ceremony. Some times it is also known by the Sanskrit term *Upanayana* among the Chhatharia Newars and the Deo Bhaju Brahmins, who wear *Janeo* on the occasion of this ceremony. *Kaita-Puja* implies the initiation into wearing the loin-cloth meant for covering the genital region.

The age at which *Kaita-Puja* is celebrated is generally between five and fourteen years. There is, however, no upper age-limit. A man may undergo his *Kaita-Puja* any time before his marriage. It presupposes that the boy has already undergone the *Bu-Sakha* ceremony. For economic reason, the *Bu-Sakha* and *Kaita-Puja* ceremonies are at times held together. As in other ceremonies, the Newars generally prefer to hold this ceremony also on a mass scale.

Having chosen an auspicious date in consultation with the Joshi, the boy is made to observe fast. Among the Shresthas, a booth is constructed in the quadrangle of the house. In the centre of the booth raw bricks are placed for kindling the ceremonial fire.\* The symbols of *Ashta-Matrika*, the *Jwala-Nhai-ka(n)* and the *Shina Mhu* and the *Sukunda* are worshipped as usual. The use of a flower known as *Dafo-Swa(n)* is very necessary for this

\* The Buddhamargi Newars hold the ceremony without it.

worship. Among other things, a piece of raw meat and a large vessel containing all the items of *Saga(n)* are also necessary.

The Brahmin priest who officiates at the function administers *Sankalpa* to the *Thakali* or the father of the boy, whoever assumes the ritual leadership. During the ceremony, the priest sits facing the east and in front of him is the sacred fire. The *Thakali* takes his seat to the right of the priest and faces the north. To the left side of the priest is seated the boy undergoing the initiation. After the *Sankalpa*, the boy is brought to his seat through the *Lasa-Kusa* ritual in which the *Thakali-Naki* and *Noku-Naki* participate. First, the boy worships the *Mandal* by offering flowers, rice and coins. Then he makes the *Gaudan* to the Brahmin priest in which the cow is symbolically represented by flowers, rice and a few coins. Afterwards, he is made to throw a small quantity of rice and flowers up into the air at the instance of the Brahmin. Then follows the worship of the *Saga(n)*. In all such worships the boy is assisted by the *Thakali-Naki*. It is she who puts into his hands the material required by him for such worship. While the worship is going on, the *Noku-Naki* goes out to worship the Ganesh of the locality and comes back after some time.

Then the *Thakali* worships the boy. He offers flowers at the feet, hands and head of the boy and this is repeated three times. The boy is then offered *Bhalincha* a kind of pot containing *Kon*, mustard oil, a little of paddy, a few blades of grass and pieces of raw meat. He touches his body with some pieces of raw meat and throws them away. He then proceeds to the barber to have his ceremonial shaving.

The boy's father's sister, *Neeni*, as during the hair-cutting ceremony (*Bu-Sakha*), does the act of bringing the barber's razor in a bronze-plate which the priest worships. Then she gives it back to the barber. The boy is

led through the *Lasa-Kusa* ceremony by the *Thakali-Naki* and *Noku-Naki*.

The barber shaves off the boy's head, and pares his nails too. Thereafter, the *Neeni* collects the hair and the nails in a bronze vessel. Then the boy goes for his ceremonial bath after which he is brought to the *Mandap* again through the *Lasa-Kusa* ritual.

Now starts the main function, the presentation of the *Kaita*. The priest hands over the *Kaita* to the *Thakali* who in turn presents it to the boy; the latter holds it in his hand. Then the *Thakali* instructs the boy how to wear it.

After wearing the *Kaita*, the boy stands before the *Thakali* with his feet close together. The latter worships the *Kaita* on the boy. The *Thakali-Naki* also repeats the same. Then follows the presentation of a set of new clothes to the boy who touches the feet of the *Thakali-Naki* as a mark of respect, after receiving the presentation from her.

Then follows the ritual of *Pathi-lui-gu* as usual. After this ritual, the boy is given a deer's skin to wrap himself with and also a bow and an arrow. With these he stands, while all his kinsfolk, especially the *Fukee* members have to shower flowers and rice on him as a token of respect and blessings. The *Thakali* takes the *Jwala-Nhaika(n)* and after showing it to the deities, shows it to the boy. Then he offers alms to the boy which include a coconut, rice and a rupee. The boy says *Bhawati Bhikshan Dehee\** before he accepts the alms. The giving of the alms is repeated by each of the relatives present in the function in the usual order of their social seniority. The important relatives participating in such alms-giving include all the agnates of the boy, including females, the boy's mother's sisters and their husbands, and the father's

\* It is a Sanskrit tradition which is confined to the higher caste Newars only.



sisters. The mother's brother and his wife refrain significantly from offering such alms.

After the alms-giving ceremony, the boy makes a pretence of running away to the Jungle, and his maternal uncle has to prevent him from it. For this the boy stands seven steps away from his maternal uncle. As the boy runs, the maternal uncle has to catch hold of him and bring him back. In some cases the boy is taken to the temple of Ganesh for worship from where he has to make the pretence of running away.

The maternal uncle brings back the boy to the *Mandap* where the ritual of *Dhau-Saga(n)* is performed. Besides, a *teeka*-mark of curd is drawn on his forehead. This act is headed by the *Thakali-Naki* who is followed by the *Noku-Naki* and so on until, lastly, the mother's brother's wife. The mother's brother's wife has to present new clothes to the boy. Then she applies *sinha* to the foreheads of the boy's parents; and also presents them each with a set of new clothes. The religious part of the *Kaita-Puja* thus comes to an end.

Then the usual ritual of *Saga(n)* takes place. But this time the *Saga(n)* is offered not by the *Thakali-Naki* of the boy's lineage, but by his maternal uncle's wife. First she offers *Saga(n)* three times to the *Kul* deity of her family; then to the boy; and subsequently, one by one to the *Fukee* relatives of the boy.

Later a grand feast takes place in which *bajee*, buffalo's meat, liquor, *tho(n)* and different kinds of boiled seeds are served.

While *Kaita-Puja* is the traditional initiation ceremony, it has engrafted upon it such Hindu rituals as the wearing of the sacred thread which is called *Upanayana*. The Chhatharia caste Newars undergo the thread-ceremony in addition to *Kaita-Puja*. The Buddha-margi Vanras have a different ceremony to replace the *Kaita-Puja*. Among them, the ceremony is known as *Bare-*

*Chhui-gu* or *Chura-Karma*, which indicates a Sanskrit tradition. It takes place before the boy has attained the age of thirteen. The ceremony symbolically represents the assumption of ascetic life and preserves the old memories when the Vanras used to be initiated as ascetics. Generally, the *Bare-Chhui-gu* is also observed on a mass scale.

As usual, an auspicious day is chosen. On that day, the boys observe *Ashtami Vrata*. Their diet consists only of fruits and sweets. The boys to be initiated into *Bare-Chhui-gu* take their seats at the place of worship in order of their seniority. They sit in front of the *Guru-Mandal*, a geometrical design. In the *Guru Mandal* a long twisted thread is kept during the entire *puja*. After the *puja*, the priest gives a discourse to each of the boys on the miseries of the world. He tells that the world is transitory and full of sorrows. Salvation lies in its abandonment. The sermons being over, the boys get their heads shaved off by the barber, removing even the last tufts of hair. They dress themselves in yellow garments and go near the idol of the Buddha at the *Bahal* with a view to seeking shelter under it. For four days they actually lead an ascetic life, with begging bowls in their hands, going from door to door for alms. Afterwards the yellow garments are taken off and they resume normal life. This initiation marks their admission as full members of the *Bahal*-group.

A very notable feature in the ritual life cycle of the Newars is the observance of the attainment of old-age, which is, however not to be found among other ethnic groups of Nepal. They use the term *Burha-Junko* to designate this observance, which is held thrice in the lifetime of an individual.

The first *Burha-Junko* takes place at the age of seventy-seven years, seven months, seven days, seven *ghadis* and seven *palas* according to the Hindu calendar. It is called *Bhima-Ratha-Rohan*. On the completion of this ceremony a person is believed to enter upon the first

stage of divinity and he gives up taking active interest in family affairs. It is commonly believed that if such an initiated one pronounces a curse upon some one, it is sure to be effective. People, therefore, look upon him with the utmost awe. On the other hand, his blessings are much sought after whenever a new project is to be started.

The second *Burha Junko* is observed on attaining the age of eighty-three years, four months, four days, four *ghadis* and four *palas*. This is known as *Sahasra Chandra Darshanam*, seeing the full-moon a thousand times. On calculation a thousand full-moon nights are supposed to have passed by the time a person attains this age. This ceremony is alternatively called *Ashwa-Ratha Rohan*, the significance of which is, however, not known to me, except that etymologically the term indicates 'the riding in a horse-drawn car'.

The last ceremony of *Burha-Junko* is called *Swarga Ratha Rohan* (going to heaven) and is celebrated on the completion of the age of ninety-nine years, nine months, nine days, nine *ghadis* and nine *palas*. This is the final stage of divinity which a person enters into. After this ceremony he is worshipped as a semi-divine being. But rarely do people survive to attain this status.

While an old man is initiated into the *Burha-Junko* his wife is also initiated without the consideration of her age, since a woman's social age is always counted on the basis of her husband's age. But if a woman be a widow she has to qualify herself by completing the necessary period of life in order to undergo the *Burha Junko*.

In all the three ceremonies of *Burha Junko* the details of the worship are somewhat similar to those involved in the *Macha-Junko* or the rice-feeding ceremony subject to a few more details which are peculiar. This observance essentially involves participation of the priest and the performance of *Hom*. On the day of initiation the old

man undergoes a fast and the ritual of *Nisi-yae-gu* is undergone as usual by all the members of the *Fukee* families.

When the auspicious moment arrives, the old man is conducted to the place of worship, through the ritual of *Lasa-Kusa*. He takes his seat to the right of the priest near the sacred fire. The old man sits on a rectangular *pidha* placed on a heap of a mixture of rice and paddy. By the side are kept a broom, a straw-mat, an umbrella, and a pair of shoes. A significant article in this ceremony is the garland of *Yo-mari* which the old man has to wear. After the completion of the *Hom* all the relatives of the initiated one pay their obeisance one by one and shower fruits, flowers and vermilion upon him. Such details are applicable to all the three kinds of *Burha Junko*. But the first and the last have some peculiar features in addition, which are as follows :

The first *Burha-Junko* or *Bhima-Ratha-Rohan* is marked by the initiate being taken out in a *Rath* through the different parts of the locality. The *rath* is drawn by his relatives, who form themselves into separate rows of males and females. The old man's sons and daughters undertake the ritual of scattering a mixture of paddy and parched rice on the route of the procession.

The procession first arrives at the temple of Ganesh where, apart from the normal worship, a duck is sacrificed to the deity. Then it wends through the different parts of the locality to observe the ritual of taking 'the round of the settlement'. Finally it returns home. This custom is, however, much falling into disuse and a modified form of it is presented by undergoing the symbolic drawing of the car within the court-yard of the house itself. In any case the initiate must visit the temple of Ganesh in a procession accompanied by his relatives. After the com-

pletion of the car-drawing ceremony, a grand feast is held in which the initiate's consanguineal relatives are distinguished from the rest.

In the last *Burha Junko* a strange custom marks it out as a speciality. After this ceremony, the initiated man does not enter the house by the usual door-way, but by the window of the top floor. For this purpose, he is placed in a wooden shrine and drawn up from the top window by means of a rope. It is symbolic of going to heaven.

Although it is the desire of every son to initiate his father or mother into the *Burha-Junko*, economic reason acts as a hurdle to its fulfilment. It is, therefore, not uncommon to come across a number of Newars of qualified age who have not been initiated through.

*Burha Junko* is, however, conspicuously a non-culture-trait of the lower caste Newars from whose hands drinking water is not accepted by the higher caste Newars. Comparatively, it is more popular among the Vanra, the Chhatharia, the Shrestha, the Udas, the Jyapoo and the Manandhar.

#### REFERENCES

1. The Gorkhas, 1928, p. 176.

## 5. DEATH

**T**HE Hindu theory of the transmigration of soul and the law of Karma form the pivot of Newar philosophy which governs their death rituals. Therefore, beliefs regarding death are akin to those of the other Hindus. The soul of a person, after death, is believed finally to go to the abode of Yama. A person is rewarded or punished according to the virtues practised or sins committed by him on the earth. While such a higher philosophy permeates the life of the higher caste Newars, those of the lower cultural ladder, such as the Du(*n*)-yee-ya(*n*) and others are, however, very remotely concerned with such a philosophy. To them death is always the result of an evil act of some deity or spirit. It is caused by the failure of a man to pacify the supernatural ones. When somebody dies, invariably some explanation of this kind is put forward.

Like the other Hindus, the Newars distinguish between death, natural and unnatural. Death resulting from a long drawn-out sickness or from old age is regarded as natural. A person, it is believed, lives the destined period of life, after which he must quit this world to take up another role assigned to him by God. Unnatural death is believed to result either from the wrath

of some malignant deity or spirit or ghost or from the act of some enemy through sorcery. Those dying of accidents, epidemics, and witchcraft are regarded as having met with an unnatural death. A girl dying, while in *Barha*, is also believed to have an unnatural death. All unnatural deaths lead to the souls turning into ghosts and spirits.

A person who dies a natural death is said to be saved from the underworld life and his soul without being required to live in transition goes straight-away to the court of *Yama*. But the path to the court of *Yama* is not an easy one. The soul has to be helped and cared for by its surviving relatives in this respect by offering timely oblations to it and by observing the various customs in its memory. On the other hand, the soul does not cease to retain its mundane interests in the day to-day life of its surviving relatives. In other words, the soul functions as a link between its surviving relatives and the gods. In order to maintain the constant relationship with it, the soul of the dead has to be propitiated; otherwise its displeasure is incurred, which means that a general calamity would befall the members of the family.

The Newars believe that the soul of the deceased is as much in need of material comforts as a human being. Thus it needs food, clothes, house etc. But such beliefs are not peculiar to the Newars who share them in common with others. The Newars differ from the others only by degrees in this respect.

There also exists among the Newars the belief that if the soul escapes through the eyes or the nose or through the skull, the person concerned is lucky. The (escape)<sup>exit</sup> of the soul through the skull is, however, most preferred. That is why among the Vanras and some of the Udas and Manandhar castes, a special ritual takes place to enable the soul to leave the body through the skull. It is called *Utkranti* or *Pho*. The term *Pho* is current among those

groups who have accepted a Tibetan Lama as their spiritual teacher. This is the case especially with the Manandhar caste.

It is not clear whether the *Utkranti* or *Pho* is performed before the death of a person or after it. Strict secrecy is maintained and even the household members are not allowed to be present when this rite is being performed.

As the belief runs, the soul of the deceased can enter heaven only on some particular dates, i.e. on the first of the dark-half of *Bhadra* and on the thirteenth of the dark-half of *Sravan*. Because only on these two days are the doors of Yama's abode kept open. That is why on the first mentioned date, the festival of cow, and on the last date, the festival of feeding the Vanra priests take place.

The Buddhist Newars replace the concept of heaven with the idea of *Nirvana* — since they believe in the soul of the deceased becoming a mortal Buddha. But such belief exists only in theory, and that too among the higher castes. It does not, however, touch upon the practical life of the majority of the Newars.

When a person is dying, he is not removed from the house in the majority of cases, a feature which contrasts with the Gorkhas\*. Even with regard to the place inside the house, as to where he should breathe his last, there is some variation from caste to caste. The Udas and Vanra sections of the Newars take the dying man to the topmost floor. But some of them also prefer to allow the man to die at the spot where he had been lying sick. Despite such exceptions, the majority of the Newars bring the dying man to the ground floor and keep him first at a place called *Argha-Jal*. He is removed thereafter to

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\* Among the Gorkhas, the dying man is immediately removed to the bank of the river and placed half-way in the water. This practice is also followed by some of the Sivamargi Shresthas.



the base of the stair-case to which, for this particular purpose, is given the appellation of *Brahma-Nal*.

During the last moments of the dying man, the traditional physician, *Ghate Vaidya*, whose duty it is to announce the death, is always in attendance. At the same time, the offering of water by the consanguineal relatives proceeds. From a *Kolla* filled with water, in which three silver coins are put, a continuous stream of water is kept pouring over the feet of the dying man. This is usually done either by the eldest son of the dying man, who has to become the *Mitaimha* (chief mourner) or by the dying man's wife. The moment the person dies, the *Ghate-Vaidya* announces to that effect. The remaining water in the *Kolla* is taken to the compound of the house and thrown at the *Ksetrapal*. The silver coins in the *Kolla* traditionally belong to the *Ghate-Vaidya* who, however, provides in return sandal wood and camphor required for the cremation.

The next step is to place five burning earthen lamps around the deceased. These lamps are fed with *ghee* and placed at the head, one each on the right and the left side and at the two knees. Meanwhile, the news is conveyed to the *Sie-Guthi* and *Sana Guthi* members, who have to proceed with the cremation.

The *Sie-Guthi* members having arrived, arrangements are made by them to procure nine bundles of *Chhwalli* (wheat straw), a basket of cow-dung cakes, a fire-pot called *Bhaj(n)*, a little paddy husk, a pair of iron chains, and some water in a vessel known as *Karua*. The *Sie-Guthi* members also bring bamboos for making the bier and the traditional textile material known as *Deva(n)* which is kept at their office and which is used to cover the corpse.

The bier is called *Kota* and made into a rectangular shape with handles at the four corners, which so much contrasts with the single bamboo pole used by the Gorkhas for carrying the dead.

Before the corpse is tied to the *Kota*, the *Thalai-Kulai* ritual takes place. The face of the corpse is washed by one of the *Fukee* members. *Sinha* or vermilion is applied to its forehead. Then his horoscope is tied to his neck. Thereafter the corpse is wrapped in a loin-cloth tightly and stitched up. This stitching is called *Dukha-Pikha* and is done only by a 'Fukee' member by rotation. But the *Dukha-Pikha* ritual has to be preceded by the ritual of *Phanga-taye-gu* to be performed by the married daughters of the deceased's household. The married daughters bring a little cotton. As soon as they arrive they raise a loud cry, come near the dead body and place the cotton over it. Then they immediately depart, except the one, who in the case of the lower caste Newars, has to perform the scattering of paddy grains on the route of the funeral procession.

Unless the married daughters depart, further work cannot start. The married daughters having left the house, the *Dukha-Pikha* takes place and then the dead body is wrapped in a *ghoom*. The dead body is removed to the bier over which the *Deva(n)* is put. The removal of the corpse to the bier and the subsequent work of attending to the burning of the dead are not done by all the *Sie-Guthi* members, but by a section of them who are called in such capacity as *Gonta*. The *Gontas* remove the bier to the court-yard of the house, where *pindas* are to be offered to the corpse, and in the meanwhile the *Sana-Guthi* members are awaited for joining the procession.

Now the unique feature connected with the death-rite of the Newar, which distinguishes them from the other Hindus, is the offering of *pindas* to the soul of the deceased before cremation.

When *pinda*-offering is over, and when the relatives and the *Sana-Guthi* members have arrived, preparations are made for the funeral procession. It is arrang-

ed in a definite manner. At the head of the procession are the Kasai and the Jyapoo musicians.\* The latter blow a wind-instrument known as *Kaha(n)* or *Indra-Baja*, which has religious importance and which is played on the occasion of death or some other important occasions. Its notes spell the sadness of the funeral procession. The musicians are followed by those members of the *Sie Guthi* who carry the nine bundles of *chhwali*, a bundle of *Nigali* and the worshipping material. Then the place is taken by another *Sie-Guthi* member who carries an earthen pot containing smouldering cow-dung cakes. Then follows the eldest married daughter with a bag of the mixture of paddy and rice grains, who is called *Po-holae*\*. Next come the four members of the *Sie-Guthi* with the bier on their shoulders. These people, in the case of the higher castes such as the Vanra, the Shrestha and the Udas, have to wear the Indian *dhoti* and not the usual Nepali tight trousers, though among some of the Shresthas of Kathmandu town it is not insisted upon. Behind the bier is the chief mourner, *Mitaimha*, who is followed by the other *Fukee* male members in the order of their status. Finally come the *Sana-Guthi* members and other relatives of the deceased. All these mourners have to cover themselves with white *chadars* to give a mournful look, their heads and feet being bare.

Just before the starting of the funeral procession an aged woman has to perform the *chwasawane-gu* ritual. She takes the mat and pillows of the deceased and proceeds towards the *chwasawane-gu*, where she leaves them and returns.

After the return of the woman from the *chwasawane-gu* the

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\* The accompaniment of music in the funeral procession is falling into disuse among the higher castes, but the Jypoons still adhere to it.

\* In the case of the higher caste Newars, a Jyapoo woman becomes the *po-holae*.

funeral procession moves. The musicians strike a sorrowful note, the *Po-holae* moves forward weeping and scattering the paddy grains, and the rest of the members of the procession follow. The procession wends through the route fixed for such purpose and halts at the first cross-road located on the boundary line of the settlement, known as *Murda-Do-pat'*. Here the three sun-dried bricks are placed. The placing of the sun dried bricks is rooted in the belief that the soul of the dead requires them for building a house in the other world.

After arriving at the cremation ground, the *Sie-Guthi* members proceed to make the pyre at a place known as *Deep* or *Depo*. Meanwhile, the corpse is placed near the bank of the river. The *Deva(n)* is removed and the offering of water to the corpse by the *Fukee* male members commences. It begins with the youngest member and ends with the *Thakali* and the *Mitaimha*. This rite is called *La-to(n)-Ke-gu*. Each of them goes to the river and brings water in their palms and drips it into the mouth of the dead.

After the *La-to(n)-Ke-gu*, another ceremony takes place, which, however, is confined to the upper caste Buddhist Newars. At this juncture, before the corpse is set on fire, *Sraddha* is performed and *Pindas* are offered to the corpse. It may be noted that contrary to the Hindu practice, the *pindas* are made of barley flour and as such it is a feature peculiar to the Newars and not to be met with among the Brahminic Gorkhas.

Just before the pyre is set on fire, a married daughter of the family (or a *Jyapoo* woman in the case of high caste Newars) walks around it three times, scattering paddy grains. Then a *Fukee* member hands over the burning torch, *Nigali*, to the *Mitaimha* who also walks three times around it before he sets fire to the corpse just below its head.

After setting fire to the pyre, all the mourners except

the *Sie-Guthi* members proceed towards the river for bath. The *Sana-Guthi* people attend to the burning of the corpse, till it is reduced to ashes. The rest of the mourners after bath, return to the house of the deceased to undergo the ritual of *Bali-Biye-gu*. For this all the mourners stand in a row in front of the house of the deceased. The eldest lady among the *Fukee* families stands at the entrance holding a dish containing ginger, mustard seeds, salt and *bajee* in one hand and a long iron key in the other. There is also an earthen fire-pot containing mustard seeds. Each of the mourners is given a little of the materials from the dish and every one pretends to eat these. The chief lady takes a little of *bajee* powder and throws it away in the name of each of the mourners after touching him with it from his head to foot. After fumigating his face with the smoke of mustard, each of them takes the iron key in his hand by turn, and enters the house, while the key is passed on to the next person in the row. This is meant to drive away the evil spirit that may have haunted the mourners. Among the Jyapoo farmers of Panga, this ritual slightly differs in some detail. The key is replaced by an *incha* (Sickle) conforming to their dominant agricultural interest. Each person takes the *incha* on which a piece of *Saki* (bulb of *Arum colocasia*) is placed. He drops down the piece of *saki* on the ground and hands over the sickle to the next person. Only then does he enter the house.

Inside the house the *Sisa-Palu* rite takes place. For this purpose each of the *Fukee* members will have brought a *Kule* of *Bajee*, pieces of ginger, and some salt from their respective homes. First of all, the woman (*Poholae*) who had earlier performed the ritual of paddy-scattering is given to eat a little of these things. All the *Fukees* sit together to eat the flattened rice, jaggery, clarified butter, ginger and salt. The chief mourner, however, abstains from eating such things. It is interest-

ing to note here that in contrast to the non-Newar Hindus, the eating of salt is a necessary ritual for the Newars. It is due to this that the Gorkhas jest at the Newars saying, "the Newars taboo the eating of salt at the time of birth, but eat it on the death of some body". After the *Sisa-Palu* all the relatives return to their homes.

Pollution is applicable to all the *Fukee* members for a period of ten or twelve days. Affines are, however, excluded from death-pollution. The married daughters are also given a separate treatment in this regard. They become unclean only for four days in contrast to the unmarried ones who are treated on a par with the other *Fukee* members. Among the Vanras a different tradition exists. In their case pollution is withdrawn on the completion of seven days and all the members of the deceased's *Fukee* circle can resume their normal life thereafter.

In the house where a death has occurred, cooking may not take place during the period of pollution. Each of the *Fukee* families has to by their turn provide to the members of the deceased's household boiled-rice, pulse and pickles. But now-a-days such a traditional practice is breaking down and cooking may be resumed after four days when the married daughters who, having become clean, can attend to it. At least, the Udas are said to follow the latter practice.

There is also restriction on certain kinds of food. During the period of seven days following death, mass-pulse, soyabeans, areca-nut, curd and milk are prohibited. But meat and salt can be consumed.

On the day of cremation, *Fukee* members do not take their meal, until the news of the corpse having been burnt is formally conveyed to them. A special messenger is commissioned for this purpose by the *Sie-Guthi* members who attend to the cremation. This custom is called *Muta*. Once the news is conveyed to them, the members

of the *Fukee* families take their meals, including salt and meat.

Next morning all persons who had accompanied the funeral procession return to the burning place. They make an effigy of the deceased out of his ashes. Two small *Ritha* seeds (*Sapindus Mukorossi*) are used to represent the eyes of the effigy and a conch shell to represent its mouth. They take five heaps of *bajee* and boiled rice which are kept at five different places around the effigy – at the legs, hands and one at the head. Three earthen pots, one each containing liquor, milk and *tho(n)* are placed on these heaps. The heaps containing *Bajee* and boiled rice are later collected along with the earthen pots and kept in a corner and covered with a basket. The ashes and the last remains of the bones are collected for their immersion in the river. This act is performed by one of the six *Sana-Guthi* members on whom the turn has fallen for the year for the disposal of mortal remains. The last remains are disposed of at the different holy places in the Valley. Two of the *Sana-Guthi* members are sent to Gokarna with the scalp, two to Sankhamool with one of the shoulder joints, one to Tekdwan with the other shoulder joint and the sixth person, first to Lakha Tirtha and then to Bhacha-Khusi with the knee-caps. places of such disposal are known as the various *tirthas* of the Valley and are sacred both to the Hindus and the Buddhists.

The effigy-making rite, though current among the high caste Newars such as the Vanra, the Shrestha, the Udas and the Jyapoo, is not practised by many of the lower castes. In the latter's case, the ashes are collected and immersed in the river by the *Sana-Guthi* members on the same day.

If the family members of the deceased are well-to-do, the remains of the deceased are taken to the various places of Hindu pilgrimage such as Banaras, Prayag, Haridwar



and Gaya, where they are offered to the flowing waters of the holy-rivers. This is true even in the case of Bud-dhamargi Newars.

There is another tradition simultaneously existing among some of the Bud-dhamargi Newars with regard to the disposal of the last remains. The last remains are brought home in an urn, kept in the court-yard of the house and worshipped daily till the *Sraddha* day. After the *Sraddha* ceremony, a portion of each of the bones is taken each month to the *tirthas* as stated earlier. The bones are placed on the ground over which a *chaitya* of sand is built. Then *Sraddha* is performed. Thus within the year of death, there are twelve monthly *Sraddhas* to be performed at the twelve different confluences of the rivers in the Valley of Kathmandu. These places are : Guheshwari, Sankhamool, Rajtirtha, Tek-Dwan, Swa-Bhagwati, Lakha Tirtha, Kara-Khushi, Tekhu-Dwan, Dangha, Bhajangal, Nakhu and Gokarna.

{ Among some of the Vanras, it is reported that there exists the practice of throwing the ashes of the deceased up in the air from the top of the hills, such as the Swayambhu. This is perhaps the survival of the earlier practice of exposing the dead on the top of a hill among some of them.

Condolences are offered by the relatives of the bereaved family early in the morning on the day following the cremation. This is known as *Bicha-Fayegu*. It is observed separately by the males and females. In the day following the death, all the male relatives of the bereaved family including the members of *Sana-Guthi* and also friends, come to offer their condolences. On the fourth or sixth day, the women relatives call at the house of the deceased after sun-set for the observance of *Locha*. While coming, they bring with them a basket of *bajee*, sweetmeat, curd and liquor. As soon as they approach the locality or the village of the deceas-

ed, they raise a loud cry. It is a pathetic scene to witness. From all sides women are seen wending their way towards the house of the deceased, weeping loudly and addressing the dead by the term according to his/her relationship to him. As for instance *ya puta!* (Oh, son), *ya Bhincha!* (Oh nephew), *ya Neeni!* (Oh sister) etc. The whole locality becomes astir with the cries of such incoming women for *Locha*. The weeping is, however, more ceremonial than the expression of real grief. It is not uncommon to see these women laughing and cutting jokes on the way. But as soon as they approach their destination, they resume weeping. Tradition has trained them so much that they can weep as easily as they can stop it.

On reaching the house of the bereaved family, the women visiting for *Locha* wait outside till a woman comes out with a bucket of water. One by one they wash their hands and faces before they enter the house. Of the food material brought by these women, a share is given to the *Kusle* and the rest is eaten up by themselves. It is, however, noted that among many of the castes such as the Vanra, the Shrestha and the Udas, the visiting women do not eat the food material themselves. They hand it over to the bereaved family and depart after the ceremonial condolence. Next day such food material is consumed by the *Fukee* members in a feast called *Locha-Bhwe*.

The next rite to follow is on the seventh day, known as *Nhaye-numa*. It is observed by all the Newar castes. Until this rite is performed, the spirit of the deceased, it is believed, continues to visit its house. Every morning, therefore, a little quantity of *bajee* and curd is kept in an earthen vessel at the place where the person had breathed his last. Next day such food material is given away to a person of the *Kusle* caste.

On the *Nhaye-Numa* day, a male and a female from

each of the *Fukee* families participate in the rite. The married daughters, since they are not affected by death-pollution, cook the food. In the morning of this day, seven shares, each containing boiled-rice, bean-pulse, meat, soyabean, oil, milk and an earthen-pot are offered to the *Kusle* in the name of the deceased. These offerings are made by the eldest married daughter of the deceased's household at the court-yard of the house, where the dead body was laid on the bier. As soon as the *Kusle* prepares to collect the food, the married daughter, as required by custom, raises a loud cry. In the same evening there is another rite known as *Pakha-Ja*. All the relatives who take part in the *Nhaye-Numa* feast offer a little food to the spirit of the deceased before they depart for their homes. Each of them puts a handful of boiled rice and *Bajee* into the basket hanging down from the eaves at the doorway. While they put the food into the basket they address the deceased, saying : *Ja-Ka-wa*. This means 'Oh soul of the dead, come and take rice!' They at the same time put into the basket a lighted earthen lamp. The youngest is the first to address the dead person and offer such food, the eldest being the last.

The chief mourner goes to the cremation ground afterwards with a replica of wooden ladder, an eyeless needle and a cooking furnace. He leaves these articles there and comes back. This is known as *Painti-La-gu*. Until it is performed, the relatives who had come for the *Nhaye-Numa* feast do not depart from the house and the *Pakha-Ja* rite takes place only after this. The significance of the *Painti-La-gu* lies in the anxiety of the Newars to stop the spirit of the deceased from visiting the house. According to the current belief, until the *Painti-La-gu* is done, the spirit of the deceased never realises that it is dead, and, therefore, it continues to visit its former abode. That is why for seven days preceding the *Painti-La-gu* some food has to be kept at the spot where the

person was in his sick-bed. The *Painti-La-gu*, is however, believed to impress upon the spirit that it is really dead and it no longer should visit the house. Only then does it come to accept the food offered to it in the *Pakha-Ja* rite. This food is thrown away the following morning at the *Chhwasa*.

The Newars' belief in the evil potentiality of the spirit is reflected in their attempt to prevent it from entering the house. For such purpose, as for example, among the Jyapoos of Panga, a Gubhaju priest is employed to drive an iron nail into the threshold of the house.

The completion of the *Nhaye-Numa* removes the pollution attached to clothes, but bodily pollution still continues till another rite, *Ghasu* is performed on the tenth day, which removes all kinds of uncleanness.

The *Ghasu* ceremony on the tenth day is preceded by the purificatory bath in the morning. It is known as *Ati-Daye-Ke-gu*. In this connection the members of the bereaved family and the *Fukee* members go to the nearby river to bathe. It is marked by the ceremonial weeping by the women while on their way to the bathing ghat.

At the bank of the river, the male members shave their heads and get their nails cut. The chief mourner, if he is the son of the deceased, has, in addition, to shave his eye-brows and moustache. As part of the purificatory rite, the priest holds some wheat-flour, *amba* (emblic myrobalan) and oil-cake in an earthen pot. Each of the relatives is required to bathe in one of these items at a time. Then a solution of cow-dung and urine is sprinkled over them by the priest with a special kind of grass known as *Situ-ghai(n)*. This ritual-act of sprinkling the solution of cow-dung and cow's urine is known as *Panch-gabhya*, which looms large everywhere in the removal of the ceremonial uncleanness among the Newars.

After the purificatory bath in the river, all the mourners return home headed by the chief mourner,

*Mitaimha*. On the way, the chief mourner goes on sprinkling the *Panch-Gabhya* solution on the road with a view to purifying the ground on which the other relatives tread on. The heads of consanguineal families and their wives proceed straight away to the house of the mourner, while the rest return to their respective homes. A ceremonial feast takes place in the house of the bereaved family, in which the *Fukee* heads participate. In this feast the items which have to be necessarily eaten include *bajee*, jaggery and ginger. Meat is, however, not served on this particular occasion.

Following the feast is the *Ghasu* rite. There are different traditions being followed in the Valley as to the date of performing this rite. Among the Gubhaju, the *Ghasu* ceremony takes place on the seventh day itself. Among some Newars it takes place on the twelfth day. In the case of a child's death, it is observed on the fourth day. The term *ghasu* implies complete purification involving performance of *Hom*. Among the Jyapoos of Panga, it is more popularly known as *Sudhiya(n)*\*. Without the performance of *ghasu* rite *Sraddha* cannot take place.

The *Ghasu* rite involves the employment of a Brahmin or a Gubhaju priest. A sacred fire-place known as *Yagna Kund* is made with five unburnt bricks at the spot where the person had breathed his last. The priest takes his seat in front of the *Hawan Kund* facing himself towards the west. Between him and the *Hawan-Kund*, there are three deities — the Sun, the Moon and the *Bau* (representation of ghost) in one row. Just a little further, and to the right of the priest, there are three other deities, namely, Lokeshwar,<sup>a</sup> Kumari and Bhairava in a row from west to east. Lokeshwar is represented in the usual way by a mixture of paddy and rice with a betel-nut on it, Kumari, by a long-necked jug known as *Anti*, filled with

\* 'Sudhiya(n)' is a corrupt form of the Nepali word 'Shudha'.

<sup>a</sup> This deity is required only in the case of Buddha-Margi Newars.

liquor; and Bhairava, by another type of pot known as *Khaye-Kuri* containing the traditional Newari rice-beer, *Tho(n)*. Facing the priest, there are nine leaf-plates placed around the *Hawan Kund* in a semi-circle, each containing a special type of paddy called *Swan-Wa*, *gahat* pulse (a kind of linnaea), black soyabean, red *mass*-pulse, rice, mustard, black *til*, barley and peas. All these together are called *Bee-Bha*. A third series of deities is represented by Jogini, Ganesh and Agni, the fire-god. These deities are symbolised, respectively, by a heap of paddy, a *Sukunda* and a dish containing a burning wick. The firewood used for the *Hom* or *Hawan* is known as *Sonsi* and *Shila (n)* in Newari language.

To begin with the description of the *Ghasu* rite, the *Thakali* of the *Dewali Guthi* worships in order, the Sun, Lokeshwar and Guru-Bhajra-Satwa. Among the Siva-margi Newars, Lokeshwar and Guru Bajra Satwa are replaced by some Hindu deities. After such worship, the leaf representing the sun is taken to a place where a beam of sun rays can fall on it. Then follows the *Puja-Sankalpo*. A copper-pot containing the *puja* items is touched by all the relatives while the priest makes invocation by chanting some formula. After this, the *Pancha-gabhya* ritual follows.

Then the *Thakali* worships collectively all the gods of the Valley. The next item of ritual is the kindling of the sacred-fire and the performance of *Homa* by the priest. During the *Homa*, all the relatives take their seats in order of their social seniority, the *Thakali* occupying the first seat and the youngest member the last. The priest gives a long thread to be held together by them. When the *Homa* is completed, a little of clarified butter is melted in a plate over the sacred fire. The relatives who are present at the moment have to see their images in the melted ghee. Then the daughter or the wife of the priest (if the deceased is a female) is worshipped by

the *Thakali Naki*; her hair is combed and vermilion is applied on her forehead. Then the *Thakali-Naki* presents her with a set of articles which include clothes, bangles, a pair of shoes and a mattress. If the deceased is a male, the priest himself or his son is presented with all kinds of articles that would have been required by the deceased in his lifetime.

The next item in the function is the feast to be held on the spot. But before it begins, a share of the feast, along with some clothes, is offered to a man of *Kusle* caste. The *Thakali Naki* offers him these in a dish and for this particular occasion he is called *Twa-Jna*. As soon as the *Thakali-Naki* proceeds with the dish toward the *Kusle*, the ceremonial weeping is resumed, but it is stopped on her return. The food given to the *Kusle* is interpreted as the share of the soul of the deceased. In this connection, it may be pointed out that according to Hodgson<sup>1</sup> the Newars in the former days used to mix a piece of brain of the deceased in a sweet-meat to be eaten by a Bhat Brahmin on the eleventh day. It was hard for me to come across such a practice among the Newars. Now-a-days it is not the Bhat Brahmin but the *Kusle* who accepts the death gift on the eleventh day. Not even a single Newar had any knowledge about what Hodgson has stated. But a similar practice exists among the present Gorkha royal family of Nepal. May be that it was the practice among the royal Mallas only, which has now been passed on to the present royal family.

The feast which is to follow is arranged in the traditional manner. The feast items include as usual, *bajee*, buffalo's meat, ginger, radishes and different kinds of boiled vegetable-seeds. Among these, peas, liquor and *Tho(n)* are essential. The priest gives a lead to be followed by the *Thakali*, and then all others begin eating.

The participants in the feast do not leave their respective seats till the ritual of 'washing the hands' is



completed. One of the consanguines, who is appointed for this purpose specifically and who does not participate in the feast comes with a jug of water and a big copper vessel known as *bata*. He is offered *Samai* to eat. Having eaten the *samai*, the person starts performing the ritual of 'washing the hands' of those who participate in the feast. While doing this he first attends to the priest, then to the *Thakali*, the *Thakali-Naki*, the chief mourner and so on. The last person whose hands he washes is the youngest one among them. Then he starts with the ritual of collecting the leaf-dishes in which the members had eaten. This time, he starts from the opposite end. The priest then worships the copper vessel containing the leaf-dishes after which they are thrown away at the *Chhwasa*. When the person returns from the *Chhwasa*, he does not enter the house straightaway, but stands outside the entrance and undergoes purification. For such purpose, the *Thakali-Naki* pours water to enable him to wash his hands. Then she gives him two pieces of raw flesh which, after having been pretended to be eaten, he throws away. Only then does he enter the house. On his return, the participants in the feast rise up and the ceremony is over for the day.

The next important ceremony, and also the last, concerning death is the *Sraddha*. The actual date for its observance varies from caste to caste. Among the Siva Margi high caste Newars, it takes place generally on the thirteenth day. The Buddhist Vanra priests observe it on the seventh day itself. For performing the *Sraddha*, the priest brings sand from the river, out of which he makes a square mound (*Mandap*) on the ground where the *Sraddha* is to be performed. The chief mourner takes his seat in front of the mound facing the south. The priest sits on the other side of the sand platform, facing the chief mourner. On the square mound of sand are

represented the following deities so far as the Buddhamargi Newars are concerned:

Gauri Mata, Bairochan, lamp, Dharma, Buddha, Sangha, Sukhawati, Lokeshwar and Mandal.

Besides, there are seven copper vessels known as *Argha*. Each of these contains water, cow's-milk, buffalo's milk, curd, ghee, honey, rice-beer and liquor, respectively. The usual symbols of Bhairava, Jogini and Guheshwari are also included in the *Sraddha* ceremony. On the sand platform, there is also a place reserved for a *chaitya* made of barley flour, which is known as *goja*.

The *Puja* begins duly instructed by the priest, after which a *chaitya* of barley-flour is placed on the *mandap* and worshipped.

The offering of *pindas* then follows. The *Pindas* are made of barley flour and offered to the souls of the dead upto five generations. Also a *pinda* is reserved for a person who has died childless. The person is not named. The *pindas* are then worshipped by all the *Fukee* members present. This rite is called *kee-ga-teene-gu*. Afterwards, a betel-leaf, containing lime but no *khair* (cutch) is offered to the *pindas*. The chief mourner then addresses the soul of the dead with folded hands saying, "Thau(n) ya Dine Ba-ya \* nama; pinda udharayaye tena sochita ka vijyama, Chandra, Surya Sakshi; dharti-mata, guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, go-mata sakshi; Chaitya sakshi." It means: "I am offering oblation to my dead father on this day; all of you please come to accept my offerings; witnesses are the moon, the sun, the earth, guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, mother cow, and the Chaitya". All of the consanguineal relatives then bow down before the *pindas* to show their respect and offer coins. The priest applies *Sinha* to the forehead of each of the partici-

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\* If it is the father who is dead the word 'Baya' is used and if mother, 'Maya' and if any other relative, the appropriate term of the relationship is used.

pating male members, the women helping themselves. The priest then receives coins from each of them.

The *pindas* are then taken to the river and immersed in it. After the completion of the *pinda*-offering the ceremonial feast follows in the same manner as in the case of *Ghasu* ceremony.

The *Sraddha* is repeated on the completion of forty-five days, six months, one year and two years. These are respectively known as *Latya*, *Khula Dakila* and *Nidan-Tithi*. Apart from these, there are monthly *Sraddhas* for a year following the death. These are known as *Lapya(n)Thaye-gu*. These monthly *Sraddhas* are performed at the various *Tirthas* and they have already been described elsewhere. From the thirteenth day onward the chief mourner observes *Barkhi* for a year. During this period, he has to wear a white dress without linings.

When a *Thakali* dies, a special treatment is given to the disposal of his dead body. His corpse is carried in a procession in a sitting posture. The procession is accompanied by different types of music befitting the honour of a chief. When the procession is on the move, coins are scattered and vermilion is sprinkled over the bier on the way. All the members of the lineage group accompany the funeral procession. A person who has been initiated through the *Burha Junko* is given a similar treatment on his death.

Though cremation is the only accepted mode of disposing of the dead, it is not without an exception. The *Kusle* caste does not have the practice of cremation. They bury their dead and deposit some salt in the grave. Burial is also resorted to in the case of an abnormal death. Thus a person who dies of small-pox or other epidemics is not burnt but buried; infants not older than six months are given a burial. A girl who dies during her period of *Barha* is buried inside the house as stated earlier.

It is hard to say whether the Newars originally practised the custom of burying the dead, though the surrounding tribes — the Rai, and Limbu<sup>2</sup>, the Gurung<sup>3</sup> and the Tharu<sup>4</sup> are known to have practised it. Some hint is, no doubt, indicated of such a practice by the narration of a tradition. A Jyapoo Newar from Panga related a tradition which shows that they did not cremate their dead. As the story runs, in the former days when a person died in the Panga village, his corpse was simply left on the ground at Bhajangal, the village-site for cremation. During the night a *Daitya* used to come there with two *cha(n)wars* — one black and the other white. With the waving of the white *cha(n)war* the *daitya* would revive the dead person and make him work for him. Then he would wave the black *cha(n)war* and make him again dead. Finally, he would consume the corpse.

Once it so happened that a prince from Gorkha visited the Valley and came to the village of Panga. A girl of sixteen had died, whose corpse was lying uncremated. The prince rebuked the inhabitants of Panga for not having the custom of cremation among them. Then the prince was told about the *Daitya* who, it was believed, would be enraged, were the corpse to be cremated. The prince thereupon offered to kill the *Daitya*. He waited near the corpse for the *Daitya* to come at night. When the *Daitya* came, he was challenged by the prince for a fight. In the fight the *daitya* was killed. The prince returned to his country. Since then the people of Panga, it is said, started cremating their deads.

The above mentioned story only suggests that non-cremation was once in existence among the inhabitants of Panga. It, however, does not show that burial was a practice in vogue in the former days. Although nothing positive can be said about the earlier practice of burial,

there is some further suggestion as shown by the burial of the bones. Referring to the numerous *chaityas* of Kathmandu, Dr. Oaldfield<sup>5</sup> observes: "Some of these are dedicatory, but the great majority of them are of a funeral character, having been erected to the memory of the deceased". Such funerary monuments are not erected now-a-days, though fragments of the bones are interred in a *chaitya* of sand and Sraddha is performed to them as already stated.

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## 6. CASTE ORGANISATION

**C**ASTE is the principal basis of social hierarchy among the Newars. Irrespective of whether an individual is the follower of Buddhism (Buddha-margi) or Hinduism (Siva-margi), he must be born into his caste. Caste cuts across religion and brings both the religious sections of the Newars under one single scheme of hierarchy. In theory the Newar caste organisation is based on the same Hindu principle which stipulates the five-fold division of society, headed by the Brahmin and to be followed in order by the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, the Sudra and the untouchable. It represents the former Hindu society of the valley of Kathmandu, which has, however, become modified through the historical process covering a span of several centuries.

Though we hear of *Varna* and 'Jati' from the very early times, it is only in the 14th Century that caste was organised on a uniform basis in Nepal. It was King Jayastithi Malla who, with the help of five Brahmins from the Indian plains, organised the society of the Valley into four *Varnas* and 64 castes<sup>1</sup> on the basis of hereditary occupations and geneologies. Brahmins were divided into three classes — Pancha gauda, Panch-dravida and Jaisi. The last mentioned caste was held to be not

sacred. The Sudras were divided into two main divisions — Jyapoo with its 32 sub-divisions and the Kumhal (Potter) with its four sub-divisions. Three castes were allowed to carry swords, wear the sacred thread like the Brahmin<sup>2</sup> and observe ten rites (Samskaras)<sup>3</sup>. These were the Patra Vamsa Thakut,<sup>4</sup> the Thakuri and the Thakur and they were clearly of Kshatriya order along with the royal Mallas themselves. The Joshi and Achar, though allowed to wear the sacred thread, were enjoined to marry the Shresthas.<sup>5</sup> Therefore they were of Vaisya status with the part privilege of Brahmin. There were a number of artisan groups between them and the Jyapoo. Below the Jyapoo came in order several castes of unclean order to be followed by the untouchable group.

While making such gradations, hereditary occupations, marriage circles and ceremonial purity were the primary factors which governed the decision of king Jayastithi Malla who relied on the Hindu law books as the ultimate source. The priestly order of the Buddhists, Vandyas or Vares was recognised as of the status of sanyasi and as the descendant of Brahmin and Kshatriya Buddhist monks who abandoned their vow of celibacy to become family-men.<sup>5a</sup>

These various castes were enjoined to follow some specific rules pertaining to occupation, residence, dress, house and a number of social and ritual matters.<sup>6</sup> And there were some additional rules to be observed by the low and untouchable castes as a mark of their unclean statuses.<sup>7</sup>

With the conquest of the Valley in 1769, the leadership for preserving Hindu traditions in Nepal passed on to the victorious Gorkhas who looked down upon the vanquished, recognised their own Brahmin and Kshatriya orders and created a double order between them and the Vaisya, to be accorded to two mangloid tribes — Gurung and Magar, who formed along with them the military



castes of Nepal. Though on secular grounds, the higher castes among the vanquished who spoke Newari and followed the Newari cultural traditions, were recognised as the Nepalese counterpart of the Indian Vaisya, they were considered ceremonially as Sudra owing to their traditional practices relating to dietary, marriage and divorce. Some of the specific grounds which influenced the attitude of the Gorkhas toward the natives of their newly acquired territory included the use of liquor and buffalo meat both for ritual and domestic consumption and the privilege of Newar women for divorce and re-marriage. These are still the fundamental grounds on which the Nepali speaking group distinguishes itself from the Newars. On the whole the Newars are treated by Gorkhas as of one caste in relation to themselves. When we take into account the broader Hindu society of Nepal as led by the Gorkhas, the different ethnic groups in order of their social statuses include: Upadhya Brahmin, Kumai Brahmin, Jaisi Brahmin, and Deva Bhaju Brahmin; Kshatriya groups – Thakuri, Chhetri (former Khasa) and Khatri; double order – Magar, Gurung; Vaisya – Newar high castes; Sudra – Limbu and Rai, lower caste Newars, Sunwar, Murmi, Tharu; Untouchable – Parbatia or Nepali-speaking untouchables and Newar untouchables.

As far as the internal caste organisation of the Newars is concerned, there are numerous castes and sub-castes. They are differentiated from each other on the basis of their hereditary callings and restrictions on food and marriage. Normally, a person lower in caste accepts food and a wife from the caste above him though it is not the other way round. But a person of higher caste can keep a woman from the lower caste as wife as long as the woman does not belong to the untouchable group. Children born of such women either take an intermediate caste position between that of the father and mother or belong to the caste of the mother. Such an issue is designated in Newari

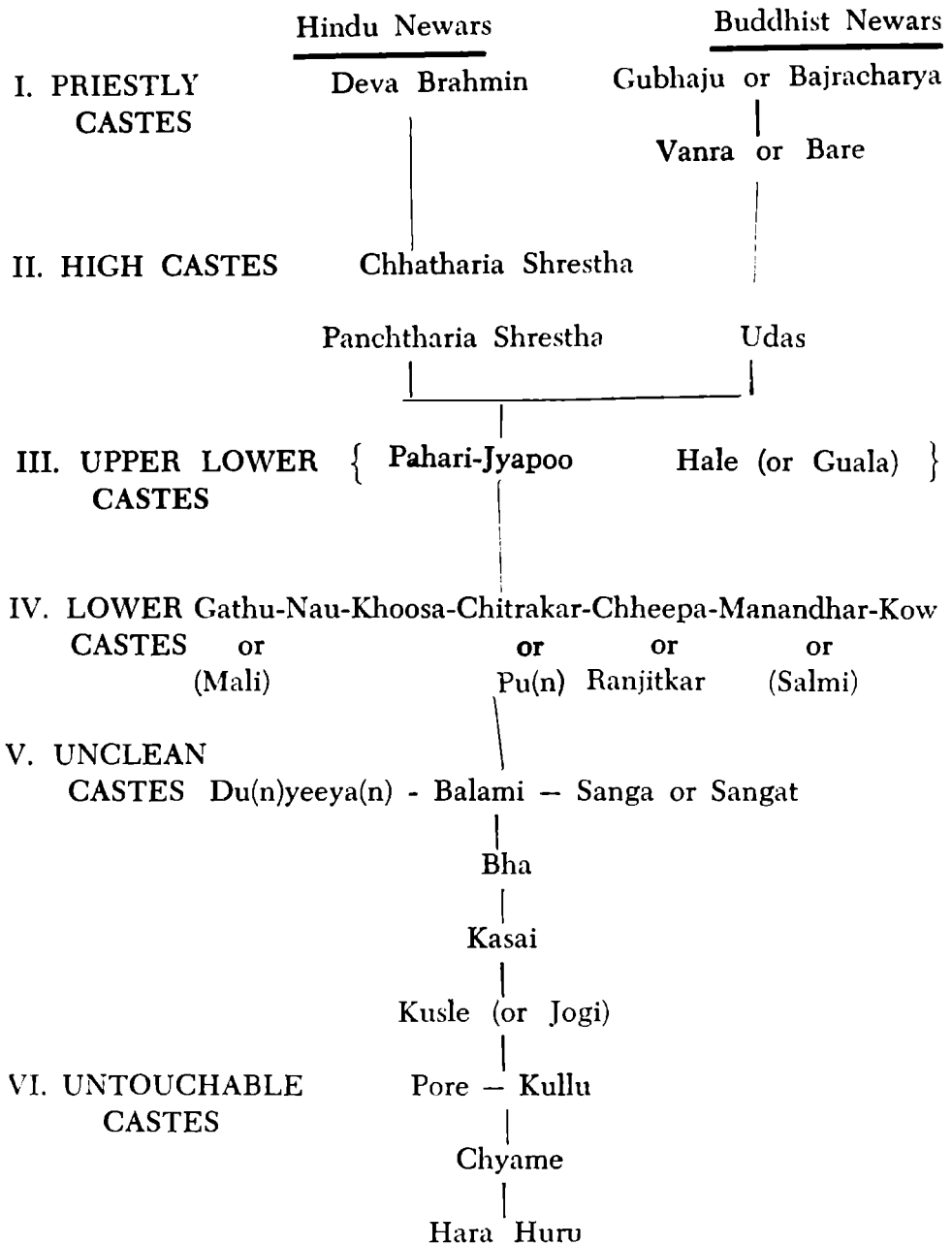
as *Lava*. A lower caste wife, however, does not enjoy the ritual and social position as is accorded to a caste wife. She is neither allowed to enter the family kitchen nor admitted to the worship of the lineage-deity of her husband. For all ceremonial purposes she and her children are outside her husband's lineage-group.

A person found guilty of keeping an untouchable concubine is permanently degraded to the caste of the woman. During my stay in the Valley, I came across a person of the Buddhist priestly caste, who was reported to have become a Pore by keeping a Pore woman.

Regarding food the Newars observe three criteria of restriction for making caste-distinctions. It is the ritual consideration of food which should be taken to govern the caste distinctions and not the food in its secular aspects: For people of the different castes freely take their meals in modern restaurants and hotels of Kathmandu. From the ritual point of view, as regards food, we can distinguish three groups. The larger group or the smoking group the members of which can smoke from the same *hookka*; the inner group or the feast groups the members of which can eat together at a feast<sup>8</sup> in which a special kind of meat dish, *Thalthale* is served; and finally the innermost group or the rice-group, the members of which, can eat boiled rice touched by each other and can also enter the kitchen. This group consists only of relatives. Whenever we speak of interdining among the Newars, we have to bear in mind these distinctions clearly.

The following scheme of caste hierarchy is generally accepted in the Valley or Kathmandu. However, it may be remarked that from the view-point of a particular caste, it may be disputed. The reasons for the present gradations are amply given while dealing subsequently with the ethnographic descriptions of the various castes.

## NEWAR CASTE-HIERARCHY



*Note* : Castes on the same horizontal plane are regarded as of equal social status.

By priestly castes we mean those caste-groups the members of which can become spiritual teacher, *Guru* and *Purohita* and officiate in the Newar social and reli-

gious ceremonies. Of such sacred castes, there are two — Deva Bhaju Brahmin priest, and the Buddhist priest, Vanra.\* The former ranks higher than the latter. This helps us to distinguish them from some of the other castes which fulfil some kind of priestly functions, but do not enjoy the sacred status.

The Deo-Bhaju is the priest of the Sivamargi Newars. It occupies the highest rank in the Newar social hierarchy. Some of the appellations given to them are: Upadhya, Rajopadhya, Deo-Brahmu and Guru-Baje. The term Rajopadhya is derived from their former role as the royal priest to the Malla Kings. Deo-Brahmin and Guru-Baje both mean a spiritual teacher.

According to one of their traditions, as narrated to me by a Deo-Bhaju, their ancestors came originally from Kannauj. It is said that first, they came to Simrawngarha (in the *tarrai*), where from they were brought into the Valley by the royal Mallas to act as their priest. One of their ancestors, it is said, went to Western Nepal and thus became the ancestor of the present Upadhya Brahmins of the Gorkha community. At present they have three exogamous gotras — Gargi of Madhyandini branch, Kaushiki of Madhyandini branch, and Bharadwaj of Tripurbara-Madhyandini branch. They are also split into two endogamous sections — Deo-Bhaju and Lakhe. The latter is considered to be progeny of Brahmin widows and is socially inferior. Dr. Oaldfield<sup>9</sup> had mentioned Upadea, Bhaju and Lavarju as the three sub-divisions of the Deo-Bhaju. Such sub-divisions were said to be based on the difference of occupations. The first section was the priest, the second, spiritual adviser to the sick, and the third, described as inferior Upadhya Brahmin who acted as the priest to the lower caste. At present there are only the above two sub-divisions.

Among the Brahmins of Nepal, the Deo-Bhajus do not

\* It is pronounced बाँड़ा

enjoy an equal social status with the Parbatiya Brahmins. Toward them all the sections of Parbatiya Brahmins behave like a closed community. The main ground for refusing to accept the Deo-Bhaju into their fold is that they (Deo-Bhaju) are the priests to the Newars whose domestic ceremonies are similar to those of the Sudras. An additional reason is purported to be the influence of tantrism on them, involving use of liquor. The Deo-Bhajus also, on their part, refuse to recognise the superior status of the Gorkha Brahmins. On the contrary, they look down upon them on the ground that most of these Brahmins do not hesitate to work as farmers and that in the majority of cases, they do not follow the profession of learning.

The Deo-Bhajus are at present a dwindling community. One of the Deo-Bhaju Brahmins gave me to understand that his caste found it hard to obtain a wife since its population was small. It is now difficult for them to adhere to the Brahminic restriction of marriage on seven degrees of consanguineal relationship. The position would have been better if marriage alliances could be effected with the Parbatia Brahmins. The latter have so far declined to consider such a proposal. The only alternative left open to the Deo-Bhajus now is either to lower down the degrees of marriage restrictions on the mother's side or start taking wives from the Newar castes below them. Consequently, they have fallen back on the first alternative and are said to have brought down the prohibited degrees on the mother's side to three. It is even then hard for a Deo-Bhaju widower to obtain a second wife. They have formed a council to regulate their society. Scarcity of girls of marriageable age has given rise to the practice of exchange-marriage. It was stated by the same Deo-Bhaju informant that marriage was easy if a Deo-Bhaju had a sister to offer in exchange for his bride.

Next to Deo-Bhaju comes the Bajracharya who is an orthodox Buddhist. His high status ranking next to Deo-

Bhaju is recognised by all the Newar castes. It claims descent from the ancient Brahmin and Kshatriya monks, who were said to have been forced by Shankaracharya to enter into family life.<sup>10</sup> The fact that until half a century ago it used to accept Brahmin boys into its caste<sup>11</sup> shows the recognition by it of the relatively higher status of the Brahmin caste. Its caste name is derived from the Vajrayan sect of Buddhism and is distinguished by its hereditary right to handle *Bajra* (a Buddhist symbol of thunderbolt) and *Ghanta* (Bell). An alternative term Gubhaju indicates its priestly status; perhaps it is derived from the term *Guru-Baje*. A Gubhaju by his failure to undergo the proper initiation known as *Acha-Luigu* is relegated to the status of Buddhacharya who can do all the priestly functions except the handling of *Bajra* and *Ghanta*. This not only shows that the right to become a priest is determined by birth and by the initiation into *Acha-Luigu*, but it also indicates that among the Bajracharyas there is an inferior section arising from the failure to undergo the initiation rite of *Acha-Luigu*. However inter-marriage can take place between these two priestly sections.

Next to Gubhaju or Bajra-Charya ranks the Vanra or Bare (goldsmith and bronze worker). Though it is also regarded as a sacred order, a Bare cannot be a priest. Another term used for this caste is *Sakya Vikshu* which is derived from the fact that originally its ancestors were the followers of Sakya Sinha (Guatama Buddha). This term is more currently applied to Vanras of Patan. This caste is differentiated from the Gubhaju only by reason of the latter being the priest. Although in theory the Gubhaju and Vanra can freely interdine and intermarry, I am told that the former marries the latter's girl, but does not reciprocate.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Oaldfield<sup>13</sup> has recorded nine sub-divisions of this caste, including the Bajra-Charya or Gubhaju. But many of them were on

enquiry found to be non-existent. Rather say, people are not aware of them at all. Thus it appears that with the disappearance of their hereditary callings such sub-divisions have either merged themselves together or become extinct.

As a cultural group the Vanra has the closest affinity with the Udas caste which ranks below it when the Buddhist castes are taken separately into consideration. Oaldfield<sup>14</sup> had mentioned that the Vanra did not inter-dine with the Udas. The tradition among the Vanra and Udas, however, does not substantiate the above remark. This writer's own enquiry revealed that the Vanra and Udas used to inter-dine, but this was followed by a long break owing to the closer spiritual association of the latter with the Tibetan monks. The demand by the Udas that the Vanra should inter-dine with them was going on during the present writer's stay in the Valley. Such a demand was based on the ground that the Vanra had always dined with the Udas in the past. The long standing dispute came to an end through the intervention of a Bajra Charya who was then the Private Secretary of His Majesty the King of Nepal. The Vanra now inter-dines with the Udas, it is reported.

Below the priestly castes come the three caste groups in order of their social statuses. These are the Chhatharia, Panchtharia and Udas. The Chhatharia call themselves as the higher Shrestha<sup>15</sup> to distinguish themselves from the Panchtharia who also assume the surname of Shrestha. If the Vanra priest is excluded, the Chhatharia caste occupies the second order analogous to the second order of the Hindu society. This group comprises many sub-divisions claiming diverse ethnic origins. It includes all the former Kshatriya and Vaishya Newars whom Hodgson had placed above the Shresthas. All these sections eat food cooked by the Deo-Bhaju Brahmin but do not accept food from the hands of the Vanras, though the latter are accepted as priests by many of their sections who are

Buddhists. They intermarry and interdine, but do not accept food or a wife from the Panchtharia caste which ranks below them.

How the term Chhatharia came to be applied to these people is difficult to ascertain. One of the members of the Chhatharia caste told the writer that this term was derived from the occupation which they followed in the past. 'Chha' means in Nepali six and 'thari' means counsellor. Therefore, six-tharia refers to the six counsellors in the court of Malla Kings and to them is attributed the ancestry of the Chhatharia Newars. It is also suggested that the term is derived from the term *Kshatri* as applied to the second order of Hindu caste. In the olden days of Malla Kings, there was, as mentioned earlier, definitely a Kshatriya order apart from the Royal Mallas themselves. Traces of this caste can still be found in the present Thaco-ju-ju, Amatya and Rathor clans falling under this head. The Chhatharia Newars are split into a number of sub-groups. These are (1) Malla, (2) Thaco-ju-ju, (3) Joshi, (4) Achar, (5) Pradhan, (6) Amatya, (7) Raj-Bhandari and (8) Munshi or Kayastha. These sections interdine and intermarry among themselves.

The Mallas claim to be the descendants of the former Malla Kings of Nepal. Formerly, when they were the rulers of the Valley, they were acknowledged as *Surya-Vamsi* Kshatriya. Prior to their advent in the Valley they were known to have flourished in the western part of Nepal. In one of the inscriptions of Lichhavi King Man Deo of Nepal, Mallas are mentioned as inhabiting the West of the Valley across the river Gandaki,<sup>16</sup> and as having been defeated by the former in a battle.

Mallas were known in India from the very early times. Manu makes an allusion to them along with Nichhavis (Lichhavis).<sup>17</sup> Kautilya (400 B.C.) describes them as a group of petty rulers.<sup>18</sup> Levi<sup>19</sup> identifies the present Male-Bung in Western Nepal with Male-Bhumi (place of



Malla) from where they appear to have migrated to the Valley of Nepal. The Nepali speaking Malla subcaste may not perhaps be different in blood from the Newar Malla group, which however was merged into the Newar community.

At present the Newar Mallas are very few. For a long time they were said to have refused to intermarry with the other Chhatharia Newars and to have retained their Kshatriya status. But later they went the same way as their predecessors, the Lichhavis and the Thakuris, and are now bracketed along with the Newars.

Thaco-ju-ju means Thakuri King. In Newari the term 'ju-ju' is applied to designate a King. This appellation accords well with the claim by the Thaco-ju-ju sub-caste as the descendant of the former Vaishya Kshatriya Kings of the Valley. During the reign of the Mallas they continued to exert powerful influence on the politics of the Valley. With the fall of their masters they lost even the small glories which were left to them since the days when they ceased to become the kings of the different principalities in the Valley.

The Thaco-ju-ju sub-caste is mostly found in the towns of Bhaktapur, Patan and Kathmandu. In Kathmandu town their principal concentration is at Bhimsen-Tham and Thamel. They are very few in number. Their association with the local festival of Bhimsen has been noted elsewhere. It is probable that their original home was in Do-Lakha from where, as the tradition tells, they moved into the Valley bringing with them the cult of Bhimsen.

The Joshi section (Astrologer) of Chhatharia is partly Brahmin and partly non-Brahmin. Its hereditary occupation is to expound the 'shastras' and assist the Deo-Brahmins in all ceremonies and religious activities of the Newars. It may be mentioned that Hodgson and Oaldfield both agree in assigning them the rank of Vaishyas<sup>20</sup>. Hamilton

describes them as the progeny of a Brahmin and a Newar female, and terms them as Jaisi<sup>21</sup>. Their own tradition, as was reported to me, however, describes them as the descendants of Brahmin widows. A tradition in support of their similar origin is also claimed by the Jaisi Brahmin of the Gorkha group. This writer found in the hilly regions on the Western extremity of the Valley a large population of the Nepali-speaking Jaisi Brahmin which belongs to the Gorkha group. The identical traditions of origin of these two different communities suggest some affinity between them. The present differentiation between them may be accepted with due caution to be the result of assimilation of one group into the Newar culture, and the other into the Gorkha culture. We have already noted a similar branching off of the former Mallas into two different cultural groups, the Gorkha and the Newar.

Likewise, the Achar or Achaju also claims originally to be Brahmin. It is said to have been degraded following the acceptance of non-Brahminic ways of life and intermarriage with the Shresthas. According to their religious avocation, the Achar is divided into a) Karma-Charya, ii) Bhootacharya, iii) Pitha-Charya, and iv) Guruva-Charya. All of them are associated with esoteric cults and are mostly concerned with the worship of various types of *Shakti* deities. Tradition asserts that they came with the Karnatic prince Nanyadeo (about 10th Century) to Simrawn Garha. When Hari Singh Deo, a descendant of Nanyadeo, brought goddess Talleju into the Valley, he is said to have brought also his priest, the Achar, who perhaps lost supremacy later with the fresh importation of Panch Dravida and Panch Gauda Brahmins by the Malla Kings in the 14th Century. The fact that their priestly services are still indispensable in every Hindu Newar ceremonial goes to suggest that, as in the case of the Joshi, the Achars were superseded by the later

Brahmins. It may be mentioned that the Gorkha Brahmins have also an Acharya clan among them and the difference between them and the Newar Acharya may be merely a matter of purity in blood.

The term 'Pradhan' speaks of their past role as counsellors in the court of Newar Rajas. Members of this caste assume now-a-days the surname of Pradhan or Pradhananga. They, however, refuse to recognise the Newars of similar surname from Darjeeling as their equal on the contention that the latter are not pure-blooded since it is the practice in that place to assume the title of Pradhan by all the Newars. The Pradhan is divided into Sivamargi and Buddhamargi and about fifty Buddhamargi Pradhan families are still to be found in the Thamel tole of Kathmandu. Religion, however does not constitute a bar to intermarriage between these two sections.

The term Amatya is said to owe its origin to their former occupational status as ministers and army generals in the days of Newar kings, when people of this class occupied the sixth rank in the Kshatriya order. Some of the present Amatya people claim to be Rathod Rajput. Persons of this section are mostly traders, government servants and teachers.

Raj Bhandari derives its name from their hereditary occupation as store-keepers in the days of Newar Kings. They used to act and still act as cooks at the Talleju temple. In the former days they were given the status of Vaishya. Their ancestors are said to have come with Hari Singh Deo as stewards of goddess Talleju.

The Munshi claims to have been descended from the Kayasthas who were brought into the Valley as scribes. A large number of them are still reported to be living in the vicinity of Bhatgaon where they are known as Kasaju or Kayastha. They generally prefer to be employed in Government services. It is the only caste among the

Newars in whose wedding the bridegroom must accompany the marriage-procession.

The above Chhatharia sub-castes of Newars are split into numerous clans. It is not possible to give all their clan names. The present writer could collect a few clan names which are as follows :

- (1) Mhaske (Giver of mass pulse);
- (2) Kasu-Ju (Kayastha);
- (3) Chipalu (salt and ginger);
- (4) Phai (giver of ram);
- (5) Kailha;
- (6) Raj Lawat;
- (7) Gongu ju (hen);
- (8) Bij Kuchha (place of the house);
- (9) Lakhe (demon);
- (10) Khau (cold);
- (11) Basi (five-hooded snake);
- (12) Sain-ju (Bhotia);
- (13) Chakhu(n) (a bird).

It can be seen that the few clan names we have are of many types. Some of them are based on occupation, some indicate ethnic inter-mixture, while others are the names of objects, chiefly relating to various kinds of food. All the above mentioned Chhatharia Newars are entitled to wear the sacred thread (Janeo).

It would be interesting to compare the present Chhatharia Newars with the group of castes which ranked as the high castes during the 15th Century. This will help us to know the former status of some of the present Chhatharia Shresthas. In the historical list of King Jayasthiti Malla, the high castes were graded in the following order<sup>22</sup> :

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Thakur (Probably it referred to the Mallas themselves); | 3. Joshi;    |
| 2. Thakuri;  | 4. Bharo;    |
|  | 5. Shrestha; |
|  | 6. Amatya;   |

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 7. Kayastha;        | 11. Karma Charya;     |
| 8. Patra Vansha;    | 12. Shiva Charya, and |
| 9. Thakut;          | 13. Pitha Charya.     |
| 10. Gubhaju Charya; |                       |

Of these, the first, second, fifth and seventh were clearly Kshatriyas of different gradations. Joshi, Bharo, Shrestha and the different types of Acharyas and Kayasthas were non-Kshatriyas. Now the amalgamation of all these diverse people into a single endogamous body is the result of historical process. That these people were migrants from India is confirmed by their traditions. With the shortage of women among them, they perhaps had to marry women from the lower ranks. After a period of time they became one single status-group.

The term Panch-tharia is of recent innovation and is employed to designate a group of Shresthas who are **not** considered pure-blooded. Under this caste Hodgson<sup>23</sup> included many sub-castes which were said to be of mixed progeny. He noted that there were 14 sub-divisions including the Shrestha proper, and he ascribes the origins of these to the various unions of Brahmin, Kshatriya and these to the various unions of Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya. Hamilton<sup>24</sup> noted three main divisions, namely, Siva, Bagul and Swal. At present there are innumerable classes among them. They include various classes who are the descendants of the Chhatharia Newars by union either with the Shrestha or the lower caste women. There are also the Joshi and Achar sections among them and they are the descendants of the Chhatharia Joshi and Achar fathers and lower caste mothers. The tradition that the Newars have descended from the Nairs of Malabar, who were Brahmaputra Kshatriya is more popular among them.

These Panchtharia Newars have numerous class names which are derived in the majority of cases from the names

of the different kinds of food. Some of the clan names collected by the present writer are as follows :

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Shrestha                                     | 11. Dhau (Curd)       |
| 2. Bhaju  | 12. Duwal             |
| 3. Deya-ju                                      | 13. Tepah             |
| 4. Naya-ju                                      | 14. Dhau-Bhani        |
| 5. Sakha-Karmi                                  | 15. Singh             |
| 6. Sya-baji (a kind of flattened rice)          | 16. Nhya-Chhola       |
| 7. Chhoyala (a kind of meat preparation)        | 17. Wa (cake)         |
| 8. Pai(n)-Baji (another kind of flattened rice) | 18. Mhukha (Mushroom) |
| 9. Bhuti (another kind of meat preparation)     | 19. Makah (Monkey)    |
| 10. Haku Masya (a variety of paddy)             | 20. Them-Shrestha     |
|   | 21. Joshi             |
|   | 22. Chhipi            |
|   | 23. Achar             |
|   | 24. Mulmi             |
|   | 25. Baide (physician) |

Of the above, the status of Them-Shrestha and Chhipi is disputed. At times they are denied the rank of a Shrestha. It may be mentioned that Hodgson had placed the Them Shrestha even below the Jyapoo and Pihi and described them as an offshoot of the latter.<sup>25</sup> Their own tradition of origin ascribes them to have come from Do-Lakha (East of Valley). The comparative higher social position now enjoyed by the Them-Shrestha since the days of Hodgson indicates how the rise in economic status has led to a corresponding rise in their social status.

There is a lot of confusion among the various sub-groups of the Panchtharia with regard to gradations of social status. Unless marriage alliance is established none of these interdines with the other. The social gradation is observed according to the caste of the mother. In this respect the Shresthas have adopted the Parbatia rule of descent under which the mixed progeny is given an intermediate caste status, instead of relegating its caste

to that of its mother, as is the practice among the majority of the Newars.

Another group of the high caste Newars is the metal-working caste called Udas. The term Udas is sought to be explained in a variety of ways. It is taken to mean *Upasak* or householder. It is said that when the Vanras were ascetics, the Udas were the people who represented the Buddhist section of the highest caste in the Valley. It, however, now includes a variety of people fused into one through many centuries of intermarriages. The main characteristic of this caste is that its sub-groupings are purely based on hereditary callings.

The Udas do not recognise that they rank lower than the Shresthas. In fact they claim that they are on a par with the Chhatharia, thus claiming even a higher status than that of the Panchtharia. As between the Panchtharia and this community there is complete restriction imposed by both sides on interdining and intermarriage. But it is reported that the Udas accept into their caste-fold a mixed progeny of their women by Chhatharia men and eat food cooked by such progeny, while there is no reciprocation from the other side.

The Udas are mainly concentrated in the town of Kathmandu; sparsely found in Patan; and not at all in Bhatgaon. The chief localities which they inhabit in Kathmandu town are: Nardevi, Asan, Ithum Bahal, Marutole, Mahadeo Loni, Te-Bahal and Kel-tole. Each of these toles is occupied by a particular sub-division of them and represents the early colonisation of the different artisan groups before their amalgamation into Udas caste.

The following are the present sub-divisions among the Udas caste :

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1. Tula dhar | : Trader and merchant,                            |
| 2. Vania     | : Trader and Merchant, chiefly dealing in spices. |

3. Sikarmi : Wood worker and house-builder.
4. Marhi-Karmi : Confectioner.
5. Tava or Tamrakar : Worker in copper, brass, gold and silver.
6. Loh(*n*)-Karmi : Worker in stone and ivory.
7. Awa : Brick-and tile-maker.
8. Kansakar or Kasa : Worker in bronze.

All of the above sub-divisions can freely interdine and intermarry and have a great group homogeneity. These terms which are used to designate the sub-divisions are also used as surnames and are indicative of their traditional occupations. About a century ago Brian Hodgson<sup>26</sup> mentioned two more sub-divisions of them. These were Sirha-Khow (Red lead-maker) and Kotaju (Door keeper). I could not, however, come across these two sub-divisions in the contemporary Newar society of the Valley. Such professions can be followed by any person and do not denote any particular caste or sub-caste.

None of the present Udas sections recognises the Tamot (Tamsakar) of Patan as Udas on the ground that the latter eat chicken while the former do not. The Tamot of Patan, it is said, came from Mathura and are also credited by tradition with the construction of the famous Krishna Mandir of that town.

The Udas are a wealthy people, engaged mostly in trades and metal-work. One significant point to note about their trade is that it is mostly with Tibet. They very rarely get out of the Valley for trading purposes, except to the above mentioned country. Although the sub-divisions of Udas indicate occupational groupings they are no longer confined to their hereditary occupations; they take to all sorts of secular professions. On the other hand, many of the occupations, excepting metal-work, are followed by other Newar castes also. For example Marhi-Karmi (Confectioner), Sikarmi (Carpenter), Awa<sup>27</sup>



(brick-maker) groups are also to be found among the Shresthas and Jyapooos and also among several other Newar castes.

As to the origin of Udas caste, there are many versions of tradition. One of these tells that originally it constituted the group of those nine families which refused to follow the caste system. Of such families, there were seven of the Shrestha and one each of Kow (black-smith) and Malla. Another version states that the mixed progeny of a Vanra by union with a Tibetan woman was given the rank of Udas. Even to this day such progeny is included in the Udas caste. This may perhaps explain the trade-connection of the Udas with Tibet. But not all the subdivisions among them may have been in the beginning the result of such wedlocks; for the different hereditary callings followed by its different sections suggest amalgamation into one group of diverse artisan castes who had perhaps migrated from India in the remote days and who had accepted Buddhism. The tradition of origin of the Tamot of Patan town affords a further clue to this. Again the historical list of castes drawn up during the reign of King Jayastithi Malla in the 14th Century shows a Hindu section of Tamot side by side with the Buddhist one, although this section is not mentioned in their respective periods by Hodgson and Oaldfield. Such Hindu Tamots used to employ Brahmin, Joshi and Acharya as their priests.<sup>28</sup> The Patan Tamots were probably Hindus as shown by their connection with the Krishna Mandir. They might have for a long time been unabsorbed into the Udas group owing to the difference of religion between the two sections.

K.P. Chhattopadhyay<sup>29</sup> regards the Udas and the Vanras as people of the same blood, differentiated from each other only by virtue of their migration in different periods of history. He thinks that the Udas were the descendants of the earlier immigrants and are of mixed

blood; and the Vanras, the later people of purer descent. He rejects H.P. Shastri's views<sup>30</sup> that the Udas are the descendants of the householder class (*grihasthas*) from which the former Bandyas clergymen used to be recruited. Chattopadhyay's hypothesis is based on the ground that if the Bandyas were recruited from the Udas caste it scarcely seems possible that on their own downfall they would succeed in forming a rigid group separated from their friends and relations, the Udas. For he thinks that the only difference between the Bandyas and the former grihasthas (householders) was in their celibacy and religious life. Once the rules grew lax and the monks lapsed from their vows such a bar would disappear. He, therefore, suggests that apart from the Udas, there must have been a different class of householders, probably of high status from which the monks used to be recruited. Between these, there could not have been any difference except the limits imposed by monastic rules. With the growing abandonment of the vow of celibacy, he says, these also must have disappeared; and in all probability the former householder class has been amalgamated with the Bandyas. From the above argument of Chattopadhyay, two basic points emerge. That there was in the remote time a householder class which has now merged itself with the Vanras; and that the Udas were the earlier immigrants who were unaccompanied by their women-folk and got mixed up in blood. But these views do not seem to be substantiated at least by the present conditions obtaining in the Valley. If there would have been a separate householder class, apart from the Udas, from which Buddhist monks used to be recruited, there would have been no doubt amalgamation of this class with the monks after the lapse of the vow. Such an amalgamation would have resulted in the two types of residence now owned by the Vanras — One, the monastic type now called the *Bahal* and the other, non-monastic type, to represent the

ancestral homes of the former non-Udas householder class. Looking at the present residential condition of the Vanras and Udas, I find to the best of my knowledge that the former mostly live inside the 'Bahals'. The few Vanras who have their residences outside the 'Bahal' claim that their ancestral residences lay inside the 'Bahals'. Some extraneous circumstances had, however, made them to move out. But once in a year they are reported to go to worship their *Agamas* (Kul deity) in the Bahals which had belonged to them once upon a time. If we accept this fact we have to take it for granted that the Vanras had always been living in the Bahals. This is a situation which cannot be explained by the hypothesis put forward by Chattopadhyay. Besides such residential consideration, we know that every Vanra boy has to undergo the initiation ceremony of 'Bare-Chhwi' which preserves in itself the old memory of the Vanras being ascetics. The current festival of feeding and honouring the Vanras also speaks against the former existence of a non-Udas householder class. In this festival, it is the members of the Udas caste who have to mainly play the host, representing the householder class. When these facts are taken into consideration together with the current practice of calling the Udas as *Upasak* or householder class, we are led to conclude that probably the present Vanra section is not the result of the amalgamation of the former householder class with the degraded monks. The Udas may, therefore, be regarded as the former householder class. The claim by the Udas caste that the Vanras are traditionally bound to inter-dine with them affords an additional evidence. And the Vanras never refute such a claim of the Udas.

Next to Udas ranks the Jyapoo, a cultivator caste, which, however, claims a higher status than the former. The term Jyapoo is compounded of two terms — 'Jya' which means work and *poo* meaning a variety of paddy known as *tauli* paddy. It is said that in former times

only 'tauli' paddy used to be cultivated in the Valley. The term Jyapoo is now applied to a large section of Newars who constitute the predominant agricultural population of the Valley. They are seldom found outside the Valley of Nepal. They are also known by such appellations as 'Kisan' and Maharjan. This caste is regarded as the upper caste Sudras from whose hands the castes ranking above them do not accept cooked food. Their low status is also supported by the historical list of castes drawn up by King Jayasthiti Malla in which they have been mentioned as Sudra.

But though ceremonially the Jyapoo is ranked as Sudra, it is the main source from which the new sub-castes of the Shrestha are recruited. A Jyapoo, when he is rich, assumes the title of Shrestha; he marries into some poor Shrestha family; and after the lapse of a certain time, his family and descendants emerge as the pure Shrestha. The origin of the Mathema sub-caste of the Shrestha is reported to be thus.

The Jyapoo people are at present split into Sat-Sudra and Asat-Sudra. The Sat-Sudra refers to the Hindu Jyapoo of Bhaktapur, while the Asat-Sudra includes the Buddhist Jyapoo. The former is also known as Swa. The Sat-Sudra Jyapoo of Bhaktapur refuse to inter-dine and intermarry with the Jyapoo of other regions, the reason being that the Buddhamargi Jyapoo eat food cooked by the Vanras in addition to their low profession as palanquin-bearers. Apart from these divisions based on religion, the Jyapoo have at present among them the following sub-divisions: i) Suwal, ii) Kumhal, iii) Dungol, iv) Gua or Gual or Hale, and v) Pihi or Pahee. The Suwal, as already stated, is found in the Bhaktapur area; the Kumhal is scattered all over the Valley. The latter is again divided into two groups viz., one which makes red earthenware and the other, black earthenware.

The term Dungol is mainly applied to the Jyapoo of

Patan region. These people are also known by the alternative term Maharjan. The Gaula is found principally in Thankot, Boshan, Macchegaon, Mata Tirtha, Kirtipur, Chaubar and Patan towards the south of the Valley. In Kathmandu these people are known by the appellation of Hale. The Hale is divided into two groups — *Sa-pu* (Cow milker) and *Me-pu* (buffalo milker). It is interesting to note that their chief concentration is in Thankot which figures so much in the traditional history of the Valley as the capital of ancient cow-herds. The Pihī or Pahee is also known as Pahari. They have almost disappeared from the Valley of Kathmandu, and said to be in good numbers in the southern hills at Boshan and Chalikhel. Although Hodgson states that this sub-caste claims to be the original Jyapoo,<sup>31</sup> it is at present regarded to be inferior to the other sections of Jyapoo.

All the sub-divisions of Jyapoo intermarry and inter-dine with one another, subject to earlier remarks in respect of the Bhatgaon Jyapoo. Further, it may be noted that on enquiry several Jyapoo of Panga informed me that they do not intermarry or inter-dine with the Kumhal (potter) section which makes black earthenware, though the maker of red earthenware is not regarded as inferior.

Hodgson had noted in his time, numerous occupational groups among the Jyapoo.<sup>32</sup> Most of such hereditary occupations were associated with Matsyendra Nath. In such functional capacities the Jyapoo of Patan are still known. But they remain Jyapoo from all points of view.

The Jyapoo caste is followed by a group of parallel castes, all of which may be regarded as standing on the same social plane. Each of these castes is a different world by itself as marked by endogamy and restriction on inter-dining. They, however, smoke from the common hukka but use their own respective 'nalis' (pipes). All of these castes can accept cooked rice from the hands of the castes upto Jyapoo and progeny born of their women

from union with men of a caste superior to them are accepted into their respective caste-folds, including the child's mother's.

Hodgson had termed these parallel castes as 'Ektharia' and had included 17 caste-groups under it.<sup>33</sup> My own enquiry, however, reveals only seven caste-groups of such parallel standing. These include: Gathu, Nau, Khoosa, Chitrakar, Cheepa, Manandhar and Kow. The rest of the caste-groups of Hodgson's list have partly disappeared and partly come to occupy different ranks in the Newar social hierarchy. The Poolpool, Koonaa and Yung-Kurme, Tatee, Moosa, and the Bow are not known now in the Valley of Kathmandu. On the other hand, the Du(n)-yeeya (n) (Dooyin or Laemoo or Putwar of Hodgson) and the Bha or Bhat rank lower, while the Goa, as already seen, enjoy equal status with the Jyapoo.

Of such parallel castes at present, the Gathu derives its name from its hereditary occupation as gardener and flower-supplier. It is also known by the appellation of Mali. Members of this caste are to be mostly found in the town of Kathmandu at Kalimati, Te-Bahal, Bhyakacha tole and Wotoo tole. They are comparatively few in numbers in the Patan and Bhatgaon areas. Even to this day their principal occupation is to deal in flowers. In caste-rank they claim a position on equality with the Jyapoo, though the latter does not recognise such a claim. Ritually, they are associated with the festival of Bhadrakali as described in the chapter on Religion and Festival.

The Nau or Napit is the barber caste and an indispensable functionary in relation to the castes up to the Jyapoo. The ritual of *Lusithike-gu* (purificatory ritual of cutting the nails and colouring the toes of females) is performed by this caste. The Nau still preserve the memory of having migrated from the 'Madhyadesha' (north India) in the early past. They claim for themselves a higher social status than the other parallel

castes on the ground that they do not attend to the ritual-cutting of nails of these castes. Though Hodgson has stated that the Nau employed the Brahmin priest,<sup>34</sup> now-a-days they are Buddhamargi and are served by the Gubhaju priest.

Another caste of the 'Ektharia' status is the Khoosa. This term is an abbreviated form of Khoosal. An important function of this caste is to render priestly services to the Kasai caste. Hodgson had noted four more subdivisions under the term Khoosa.<sup>35</sup> Of these, the Kuta (navel-string cutter) is now little known; the Teepah or Teppye (as known at present) are few in number and they sell 'palung' (a kind of leaf-vegetable) on the Magh Sankranti; the Gnai-Gubha has totally disappeared; and the Bala is perhaps the present Balami who, however, takes a rank on a par with the Du(n)-yee-ya(n).

The Chitrakar is the painter-caste among the Newars. Beside painting the figures of Bhairava and other religious objects, they also paint houses and temples. They are said to have descended from a Udas mother and a lower caste father. They are known by the appellation of Pu(n) and are in the process of extinction. Their number is more in Bhaktapur than elsewhere. The important community-function which they fulfil is to repaint the masks of gods and goddesses during the annual festivals. Their declining hereditary occupation is driving them to take to any type of occupation which would afford them some means of livelihood.

The Cheepa are numerous in the town of Kathmandu. The term Cheepa is derived from the occupation of printing the cloth called, Cheepa. This caste is also known as Ranjitkar which means 'dyer of cloth'. Hodgson describes this caste as the dyer of blue cloth as distinct from the Bha caste, dyer of red cloth. Now-a-days, however, they do not restrict themselves to dyeing in blue only. They are also engaged in a variety of secular occupations as

doctors, government servants, shopkeepers and agriculturists.

As regards caste-organisation, the Cheepa is said to have had formerly their 'Nayak' (Chief) who used to settle disputes among them. They have now formed a Cheepa Sangh, an association to effect reforms in their community. In religion they are Buddhist and employ a *Vanra* for priestly functions.

The Manandhar or Salmi or Saimi is the former oil-presser of the Valley. The people of this caste are numerous in the regions of Kathmandu, Kirtipur and Bhaktapur. In the first mentioned region their original locations are to be found round about the palaces of the former Newar Raja. Their caste-name is derived from their hereditary calling of oil-pressing. 'Sal' means oil-pressing machine and 'mi' means owner. In each of their localities they had a 'Sal' which used to be run on a co-operative basis and these 'Sals' though now in disuse, can still be found at many places.

It is alleged that formerly the Manandhar or Salmi was not a clean caste and hence water could not be accepted from their hands. But in the days of Maharaja Jung Bahadur, the Salmis were raised to the rank of clean caste as a reward for their assistance in the Nepalese expedition into Tibet in 1558.<sup>36</sup> The Manandhars, however, deny that they were formerly an outcaste. I was given to understand that once a small child in Bhatgaon accidentally got crushed in the 'Sal' without the knowledge of any one. As a result of this the families concerned were outcasted for having sold the oil mixed with human blood. The Manandhars contend that, apart from this solitary instance, they had always been a clean caste throughout. At present in the region of Kathmandu and Kirtipur they are not only treated as a clean caste, but also seem to enjoy a higher secular status among the parallel castes, owing to their being wealthy and educated. In the



region of Bhatgaon, however, the high caste Newars still refuse to accept water from their hands for religious use, it is stated.

The Manandhars are the most ethnically organised people among the Newars. It has a caste council whose head is called 'Kaji'. The caste-council is divided into regional sub-councils, each headed by its own Kaji. Each regional Kaji used to be in the past also the head of the 'Sal' administration of his region. For example in Kathmandu the following are the sub-councils with their respective Kajis: i) Guacche-Mangal Dachche Sal, ii) Layeku-Sal, iii) Nhu-Sal, iv) Pako-Pokhal Dyang, v) Wotoo Tole, vi) Tan-Lachhi, vii) Thahiti Sal, viii) Chaswanda, and ix) Phalacha Sal. These Kajis have also under their jurisdiction the regions of Kirtipur, Ferpring, Fascu and Panch-mane. The regions of Patan and Bhaktapur have their separate organisations. There are two different traditions with regard to the rule of succession of these offices. In some of the cases, the eldest son inherits the 'Kajiship', while in others the succession devolves on the members on the basis of seniority of age. The council also appoints an adviser to each of the sub-councils from among the members. All disputes, social and caste, are settled by the Kendriya-Manandhar Sangh, whose head acts as the chief Kaji.

In religion, though they are Buddhist and employ a Gubhaju as priest, they are under the strong influence of Hinduism. They worship all the Hindu gods and goddesses. Many a Manandhar informed me that they had visited places of Hindu pilgrimage in India, such as Kashi, Prayag, Gaya, Badrinath, Dwarka and Jagannath. Satya Narain Puja has become a popular feature among them for which they employ either a Deo-Bhaju or a Maithili Brahmin.

There are two groups of unclean castes among the Newars. First, the touchables from whose hands water

cannot, however, be accepted. These include: Du(n)-yee-ya(n), Balami, Sangat, Bha, Kasai and Kusle. Secondly, the untouchables who include Pore, Kullu, Chyame and Hara-Huru. There is, however, no caste which pollutes at a distance. If any person of the untouchable caste group happens to touch a member of clean caste, the latter has to undergo a purificatory rite for regaining his cleanly status.<sup>37</sup>

Of the touchable unclean castes, the Du(n)yeeya(n), the Balami and the Sangat occupy the highest ranks. Each of them is endogamous and does not inter-dine with the other. The Du(n)yeeya(n)s are found at the southern extremity of the Valley and show a preference for higher elevation. Their settlements are found at Hole-Chouk, Balaji and Bhim Dunga. These people are known by several appellations such as Putwar, Rajputwar, Dwi(n) or Dhwi(n).

Culturally there is a wide gulf between the Du(n)yeeya(n)s and other Newars. They are in the lower state of culture. They mostly live on jungle produce. I was told that they had not taken to agriculture till quite recently. Even to this day they earn their livelihood as workers in stone-quarries and by selling fire-wood and red-soil. A very strange habit among these people is that their women-folk never take rest even for a day after delivery of a baby and go about for usual work. While pronouncing, they inter-change 'r' for 'l'. They have no tradition of migration.

The Du(n)yeeya(n)s are said to have been once an untouchable caste, i.e. before the advent of Prithivi Narayan Shah. In 1769 when Prithivi Narayan Shah was forced by the Newar armies to retreat it was these people who helped him to escape from the Valley through its south-western extremity. After the conquest of the Valley, the Gorkha prince is said to have rewarded them by raising

them up to the status of a touchable caste,<sup>38</sup> and giving them the privilege of being the royal palki bearers, a privilege which they enjoy even to this day. It also marked the occasion for their designation as Putwar or Rajputwar.

With regard to religion, the Du(n)yeeya(n)s seem to be both Buddhist and Hindu since according to Hodgson their priest used to be a Vanra, while they received 'Diksha' from a Brahmin.<sup>39</sup> According to Sete, a Du(n)yeeya(n) from Halchouk, they used to employ the Deo-Bhaju as priest. Later when they fell on evil days, the Brahmin gave up rendering priestly functions to them. Now-a-days such priestly functions are discharged by the sister's son, and some times, by a Kusle.

The principal gods of the Du(n)yeeya(n) are Akash Bhairava and Riksheshwar and not Buddhist deities. The identification of Akash Bhairava with a demon prince who fought in the battle of the Mahabharat and the practice of giving this god the appellation of 'Sava Deyea' or Bhaila suggest not only a great antiquity of these people but also an affinity with the darker race of India as pointed out earlier. The Du(n)yeeya(n)s identify Akash Bhairava with Eklabya prince also.

Clan life is still the basis of the Du(n)yeeya(n)s' Organisation and their chief, the Nayak, is the leader of their respective patrilineal groups into which their society is split.

Like the Du(n)yeeya(n), the Balami is another group which occupies the lowest rung of the Newar cultural ladder. And like the former, it also stands out as a distinct community. The Balami occupies the foothills and is especially to be found at Kagategaon at Balaji. These people claim to be formerly of Kshatriya caste. They are said to have lost their former status through the displeasure of some Newar King who deprived them of their sacred thread. At present they are also known by the appellation of Swa(n)-gami. The local Newars assert that

the Newari dialect spoken by the Balami and the Du(n)yeeya(n)s is somewhat different from the current Newari. These two ethnic groups along with the Pahari which has totally disappeared from the Valley suggest a substratum over which the present racial and cultural superstructure of the Newars has been built up.

Another social group which is treated on a par with the Du(n)yeeya(n) and Balami is the Sanga(n). It is an abbreviated form of the term Sangat, the former washerman caste in the Valley. The people of this caste are fast disappearing and they no more follow their former occupation. This writer was told that there are only a few families left now. With the advent of the Indian washermen, they have taken to agriculture. They are, however, endogamous and do not have any social intercourse with the Indian 'Dhobi'. Their tradition asserts that King Pratap Malla took a Sanga(n) woman as a concubine and since then they were raised to the status of a pure caste. This writer was, however, unable to come across any high caste Newar who could admit that water could be accepted from their hands.

The Bha caste is in the process of extinction. They are found only in Bhatgaon. Hodgson describes this caste as the dyer of cloth of red colour and acceptors of death-gifts on the eleventh day.<sup>40</sup> On enquiry it was reported that only a few persons of this caste are found in Bhatgaon town, who are still reported to accept the eleventh-day death-gifts from the Shresthas only. Barring this instance in Bhatgaon, they are hardly to be found anywhere else in the Valley. We have noted elsewhere that such a gift is now-a-days accepted by the Kusle caste only. The occupation of dyeing is no longer followed by them.

The term Kasai is derived from the occupation of animal slaughtering and selling of meat. In olden days this caste was known as 'Khadgi' or Swordsmen. In the

Bhaktapur region it is known as *Nya*. The Kasai claims to have descended from the Shahi Thakuri, a clan to which the present Kshatriya royal family of Nepal belongs. The story of their origin as related by one of its members runs as follows: While on his way to the Valley of Kathmandu, Harisingha Deo carried goddess Talleju, his family deity, with him. On the way, the members of the Harisingha Deo's party could get nothing to eat. So the prince invoked Talleju. The Goddess appeared before Harisingha Deo in his dream and told him that he and his men could eat the first animal they came across the following morning. The first animal to be sighted was a wild buffalo. The buffalo was brought before the goddess for sacrifice. The latter ordered to bring a man who would be found excreting with his back toward the sun. A person was found accordingly and was discovered to be of Chhetri caste. This person became the first Kasai, it is said.

The Kasais are numerous, especially in the town of Kathmandu. They are perhaps the third major group after the Jyapoo and the Shrestha. In every town in the Valley, they have a separate locality of their own situated just on the outer-ring of what was once the ancient boundary of the town. They are divided into two groups on the basis of their hereditary callings. These are Kasai and Bagur-Kasai. The latter derives its name from their being goat-killers and vendors of meat. But there is no restriction on intermarriage and interdining between these two sections. They together constitute a single unit. In relation to the castes lower to them they are strictly endogamous, but they accept into their caste any person from the higher castes. In addition to the hereditary profession as killer of buffaloes and goats and seller of meat, they have taken to milk-vending which, of course, was not allowed to them under the traditional caste rules. The milk which is purposely adulterated with water, with a view to claiming that the high caste Hindus thereby

accept water from them, is freely consumed by the Newars and even by the orthodox Gorkhas.

Though they are given a rank lower than the Bha, they claim to be socially higher than the latter. Not only this, they refuse to accept cooked rice from the parallel castes (ektharias). They have, however, no objection to accept cooked rice from the hands of the Jyapoo caste and above it. The *Lusi-Thike-gu* ritual is provided to them by their own castemen.

The Kusle is called also Jugi or Jogi and are said to be descended from the ascetics of Natha sect. They are also known as 'Darshandhari'. This caste is divided into many sections on the basis of the type of musical instruments they play. But from the point of view of marriage, ceremonies and interdining all of these sections act as a single endogamous group. Their priestly connections with many of the temples of local deities indicate their significant role in the Newar society. They regard Gorakhnath as their principal deity.

The foregoing unclean castes are followed in order by the Kullu (cobbler), Pore (executioner), Chyam-Khala and Hara-Huru, who are Newar outcastes. These castes are not allowed to have their dwelling places within the village boundaries. The Kullu are the Newar cobblers and basket-makers and believed to impart pollution by touch. They employ their own 'thakali' as priest. Formerly they were not allowed to wear golden ornaments.

The term 'Pore' is derived from the hereditary calling of public executioner. The principal occupations of the Pore are fishing, basket-making and skinning of dead animals.

The Chyamkhala is the remover of night-soil and considered as lowest among the untouchables. This caste considers itself superior to the Parbatia untouchable castes such as the Kami (ironsmith), Sarki (cobbler), Damai (tailor). The Chyamkhala, therefore, does not accept cooked food from these castes. It has a section lower in

rank, which is said to be the result of the union between a Chyamkhala and other untouchable caste like the Pore. This section is known as Hara-Huru.

The ethnic solidarity of the Newar is maintained and reinforced by a variety of inter-relationships which exists among them, mainly pertaining to ceremonies and religious occasions. The best way to understand such inter-relationships is to describe one caste in the context of the rest. Such relationships have to be viewed from two different stand-points. Firstly, among the Newar castes themselves; and secondly, the relationship of Newar castes with the non-Newar castes.

The Deo-Bhaju Brahmin comes in ritual contact only with the Sivamargi Newars and particularly with the Chhatharia and Shrestha sections. In all the domestic ceremonies he has to officiate and provide ritual guidance. He rarely comes in contact with the Buddha Margis, except on secular basis. He used to be formerly employed by the Buddhamargi castes to plead in the courts on their behalf, when there was some dispute involving caste. Now-a-days the Deo-Bhaju has begun to come in ritual contact with some of the non-orthodox Buddhist Newar castes such as the Manandhars and Jyapoos. For, among these castes Satyanarain worship has become popular. For such worship, the Deo-Bhaju Brahmin willingly undertakes to officiate. Whenever the Buddhamargis want to worship such Hindu deities as are not connected with the Vanras, the Deo-Bhaju is employed. Besides being the family priest, the Deo-Bhaju Brahmin is the priest at many of the local temples. In this priestly capacity he comes in contact with the members of all castes that visit such temples.

As distinct from the Deo-Bhaju Brahmin, the Gubhaju or Bajracharya, comes into wide contact with both the Buddhist and the Hindu Newars. As a priest he is connected only with the Buddhists. He is not only the

priest at the Buddhist temples including the famous temple of Swayambhu, but also at many temples of Hindu deities which are of daily importance to the Newars. In such capacities he comes in contact with all the Newar castes.

The Gubhaju has to provide still some other ceremonial functions to many of the Newar castes. On the thirteenth day of mourning when the *Sraddha* ceremony takes place in the house of a Chhatharia or Shrestha Newar, it is he who has to officiate in the function. The Gubhaju also comes in touch with all the Newar castes in his capacity as a magico-religious practitioner. He is well noted as a spiritual physician; and the people bring their sick-children to him for treatment.

On secular basis, the Gubhaju has taken to a variety of occupations which brings him in daily contact with all the castes. He is teacher, shop-keeper, Government or private employee, physician, astrologer and tailor, the last one being a favourite occupation of his.

The Shakya Bhikkshu or Vanra has some ritual contact with the other Newar castes. One of the important functions provided by him is in relation to marriage. When the *Kalya-Nhyake-gu* ceremony takes place, a Vanra as a goldsmith has to go to the bride's place to put a silver bangle around the bride's wrist. In this capacity he is connected even with the non-Buddhist Newar castes. On a non-ritual basis he comes into intimate contact with all the Newar castes. The principal basis of such contact is his hereditary occupation as goldsmith. In Bhaktapur and Patan towns members of this group come in contact with the local inhabitants in an additional capacity of carpenter and brass-worker. Apart from these, the Vanra has taken to all kinds of secular occupations of non-hereditary character and these provide him ample opportunity to be associated with others.

The position of Joshi and Achar is peculiar. In their semi-Brahminic hereditary profession they have to provide



certain services to the Chhatharia and Shrestha Newars. In every domestic ceremony of these two high castes, the Joshi performs the function of striking the auspicious hour.

The Achar, on the other hand, has to attend to *havan* and other ceremonial duties under the guidance of Deo-Bhaju Brahmin. In relation to castes other than the Chhatharia and Shrestha, the Joshi does not have a ritual function in domestic ceremonies. But he is employed by all the Newars to draw up horoscopes. The Achar similarly has no religious function in the domestic ceremonies of other castes. But both of them as temple-priests are associated with the local inhabitants. The Joshi is the hereditary priest to goddess Talleju (the kul-deity of the former Malla Kings), Pancha-Mukhi, Hanuman and other minor deities. The Achaju is likewise the priest of many temples in the Valley, which principally include Jai-Bageshwari, Koteshwar, Chhebel Ganesh, Jal Vinayak, Dakhin-Kali and Guheswari.

Although their Brahminic hereditary occupations (including that of 'Guru-purohit') bring both the Joshi and the Achar into ceremonial association with all the castes, especially with the high caste Hindu Newars, socially they have the most intimate contact with the Chhatharia with whom they intermarry.

As temple priests the Joshi and the Achar also come in contact with such unclean castes as the Kasai, Pore and Chyamkhala, since these castes are the Deo-palas (Temple care-takers) at these temples. On a secular level they come in contact with all the other castes in a variety of ways according to the secular occupations they take to. They are tradesmen, land-owners, printers, government employees and teachers.

The Chhatharia and Shrestha Newars do not have much ritual function in relation to other castes. They come in contact with other Newar castes in the same manner as the Rajputs do in the Indian villages. They are

looked up to for guidance and leadership. However, many of the families of the Chhatharia and Shrestha are associated with the local deities and their festivals. For example, in the festival of Bhimsen, the Thacoju-ju must be present as the ritual leader and Chief guest. In Kirtipur a Shrestha acts as the local leader and supervises the annual festivals.

As for the Udas, only a section of it in Patan, called Barhi-Karmi has ceremonial function. It is connected with the festival of Machhendranath. But the Udas has to supply a variety of brass and copper vessels to be used for religious purposes by the Newars. As artisans and traders, it comes into intimate contact with others, as metal-workers and cloth-dealers. It also comes in contact in its capacity as carpenter, brick and tile-maker. Since the members of this caste are rarely to be found in the region other than Kathmandu town, their intimate contact with others is regionally concentrated in that town only.

The Jyapoo caste impinges on the life of the upper caste Newars in innumerable ways. On ceremonial occasions what the barber does in India as a messenger, the Jyapoo does for them. No invitation sent to the relatives is regarded as valid unless it is sent through a Jyapoo. On the birth of a child it is a Jyapoo who goes to the child's maternal uncle's house to convey the news. The mid-wfe, 'Aji' is drawn from the Jyapoo caste. In the marriage of an upper caste Newar, men of this caste have to provide services not only as 'dooly'-bearers, but also in the capacity of two Tibetans who head the marriage procession. On the event of a death, this caste again appears on the scene, since *Kaha(n)* music has to accompany the funeral procession of the higher caste Newars. Now-a-days since the custom of providing music at the funeral procession of the upper caste Newars has become less in vogue, he is more intimately connected with regard to this

particular function with the members of his own caste. But in feasts and festivals his services are still indispensable, whether in the capacity of a musician or a servant. An important point which needs mention in this connection is the services provided by him to the Newars at the time of the worship of the lineage deity, 'Dewali'. He has to carry not only worshipping materials, but also the cooked items of feast which would not have been allowed to be touched by him on normal occasions.<sup>41</sup>

The Jyapoo does not render ritual services to the castes below him, although his low economic condition has led him to be employed as a casual labourer by all. Apart from his ritual functions which are too many during domestic and social events, his contact with the other castes during the festivals are equally many. In all the festivals he is the principal participant who has to attend to a number of non-priestly duties ranging from the work of a servant to that of drawing the car of the deities. Especially in the Machhendranath Jatra, Indra Jatra, Kumari Jatra and the Bhairava Jatra, his role assumes many sided importance.

As a peasant, the Jyapoo has an intimate relationship not only with the Newars, but also with non-Newar castes. Being the dominant peasant class in the Valley, all the lands owned by the non-peasant classes are given to him for cultivation. His position as the dominant farmer class, therefore, brings him in close relationship with all those who are land-lords.

The Pahari section of the Jyapoo caste hardly comes into relationship with the other castes of the Valley, since they are found in the farther region of Boshan and Chali-Khel near the foothills. The people of this sub-caste visit the Valley only occasionally when they come to sell food-grains, baskets and brooms. Similar is the case with the Gwa which inhabits the southern foot-hill of the Valley. In Kathmandu, its section the Hale comes in contact with

the other Newaris in the same way as the Jyapoos do. In and around Kirtipur, a person of this caste has to worship, as noted elsewhere, (on the Gathe-Mangal festival day) at the tank which is believed to be the ancient site of a cowstable. He also supplies cow's milk for religious purposes.

The Gathoo and the Khoosa come in contact with the other castes as the maker and supplier of earthen pots. This is only in the towns. In addition they take out the Bhadra-Kali dance every year; it may be also mentioned that once in six years this annual function assumes a special grandeur. and accordingly, their role is also enhanced. They come in contact with other castes like the Jyapoo in their capacity as farmers. The Kumhal section of the Jyapoo is brought into relationship with the other castes as the maker and supplier of earthen pots.

The *Ektharia* groups of castes which rank below the Jyapoo do not have such numerous ritual functions. These parallel castes come into relationship with the other castes mostly in their secular capacities. But the Chitrakar and the Nau, who provide ceremonial functions in the domestic ceremonies, stand out as an exception. The Chitrakar has to paint the walls of the house with pictures of gods and goddesses. But now-a-days this is slowly becoming less popular. He has still to paint the sacred earthen vessels with the images of god Brahma for use in the "Yihee" ceremony (mock-marriage) of the Newar girls. In such capacity he comes in contact with all the Newar castes whose touch does not impart pollution. The Nau (Barber), however, assumes an important role in relation to the castes down to the Jyapoo as its principal role consists in ritually purifying an individual. The Nau is especially required at the time of "Bu-Sakha" (hair cutting ceremony), *Kaitapuja*, *Bare-Chhwi-gu* (in the case of Gubhaju and Vanras) and "Yihee" when he has to fulfil important ritual functions. Now-a-days, although

the Nau refuses to provide the above ritual services to a caste below the Jyapoo, he attends to all the clean castes in its secular function. To speak about Kathmandu town, the members of this caste have opened hair-cutting saloons which are visited by all the castes, including the non-Newars.

The Kow is the Newar blacksmith and hence, the farmer is mostly dependant on him for the supply of agricultural implements. Each village has generally its own Kow whose services are paid in grains at the time of harvest. Besides, the Kow has also to supply a number of iron tools for domestic and agricultural use.

The Salmi or Manandhar comes into contact with all the other castes as dealers in grain, oil, and ghee. Another important secular service which it provides is the selling of liquor. It does not have any ritual function in relation to individual castes. But in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur towns people from this caste are connected with the annual festivals and Jatras. One of the chief functions this caste provides is the erection of the *Linga*. On the *Ghore-Jatra* (Horse festival) in Kathmandu town they have to accompany the procession of Bhadrakali deity with their traditional musical instruments.

The Ranjitar or Chheepa has no ritual function in relation to other castes. But he comes in contact with others as the dyer of cloth. But as "*Lakhe*" dancer he is connected with the entire Newar community. In this capacity, he has a variety of roles.

The Duyeeya(*n*) caste comes into relationship with the others as the supplier of red soil and wood. In these roles, they come into intimate contact with all the inhabitants of the Valley of Kathmandu. During the festival of Indra, they take out the "*Sava-Bhaku*" or Akash Bhairava dance as elsewhere noted. In addition, they come in secular contact mostly as labourers in the stone quarries and as palanquin-bearers. The women-folk

exchange wild-fruits for rice. The Balami on the other hand comes in little contact and that too only as grain dealers. Therefore, it appears that this caste has no important function in the Newar society at present.

Among the unclean castes, the Bha does not appear to have many ritual relationships. In Kathmandu town this caste is connected with the Shresthas from whom they receive death-gift, as stated elsewhere, on the eleventh day. Their former function of acting as bards in the court of the Newar Kings was an important role which they played once in the Newar society.

The Kasai is another important caste which has to provide music in a funeral procession. During other important Newar ceremonies also they provide music when offerings are made to the evil spirits. The Kasai also supplies dried-frogs for the worship of *Ajima*, the goddess of small-pox. Another important ritual function rendered by them is the cutting of the umbilical cord and dripping of a few drops of water into the mouth of a newly born baby. In festivals, men of this caste, as we know, are associated with goddess Talleju. They also act as the '*Deo-pala*' at the famous temple of goddess Guheshwari and is entitled to touch the deity and receive all the offerings made to it. In its non-secular role this caste comes into contact with all the Newars as the killer of buffalo and seller of its meat; and also as milk-vendor. It is strange that, although, water touched by a Kasai is not accepted, milk mixed with water is accepted from his hands. Another role fulfilled by the Kasai is the transportation of bricks to the places of construction site.

The Kusle caste has to provide auspicious music during marriage and the '*Dewali*' worship. On the seventh day of mourning, he accepts cooked rice in the name of the dead. As '*Deo-pala*' at a temple, he comes in contact with other castes also. For example, the Kusle is the *Deo-pala* at the temple of Bagh-Bhairava in Kirtipur.

In Panga, he is the temple-priest of Bisendevi. He is entitled to receive the offerings made to the deity and can also touch it. In his secular role, he comes in contact with others mostly as a tailor.

The relationship of the untouchable castes with the other Newar castes is of special importance, which is perhaps rarely to be found in India. Barring the temple of Pashupati, there is absolutely no restriction on their entering the temples. In most of the temples of Kali and other deities like Ganesh and Bhimsen, as noted elsewhere, members of these castes happen to be 'Deo-palas' who can freely touch the deities and take away the offerings made at the temple. In such capacities these untouchable castes enjoy comparatively quite a higher status and come in contact with all the people who go to worship at these temples. They also provide music at the different temples in return for which, they are given 'ahista' or lands for cultivation.

Of these untouchable castes none has, however, any special ritual relationship with the high caste Newars. The Newar leather-worker (Kullu) assumes an importance as the maker of drums and baskets ('Dhaki') to be used for religious purposes. As a shoe-maker his contact with the other Newars is not so significant now-a-days. The Parbatia shoe-maker (Sarki) has almost monopolised this trade.

The Pore (public executioner and skinner) comes into contact with others as the seller of basket and fish. Fishing is one of his main occupations. In Kirtipur, when an animal is sacrificed to goddess Indrani, he has to be given 360 pieces of its meat as his share before any body else could have a share.

The scavenger castes, the Chyame and the Hara-Huru, similarly have no ceremonial function in relation to any of the Newar castes. But they fulfil an important community-role on the Gathe-Mangal day. From the secular point

of view these castes, as night-soil removers, are of special importance to the people of the towns. In the villages, however, their role is negligible. But with the Jyapoo farmers they have special secular connection, since they supply the night-soil for the fields. Some of the untouchables enjoy a higher status on some particular occasions. This writer was informed that at the annual festival at Kirtipur, when a community feast takes place, a member of the Pore caste has to sit at the head of the table and is ranked as the group leader, *thakali*, of the participating members in the feast.

We have so far reviewed the functional interrelationship of the Newar castes within their own society. Now we proceed to examine the nature of contact between the Newars and the non-Newars. From the point of view of the Newars, all non-Newars in the Valley are outsiders. Therefore, in the social and religious spheres the non-Newar castes largely stand segregated, except for a few exceptions when the Gorkhas are brought into some minor ritual relationships during some of the local community-events. Of such contacts, one is the role of the Kumai Brahmin in his official capacity as Dharmadhikari who has to adjudicate in the caste disputes of the Newars. The low caste Damai (tailor) of the Parbatia group is employed by the Newars to provide music. On the other hand the Gorkhas employ Kusle musicians. Besides, these non-Newars being the members of an immigrant community, they have to always depend on the Newars for the propitiation of the local deities. Worship of Ajima, goddess of small pox, is a point in case.

In festival times, although the non-Newars are merely spectators, in one important respect the King of Nepal is ritually connected with the Newar festivals. His presence, as will be seen later, is necessary in many of the Newar festivals. On the last day of the Kumari Jatra, the King appears before the human goddess Kumari and pays his



homage acknowledging her as the divine sovereign of the Valley. She is supposed to renew her directive to him to rule over the Valley. This is a sort of a reminder that the Gorkha King rules over the Newars and the Valley through the granting of a boon by the local goddess.

Secular relationships of the Newars with the non-Newar castes and the mongoloid tribes in the Valley are, on the other hand, of innumerable varieties. The Newars are artisans and functional castes and also shop-keepers; and the non-Newars are absolutely dependent on them for all kinds of services. Such a contact becomes much more pronounced in Kathmandu where the Gorkhas, the Indians and foreigners live interspersed with one another. The principal trading castes of Newars such as the Shrestha, Udas, and Manandhar are brought into close relationship with others as sellers and buyers of goods of daily use. There is no manifest rivalry between the Gorkhas and the Newars in this matter. But a keen rivalry exists between the Newars and Indian trading castes who compete with the former in business; particularly the Marwaris and Rauniars are singled out for their bitter criticism. A Newar businessman dislikes that such itinerant communities should be allowed to encroach upon their business. The Marwaris bear the brunt of Newars' dislike for the outsiders; for, the Marwaris are shrewd businessmen with large capital outlay; and with them the Newars are unable to compete owing to their small capital. In another type of business, that of copper and brass vessels, the Udas dominates. These are the articles of daily use, which every household requires. The Gorkhas and other castes have to buy such articles from them. But here again the conflict with the Indian Agrawala caste known as the Indian Tamot comes into play. The Indian Tamots import into the Valley ready-made copper and brass vessels, which affect the business of Udas.

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## 7. GUTHI ORGANIZATION

**T**HE caste and familial organization of the Newars cannot be fully understood without understanding their 'guthi' institutions, which are of socio-religious character. While caste or sub-caste sets the limit to the general status-position of a person in the total society, his ritual and social life is regulated and controlled through these 'guthi' institutions. A net-work of such 'guthi' institutions binds the Newars together at the three different levels of caste, patrilineal grouping, and territory. Each guthi provides numerous occasions for collective worship of a particular deity to which it is consecrated; and for feasts in which its members have the right to ritual participation. Further, while the manifest function of such guthis is the fulfilment of some secular or religious interests, they have the latent function of preserving the norms and values of the community. As will be seen later, the three-tier sanctions against a defaulting person or household results in complete social boycott, through the denial of participation in the group events and feasts, and services to be rendered by these respective institutions. In the event of sanctions imposed by any of these 'guthis', the social living of a defaulting household becomes quite miserable.

Of these guthis, the principal ones whose sanctions are most dreaded by the Newars are the 'Sana-guthi' and the 'Dewali' or 'Deya' guthi.

Each caste is spatially divided into local groups owing allegiance to their respective 'Sana guthis'. The name of this 'guthi' is derived from its primary function of disposing of the dead. Since, among the Newars the corpse must not be touched by the members of the bereaved house-hold and further, the disposal of the dead involves the elaborate participation by the caste members and the patrilineal kin, the 'Sana guthi' assumes great importance as will be seen from the chapter on Death. Though the membership of this guthi is hereditary, a person migrating to a different region can, if his original 'Sana guthi' is unable to serve him, become a member of the local 'Sana guthi' of his caste.

The 'Sana guthi' runs a permanent office and has its governing body consisting of eight members who happen to be the senior male members among the member-households. The chief of 'Sana guthi' is called 'Naike' or 'Thakali'. At the time of a funeral procession, the corpse has to be covered with a red cloth called 'deva (n)' which has to be supplied by the 'Sana guthi' office. Besides, the members of the Sana guthi are divided into different groups entrusted with different duties connected with the disposal of the dead. For example, a group known as 'Sie-guthi' within it is concerned with cremating the corpse. Thus through the regulation of the disposal of the dead, this institution controls the social behaviour of its caste-group members. At the same time there are numerous feasts to be held by it in a year in which all the members have to participate or in default, pay a fine such as would be fixed by the 'guthi' council.

As to the number of households attached to a particular Sana-guthi, it is difficult to say in respect of Kathmandu town. But in the village of Panga, the 442

house-holds of Jyapoo caste are divided into three 'Sana guthis' and 42 households of the Shrestha caste have only one 'Sana guthi' among them.

Besides the Sana guthi, there are a number of other 'guthis' involving a variety of interests whose membership is restricted to the Sana-guthi members only. Such guthis may be of any number. Some of the typical 'guthis' based on the membership to be restricted to 'Sana-guthi' caste-members as found among the Manandhars of Kathmandu are as follows:

(i) *Nasa Puja guthi*: It is an institution for training in songs and caste music. Each family has to send a person to receive training in such matters. 'Nasa Deya', the god of dance, is worshipped. Each family has to send a representative to participate in the daily visit to Swayambhu temple during the month of Gula (Sraavan); to the temples of Pithas in 'Ya(n)-La' (winter); and to the temple of the presiding deity of the tole in 'Kaula'. Its feast takes place thrice in a year in which attendance is compulsory for all the member-families.

(ii) *Ashtami guthi*: It is connected with the Ganesh of the tole. Every month on the 'Ashtami' day (eighth day) a feast is held. Membership is not compulsory.

(iii) *Chare-guthi*: It is consecrated to the worship of the Pithas. Membership is open only to 'Sana guthi' members; but it is purely voluntary. On the fourteenth of the half of every month, the Pithas are worshipped. Feast is held once in a month.

(iv) *Bijli guthi*: Like Chare guthi, it is connected with the worship of the Pithas. Feast is held once in a year.

(v) *Nisala Chhya-guthi*: It is connected with Swayambhu worship. In the middle of the month of Sraavan, all the members hold a grand feast at the precincts of the Swayambhu temple.

(vi) *Holi guthi*: It is meant for the purpose of

celebrating the festival of Holi and feasts in that connection. Among the Manandhars it is consecrated to Jagannath and, therefore, generally a person who returns from the pilgrimage to Jagannath Puri is admitted to this Guthi.

(vii) *Saju Puja guthi*: It is connected with the worship of Goddess Saraswati on the fifth of the bright-half of Magh. Its membership is not compulsory.

(viii) *Dashami guthi*: This Guthi is not confined to the members of one single Sana Guthi. Its membership can be granted to a casteman belonging to any Sana guthi. It is meant for the propitiation of goddess Ajima. Twice in a month Ajima is worshipped and a feast is held.

Each caste is divided into patrilineal lineage-groups whose members preserve the memory of having a common ancestor. Such a lineage-group is organised under the cult of the ancestral deity called 'Dewali' and the institution is called 'Dewali guthi'. Unlike the Sana guthi, its membership is neither acquired nor based on the local grouping. Its members may be spread over the different regions. But at the time of feasts, and the worship of the 'Dewali', they must come together to participate. Married daughters are excluded from this 'guthi'. The persistent call of the 'Dewali guthi' is such that nobody can ignore its worship and the feasts connected with it.

The members of a 'Dewali guthi' are referred to by one another as 'Fukee', a term which implies 'splitting from the common source'. When a Newar says that such and such person is 'my fukee', it implies many things. Firstly, it means that he and the person in question can not intermarry; secondly it denotes that their 'Dewali' deity is one; and finally it means that mutual rights and obligations in matters of domestic ceremonies existing among them, are the same as among the members of a family.

The period of pollution regarding birth, death and

'Barha' to be observed by a person in relation to his 'fukee' is the same as would have been observed by a person in relation to his son or father. The 'Dewali' group is, therefore, a cluster of a large number of joint and nuclear families who trace their descent to a common male ancestor. In all ceremonies they act as a group. For it will be clear from the chapters on Ceremonies and Death that at every stage of the social development of an individual or on death, it is not the father or the head of the individual family who assumes the leadership. It is the 'Thakali', chief of the 'Dewali' group and his wife ('Naki') who have to head these ceremonies.

The 'fukee' members are placed in a definite hierarchy in matters of social precedence. The determination of seniority is based on generation and age. The Thakali or Nayake as we have stated, is the head of the fukee organisation. There are seven more subordinate offices occupied by the elders among the 'fukees'. These seven seniors in order of their decreasing statuses are Naku, Soku, Peku, Nyaku, Khuku, Nhye-ku and Chya-ku. These eight seniors are the custodians of the familial norms and values. Each of them is known as 'Chuti' and represent on the Dewali 'guthi' a certain number of families who have sprung from a common point on the lineage branch.

The eight senior elders are distinguished from one another by their respective social precedence at the time of the annual worship of the 'Dewali', when each of them is entitled to get as his share a certain part of the head of the sacrificial goat which they have to eat in the ritual of 'Sika-Bhue'.

Although it is impossible for a person to become a 'fukee' of some one by acquiring membership of a 'Dewali Guthi', it is within his right to break off with the 'Dewali' of his birth and set up his own. But this does not mean that he adopts a new 'Dewali'. What he actually does is to worship the same 'Dewali' at the



same 'Digu-Khya' (aboriginal site of Dewali), but separately. Thus the 'Lo(n)-Digu' (Dewali idol of stone) remains the same. But the 'Loo(n)-Digu' (Dewali deity of bronze) is different. For such purpose a new idol of the latter kind is made and sanctified by bringing it into physical contact with the original one.

The split from the common 'Dewali' creates a new Dewali-group. Members of such splitting families retain the relationship as 'fukee' among themselves. But from the point of view of parental 'Dewali' they become 'Ba-fukee' and vice versa. In theory they are no longer regarded as an agnate, since there is no existence of mutual rights and obligations in respect of birth, 'Barha', marriage and death. They are as good as any other sub-caste members. It is said that intermarriage between the members of such two groups can be tolerated. But it is not finally ascertainable. For, many of the Shresthas from whom enquiries were made took the view that there had not been any instance of marriage with a 'Ba-fukee' woman so long as such relationship was known to exist. It may be that intermarriage takes place between the two 'Ba-fukee' families when people do not remember such relationship. It, therefore, goes to suggest that the 'Ba-fukee' is a part of the exogamous circle but not of the same Dewali group.

The 'fukee guthi' or Dewali guthi has its own sub-varieties. A person can become a member of these sub-'guthis' only because he belongs to a common Dewali. Of such sub-'guthis', the following are the typical ones found among the Manandhars of Kathmandu.

(i) *Bhimsen Guthi*: It is connected with the worship of Bhimsen. All fukee members can become its members. There is, however, no joint feast. Each member family holds its own feast. (ii) *Gula Paru Bhue Guthi*: It is connected with the celebration of the Sraavan month. Its feast is held once in a year. (iii) *Sithi Nakha*

*Guthi*: It is concerned with cleaning the well on the Sithi Nakha day. Its feast is held once in a year.

These sub-guthis do not exhaust themselves and are to be found in varying numbers among the different castes. Some of the castes may be having some 'guthis' which are not to be found among others, and vice-versa.

The 'guthi' organisation among the Newars thus sets up a net-work of social relationship, involving values, norms, etiquettes and social precedence based on age and generation. It is also a work-organisation concerning the social and religious interests of its members. As between the 'Sana guthi' and the 'Dewali guthi', the latter functions as the most effective instrument of perpetuating the caste-norms. For, if a person is outcasted by it, he is automatically outcasted from the Sana guthi membership.

In the rural areas such numerous 'guthis' are generally merged with their respective generic guthis — 'Sana guthi' and 'Dewali guthi'. For example, in the Panga village the functions performed by each of the caste sub-'guthis' and 'Dewali' sub-guthis, as in the case just noted above, are performed by the 'Sana guthi and the Dewali guthi themselves, there being no sub-variants of these main guthis.

Besides the caste and partrilineal-group-guthis and their sub varieties, there are inter-caste 'guthis' involving the maintenance of solidarity of a regional community. Such an inter-caste 'guthi' is concerned with the propitiation of the presiding deity of the village or locality and the holding of festivals in its honour. In the religious events concerning the deity every caste-group has to discharge some duties and participate in the feasts which follow. How the inter-caste relations are given a wide ritual and social manifestations through the working of such 'guthis' can be better understood by reference to the chapters on festivals.

## 8. MARRIAGE

**A**MONG the Newars marriage is a recognised institution and every boy and girl must carry. Marriage is necessary because one must have a son to continue the family line. In a society in which the cult of ancestors is so important, the obligation to offer oblation to the dead makes marriage indispensable. Apart from the need for the continuance of the family line and the obligation towards one's ancestors, economic consideration is also a factor for marriage. This idea is specially dominant among the lower class Newars. If one were to ask them as to why one should marry, they would reply: "Because marriage means an addition to the labour force of the family". Thus marriage is interpreted both as a social and economic necessity.

Marriage is, however, not recognised as a sacrament, though it involves worship of several Hindu deities. They refuse to give such a recognition on the ground that the real marriage of a Newar girl is always with God Narain through the ceremony of 'Yihee'. A Newar woman can, therefore, in theory leave her husband as many times as she likes. In the event of her husband's death she does not become a widow, since her real husband, God Narain is immortal. In practice, however, no Newar would like to see his daughter leaving her husband in favour of a

second one. But to dislike a thing is different from the social recognition given it.

Though religious acts are involved in the marriage, the customs of divorce, remarriage and of taking a wife without the accompaniment of any religious ceremony are the features which are distinct from the Hindu practices followed by the others in the Valley. The significant fact to note is that the traditional sentiment in this respect still dominates. However much a man may be educated and may have come under the influence of western culture, he remains traditionally a Newar. There are many families of Newars which have been living in cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi for as many as twenty to thirty-five years. They are highly educated and have good financial background. And yet, though they are far away from their native place they have not given up their domestic ceremonies. Suffice it to say that the Newars are still traditional and their marriage customs do not seem to be much influenced by the Gorkhas who are orthodox Hindus. They believe their own system is the best one.

Since marriage is an indispensable need, every Newar father feels that it is his duty to get his son or daughter married. Bachelors and spinsters are therefore very few. Of the total 814 males and 793 females in the 224 sample families, 52.83 per cent of males and 42.37 per cent of the females have respectively been found to be unmarried. But among these unmarried persons, there are only 65 boys and 28 girls who are of 20 years of age or above, and who may be regarded as of marriageable age. Such boys and girls constitute respectively only 8 and 3.5 per cent of the sexwise totals of the unmarried persons. Thus it is seen that there are few persons who remain unmarried after they approach the age of 20.

Considering the samples of Panga and Kathmandu town, the former, which may be taken to represent the

TABLE I

Kathmandu Sample		Panga Sample				Total	
Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
<b>Married</b>							
282	43.94	342	54.49	102	59.64	108	64.67
						384	47.14
<b>Unmarried</b>							
361	56.06	284	45.51	69	40.35	59	35.33
						430	52.86
<b>Total</b>							
643	100.00	626	100.00	171	99.99	167	100.00
						814	100.00
						793	100.00

% — Percentage to the sex-wise total.

rural region in the Valley, shows a greater proportion of married people. This is quite obvious looking at the comparatively lesser influence of urbanity. The other factor influencing marriage in Panga is the importance of labour for the agricultural people.

The general view among the Newars is that marriage should take place between sixteen and twenty. The bride should be as far as possible two or three years younger. The majority of the heads of the 224 sample-families in my collection subscribe to this view. Though child-marriage is not preferred, some special circumstances may lead to such marriages. One among such reasons is the desire of the aged parents to see their children married in their own life time, for they think that it is meritorious to die after seeing one's grand children.

Early marriages, though uncommon, are not totally barred. Apart from what has been stated above, an early marriage results from the practice of arranging the marriages of several children together. In such marriages the youngest brother is bound to be comparatively younger, sometimes as young as ten years.

Let us now examine the data regarding the age of marriage. These relate to 257 marriages for which complete data are available in the 224 sample families. Of these 206 marriages are from the urban area of Kathmandu and the remaining 51 from the rural area of Panga. The data have been divided into four periods according to the present age of husbands. The age-at-marriage of the wives is also given side by side. This serves to show the comparative trends not only between different age-periods, but also between the different sexes.

Of the 206 marriages from Kathmandu as many as 69.42% husbands were married when they were between the ages of 15 to 24. The highest number of marriages in this group (39.32%) had taken place when the hus-

bands were between the ages of 15 and 18 years. The number of husbands married below the age of 15 years come to 11.64%. These husbands number 24 and are more or less equally distributed in all the four age periods. Husbands married at an age above 24 years form 18.95%. We are therefore inclined to conclude that among the Newars, marriage of boys generally takes place when they are above fourteen, and mostly between 15 and 24 years.

With regard to wives in these marriages, more than half their number (55.88%) were married when they were between the ages of 15 and 20 years, the largest percentage (40.78) being of those wives who were married at the ages between 15 and 18 years. Women marrying at an age above 20 form a small percentage of 9.21. Those marrying at the age below 15 form comparatively a higher percentage (34.09). It is nearly three times the husbands married at this age group. The majority of such wives married below the age of 15 are within the age-at-marriage group of 13 and 14. It is therefore evident that the tendency to get the girls married is when they are between 13 and 20 years, as against the boys who get married between 15 and 24. The average age-at-marriage in respect of the husbands is 19.33 years and the corresponding age for the wives is 15.45 years. It is seen here that the age difference between the two spouses, on an average, is hardly beyond four years.

Coming to 51 marriages from Panga, the majority of husbands were married when they were above the age of 15 years. Such marriages form a percentage of 79.56, a little smaller than the corresponding figure for Kathmandu. Those married at an age below 15 is higher by 7.95 per cent when compared to Kathmandu sample. Such proportionately large extent of marriages at the lower age group in Panga, may be explained by the high value set on labour among the agricultural class, combined with

the comparatively less influence of urbanism. Every bride coming into the house means an additional labour unit. There is, however, not a single instance in the Panga sample, showing marriage below the age of 10 years.

With regard to late marriages i.e. marriages at above the age of 21, the Panga sample shows a smaller proportion. This may be due to the reasons already stated above.

So far as the wives are concerned in Panga, the tendency seems to be to marry at slightly earlier ages than in Kathmandu. As many as 45.08% wives in the sample were married when they were between the ages of 15 and 20 years, but 50.96% of them were married below the age of 15. This shows rather a lowering down of the age-at-marriage of women in Panga. The average age at marriage for the male in Panga works out to 17.56 years and for females to 15.07 years.

The data regarding late marriages in both the regions need some explanation. They are not, however, due to education. None of these late-married wives is known to have even primary education. In the case of husbands of Kathmandu, there are only ten who have reached matriculation or higher education; but not one husband in Panga falling under this group, has even primary education. Thus it leads us to conclude that the causes of these late marriages are problems partly sociological and partly economic. Among the well-to-do Newars, it is primarily due to the difficulty in finding a suitable mate. Such a difficulty arises from the fact that caste endogamy leaves little room for a wider field for the selection of a wife. Moreover, the tendency of regional concentration of marriage-ties adds to this difficulty. Some how or other one discovers that the family from where a suitable mate can be had is related through blood; and, therefore, marriage cannot take place



with that family. The other reason is economic. In Panga, it is especially poverty which compels a family to postpone the marriage of a son. I had come across a number of youths in Panga (not included in the sample) who were above 28 years and yet not married. They explained that, they did not have enough money to meet marriage expenditure.

As regards the restriction on marriage, the Newar-exogamy is based upon the consideration of blood. A man may not marry a woman who is related to him through blood. For such prohibition they take seven generations into consideration both on the father's and mother's side. The restriction on sexual relation between close relatives is very rigidly enforced. They taboo all sexual relations between brothers and sisters, including the parallel and cross-cousins, although many of the surrounding ethnic groups such as the Tamangs, Magars, Gurungs and Bhotias practise cross-cousin marriage. They not only regard it as an injury done to the community but also as a sin. The erring persons are excommunicated and from their hands nobody will accept water. It is even considered a sin to see their faces.

Despite the severe restrictions on sexual relations between close blood-relatives, cases of deviation from the traditional norms are not totally absent; but these are rare. A typical instance in this respect was found by me during the survey work in the Valley of Kathmandu. It reveals to us the attitude of the Newars towards incest. At the same time it points out the fact that discriminations are made between the male and female with regard to punishment.

Mr. X is a Shrestha, wealthy and of high social distinction. He had a son and a daughter by his former wife. After the death of his first wife, Mr. X brought a second wife. One day Mr. X came to know that his daughter

by his former wife was pregnant. When the girl was asked to name the person by whom she had conceived she named her own brother. She further stated that she had herself persuaded him to cohabit with her. The son of Mr. X also confessed to it. Mr. X asked his erring son to leave the house immediately and never to show his face again. While sending him away he said, "Now we cannot accept water from your hand; leave the Valley as soon as possible; otherwise the law of the country will not spare you". The boy fled the Valley and is reported to have gone to the 'tarai' and committed suicide. It is the belief among the Newars that a person guilty of incest never survives. The girl was given a different treatment. She was administered abortion and is said to have later on married into a good family.

Thus we should see that incestuous relation is never tolerated by the society. It is regarded as a crime as well as a sin. To allow a person who is guilty of incest to live in the house is believed to destroy the sanctity of the family and to enrage the *kul*-deity. It is, however, strange to note the differential treatment given to the females as against the males.

In the case of cognates the prohibition of seven generations has been somewhat relaxed. People have started marrying a woman from the third or the fourth generation, if the relationship is traced through the female links only. Thus the Jyapoos of Panga say that they have started marrying into the families of father's sister's daughter's daughter; mother's sister's daughter's daughter; and mother's brother's daughter's daughter.

This sort of laxity with regard to the relatives linked through the females is necessitated, it is said, by the comparative scarcity of brides. The Deo Bhajus, for instance, as we have noted elsewhere, have been forced to bypass the restriction on seven generations imposed on the cognatic side. Similar is the case with the

Shresthas. They have also started marrying into the family of cognates in the fourth or fifth generation.

The Newar's exogamy is completed by the inclusion of a few affinals. A man must not marry his wife's elder sister whom he approaches with respect, although all of his wife's younger sisters are his potential wives. But a man can marry his step mother's daughter by her former husband. There are two instances of such marriages drawn from the Manandhar caste in Kathmandu. Bhagwan married a woman who had a daughter by her first husband. This step daughter of Bhagwan was married to Bhagwan's son by his first wife. Similarly, after the death of Sete's mother, his father brought a second wife who had already a daughter and this daughter was married to Sete.

The gotra exogamy which is a feature of the Gorkhas, is not practised by the Newars nor do they observe any restriction on marriage between persons having identical family names.

The Newar exogamy culturally differs from that of the Tamangs who are numerous around the Valley of Nepal and who practise cross-cousin marriage like the other Nepalese tribes such as the Gurungs and Magars. On the other hand it is closer to the Rais and Limbus who dwell in the east, to Tharus in the south in the Tarai and to the Khasas who are now popularly known as Chhetris. In the case of the last named community, there is known to have existed in the past the practice of cross cousin-marriage. This has come to light by the publication of one of the dispatches of Gen. Bhimsen Thapa who had given orders to stop such a practice which was said to be prevalent among the Jaisi Brahmins of Panch-Thapaula (in Western Nepal).<sup>1</sup> He, however, appears to have made an exception in respect of five classes of Khasas the ground for which is not mentioned.

As regards endogamy, there is only one type of

restriction; that is, one should not marry outside the caste. In the event of a breach of this rule the person concerned is outcasted. Being outcasted implies the forfeiture of one's right to participate in the worship of Dewali. He is further debarred from participating in the ceremonial feasts in which the *Fukee* members take part. But this sanction comes into operation only if he accepts cooked rice from a wife who is lower in caste than himself.

If a wife belongs to a caste higher than that of her husband, she and her children are socially recognised for all purposes. But a woman of non-Newar caste is accepted only if she happens to belong to no other caste than the Brahmin.

A Newar who wants to get his son married makes a search for a suitable mate in the locality, failing which he would try in the neighbouring regions. Only after having failed to find in the neighbouring areas, does he proceed to search in the distant areas. This local preference for marriage has resulted in the concentration of Newar marriage-ties over a limited area. For example there are more marriage-ties between the localities of Kathmandu than between Kathmandu and its neighbourhood. Similarly, there are more marriage-ties between Kathmandu town and its neighbouring regions than between Kathmandu and Patan; there are more marriage ties between Kathmandu town and Patan than between the former and Bhaktapur which is situated towards the eastern extremity of the Valley.

Taking instances of marriage-ties from Panga, they too are mostly local. There also, the Newars first limit their search for a mate to the neighbouring settlements of Kirtipur, Chaubar, Nagaum and other regions all of which are within a distance of fifteen minutes' walk. Only if a suitable bride is not found here, do they go to further regions, such as Patan town and its neighbourhood.

Panga has, therefore, more marriage-ties with Patan than with Kathmandu.

We have on record 134 marriages from Panga for which data regarding their territorial extension are available. Of these marriages, 56 wives were locally obtained from Panga village itself, 65 wives were from the neighbouring settlements of Kirtipur, Bhajangal, Chaubar and Nagaum. Of the wives obtained from the distant regions, only four were from Kathmandu region (about three miles away from Panga), one from Banepa (outside the Valley) and the remaining ones from the regions of Patan and its neighbourhood. This shows that about ninety per cent of marriage-ties are concentrated locally.

Such territorial limitation of Newars' marriage depends on many factors, such as the concentration of one particular caste in a single region, inter-regional variation in the cultural life of the same caste, and difference in occupations. A typical example of caste-concentration is provided by the Udas caste. They are mostly found in Kathmandu town and rarely, if any, in the other towns of Patan and Bhaktapur. Therefore, their marriage-ties are concentrated within the Kathmandu region itself. It begins to weaken as we move further and further from it. As for cultural differences, the Jyapoos of Bhaktapur show reluctance to negotiate marriage with the people of the same caste in Kathmandu. Such reluctance is due to the fact that the latter are Buddha-Margi and eat boiled rice cooked by the Vanras, whereas the former being Sivamargi Hindus, do not. An additional ground for the refusal by the Jyapoos of Bhaktapur to have marriage-ties with the Kathmandu Jyapoos is that the latter work as casual labourers and palanquin bearers, which the former consider as derogatory.

The important sociological fact to note in this respect is that a large concentration of marriage relations over a proportionately smaller area, inter connecting loca-

lities and neighbouring villages, is consistent with the ritual functions that the married daughters have every now and then, to fulfil in the families of their birth. In every feast, ceremony and important festival, the married daughters and their children are the indispensable persons to be invited and feasted. Besides, in the event of any ceremony or marriage, it is again the married daughters and their husbands who have to welcome guests and look after the management of feasting. It is again the married daughters who have to fulfil a series of ritual functions in the event of a death in their family of birth. A smooth and efficient fulfilment of such a variety of roles materially depends on the close physical proximity between the married daughters and their parents. Otherwise, it would be difficult to fulfil these functions.

It may, however, be observed that such traditional preference for a wife to be locally obtained is slowly lessening at least in the case of high caste Newars whose educated sons and daughters prefer educated mates. Thus if it were to be a choice between a mate of nearer region who is not educated and the one from a more distant place, who is educated, the choice would, other things being equal, naturally fall on the latter.

The marriage seasons of the Newars is not different from that of other Hindu communities in the Valley. They will, however, avoid marriage in the months of *Chawla* (*Chaitra*), *Kachhala* (*Kartik*), and *Pohela* (*Paush*). They identify the first month with horse, the second with dog; while the third is believed to bring nothing. During the remaining months marriage can take place. They would, however, prefer *Chilla* (*Falgun*), *Silla* (*Magh*) and *Bachalla* (*Baisakh*).

Newari society recognises three ways of obtaining a wife. Firstly, the usual traditional marriage which involves the marriage procession; secondly, by dispensing with the ceremonies connected with the traditional form

and resorting to *Swayam Vara*; and thirdly by eloping with a woman.

In the traditional marriage the initiative is always supposed to take place on the bridegroom's side. Newar parents are not expected to bother about the marriage of their daughters. To show concern for a bridegroom is looked down upon by the society. Though such a traditional value still exists among them, many parents, in fact, do feel it necessary to make enquiries for suitable bridegrooms for their daughters. Of course, after having settled everything informally, the bridegroom's representatives are made to fulfil the traditional obligation of making a formal approach to the bride's parents. Any relative or a friend of the bridegroom's family may be entrusted with this job. The person concerned in his or her role of acting as a go-between is known as *lamee*. When the *lamee* goes to the house of the bridegroom, he is formally asked the purpose of his visit. After having known the purpose, the bride's family-members make enquiries about the bridegroom's family-background. When the proposal is acceptable to the bride's parents, they consult the other important members of the family. After having come to decide formally in favour of the proposal, the *lamee* is offered *saga(n)*. He is then feasted. He leaves the bride's house with a word that he would come back with the horoscope of the boy.

After a day or two the *lamee* goes with the horoscope. This time he has to face a larger circle of the bride's kin. The consent of the *Fukees* and of the *Thakali* of the Dewali guthi is necessary, because it is with them that the responsibility of admitting the bride to the clan membership rests. These men ensure that the proposed marriage does not go contrary to the norms. When they satisfy themselves that the bride can be socially accepted they put their seal of final approval; only after this, can the matter proceed further.

After fixing the date of marriage the preparations start. On the bride's side, the most important work which is much talked about, and is taken care of, is the preparation of flattened rice, bajee and liquor. The Newars attach much importance to these home-made items of food and drinks because if these are obtained from outside it dampens the prestige of the family. It takes months to prepare these items. Liquor is stored in huge earthen jars known as *tepa-ghyampa*. Liquor serves as the means for the manifestation of protest in case either of the parties cancels the marriage. As a retaliatory measure in such cases, the huge earthen jars containing the liquor are brought to the locality of the failing party. In front of its house, the liquor is spilt over and the jars broken to pieces. By this it is implied that the party is insulted and dishonoured.

While the marriage preparations are going on, the 'lamee' is again sent to the bride's parents' house to appoin the date of betrothal. The betrothal is called *Gue-bi-ye-gu*. There is no time limit fixed for this to take place. It might take place just a couple of days earlier to the marriage. Or sometimes, it is completed early simply to insure a suitable mate. In such cases, marriage is, however, postponed till the betrothed persons are quite grown up. The popular practice at present, however, seems to be to hold this function just a year before marriage.

Whereas an early betrothal is a safe way to insure a matc, it has its own problems. Many a time, it so happens that a betrothed boy or girl, in later age, does not like to be married to whom he or she is engaged. It may be that either of them has developed a love affair with a third party. The marriage, if it takes place, then could lead to divorce. Or it may happen also in quite a different way. Before the marriage could take place, the girl may run away with her lover or the boy may elope



with another girl. As the practice of obtaining a wife by such means is recognised, the betrothal automatically comes to an end in such cases.

On the day of betrothal, the family of the bride sends the *lamee* with ten betel-nuts to be presented to the parents of the boy. From the points of the parties involved, this function connotes two different meanings. On the bridegroom's side the function is termed as *Gue-Be-Ye-gu*, the giving of the betel nuts. On the bride's side it is known as *Gue-Kaye-gu*—the acceptance of betel nuts. The betel-nuts are sent by the bridegroom's family in a velvet bag. If the person is rich these may be sent in a silver case. Along with the betel nuts, a load of worshipping material and other ceremonial items such as a vermilion-box, ('Shina Mhu') and a brass mirror ('Jwalah-Nhaijka') are also sent from the bridegroom's side.

The priest from the bride's side offers worship, as in other domestic ceremonies, to Ganesh, the Sun, the Moon, the *Ashta matrikas*, Bhagwati, Bhairava, Kumari, *Das Dignpal*, *Kul-Deity* of the bride's parents and also a few evil spirits. It may be pointed out that this worship is always performed with the materials brought from the bridegroom's side.

After the *Puja*, the father of the bride formally accepts the bag containing the ten betel-nuts. Then the 'Thakali-Naki' of the bride's side applies vermilion on the bride's forehead and presents the set of new clothes brought from the bridegroom's side.

The privilege of receiving the *gue* (betel nuts), it may be remarked, has been assigned to the father of the bride. But it is so, only when there is no other elder male among the bride's kins-folk. Otherwise this function is fulfilled by the eldest male member among them. The traditional practice in this respect however is that it should be received by the *Thakali* of the *Dewali-guthi*. This tradition

is still adhered to by the Newars of Panga, although in Kathmandu town it is slowly breaking down.

After betrothal the bride is regarded as belonging to the family of her would-be husband, although her link with her parents' family is not completely broken. If the bride has now to participate in any social or ceremonial event in her parents' home, such expenses as would involve, should be borne by her would-be bridegroom's family and not by her parents. If a betrothed girl dies, her obsequies will have to be performed by her would-be husband who has to be the chief mourner. In the event of such a death, the parents of the deceased daughter do not call their own *Sana Guthi* members, but they inform the betrothed boy's family to take away the corpse. Thus '*Gue-bi-ye-gu*' is a *de jure* transfer of the girl from the family of her orientation to the family of her procreation.

The contract designed to unite the bride and bridegroom as signified by the '*Gue-bi-ye-gu*' ceremony is finally made effective by holding the ceremony of '*Lakha-Bi-ye-gu*'. This may take place a couple of days before the actual date of marriage. After this ceremony there is a regular inter-flow of social obligations between the two families, who were strangers to each other just before the '*Gue-bi-ye-gu*' ritual. From time to time the bridegroom's members will send seasonal fruits to the house of the bride's family and a chain of mutual affections is maintained. It adds to the strengthening of social bonds between the two families even before the marriage.

On the day of *lakha-bi-ye-gu* the bridegroom's parents have to give to the parents of the bride the traditional sweetmeat known as *lakha mari*. The eldest male member of the bridegroom's group brings the *lakha* sweets to the bride's parents' house. He is accompanied by the *lamee*. At this time they bring, as usual, a load of worshipping material. The *thakali naki* of the bride's parents' group puts a *teeka* of vermilion on the forehead of the bride.

Then the *sanga(n)* ritual takes place and later on the bridegroom's party is feasted. They return the same night.

The giving of *lakha* by the bridegroom is a necessary condition for fixing the date of the marriage-procession. When the *lakha* sweets are received by the bride's parents, these have to be distributed among the families of the bride's agnates and cognates. In principle, each family should get a *lakha* its size and variety depending on the nearness of relationship with the bride's parents' family. The following relatives are generally considered as falling within the circle of '*lakha*' distribution, the relationship being counted by taking the bride as the point from which the relationships emanate.

1. All *Fukee* families.
2. Father's sisters' families.
3. Mother's brothers' families.
4. Mother's sisters' families.
5. Father's brothers' wives' brothers' families.
6. Mother's mother's brothers' families.
7. Father's father's mother's brothers' families.
8. Mother's sisters' daughters' families.
9. Married sisters' families.
10. Brothers' wives' brothers' families.
11. Collateral brothers' wives' parents' families (if collaterals are joint with the bride's parents).
12. Families of cross-cousin sisters.

The distribution of *lakha* may sometimes cover a much larger circle of relatives.

Those relatives who receive the '*lakha*' are regarded as within the circle of relationship among the members of which, there should be a constant interflow of mutual obligations. The recipient families and the bride's parents' family have therefore mutual rights and duties existing between them. On the other hand a family of a cognate or affine excluded from receiving the *lakha* ceases to be

regarded as a close relative. Even among the relatives who receive *Lakha* there is an order of relationship. The size of the *lakha* determines such an order. This *lakha* distribution, when sociologically interpreted, is a manifestation of the structure of kinship-bonds.

If the number of families among whom the *lakha* is to be distributed is large, it poses a financial problem, since the cost would, in this case, run to several hundreds of rupees. The Newars have however standardised the number from 12 to 32.

There is also the tradition to pay cash *in lieu* of the *Lakha* sweets. Whenever cash is to be paid, the amount is generally calculated at a flat rate of Rs. 2/- per *lakha*. It is specially in vogue among the poor class families. In Panga village, as also among the poor families in Kathmandu, the bride's father usually asks for cash amount, such a right always being vested in him. Even among the high caste Newars like the Shrestha the payment of cash is preferred. For instance, in one of the cases the amount paid was rupees two hundred. Another Shrestha Newar had to pay six hundred rupees when he married a second wife. Among the Du(n)yeeya(n) Newars, in addition to the *Lakha* or its cost in cash thereof, a sum of rupees five is paid to the mother of the bride and they call it 'payment for the mother's milk'. But this payment for the mother's milk is not made by the other Newars in the Valley.

Though the payment of cash is looked down upon by the society, since it amounts to paying for a wife, it has not diminished at any rate; and it is a favoured practice among the poor. There is no social sanction against it, except the moral disapproval.

The giving of *Lakha* or cash payment in lieu thereof, can be avoided if an exchange marriage takes place. People, therefore, generally prefer exchange marriages. If a Newar wants to get his son married and if he wants to

avoid the giving of *lakha* he may do so by offering his own daughter or any other girl of his family in marriage to his would-be daughter-in-law's brother or to any man of that family. This facility of exchange marriage has to a great extent helped the Newars to mitigate their helplessness of not being able to give the *lakha*. Exchange marriage also helps in another way. It keeps down the cost of feasts on both the sides. With the same expenditure the feasts connected with two different marriages — that of the son and the daughter — can be accomplished. As revealed by their answers, the majority of the heads of the 224 families included in the survey take the view that this also helps to stabilise relationship between the bride and the members of her husband's family. The Newar family being too traditional, the daughters-in-law are at times subjected to cruelty and illtreatment by their mothers-in-law whose authority is enormous. A bride obtained in exchange marriage has less fear of being tortured since there is always the scope for retaliation by the family of her birth against their own daughter-in-law.

Exchange marriage fulfils another social function, rather in an indirect way. While the fear of retaliation limits the range of conflict, a fund of affection and love for the daughter-in-law is created by the realisation that she is the sister of the son-in-law of the family.

Wherever exchange marriage is not possible and cash has been paid in lieu of the Lakha, the relationship between the daughter-in-law and the members of her husband's household becomes more often than not a problem. For, very often the bride's husband's household-members boast of having literally purchased her and taunts are flung at her, which lead to an unhappy life. Even the community members in the locality talk much about such payment. The daughter-in-law develops an inferiority complex. This happens specially in the upper strata of the society where the women are little inclined

to create a scene by resorting to divorce. In the lower strata of the society, however, this could be easily solved. The daughter-in-law may go away with her lover who could pay back the cost of *lakha* to the injured husband.

While the custom of *lakha* is still a recognised practice among the majority of Newars, a few instances are not lacking where it has been altogether dispensed with. In many of these cases the bride's parents have been found not to accept the *lakha* from the bridegroom's side, but distributed it among their relatives by meeting the cost themselves. These are, however, exceptions rather than the rule.

A day before the date of the marriage-procession, the Kalya-Nhye-Ke-gu' ceremony takes place. It involves slipping over the bride's wrist an ornament known as *Kalya*. It is also known as 'Bahi', a term current in Hindi. The *Kalya* bears on it symbols of 'Ashta Matrika' which are meant to give protection to the wearer. The 'Kalyan-Nhye-Ke-gu, ceremony is more popularly followed by the castes such as the Shrestha, Vanra, Udas and Manandhar. It does not appear to be much in vogue among the Jyapoo Newars. One of the Jyapoos of Panga when asked in this connection, told that they did not have such a practice.

On the occasion of *Kalya-Nhye-Ke-gu*, the bridegroom's representatives proceed to the house of the bride's family. They are accompanied by a Vanra, in his capacity as a goldsmith. On reaching the house of the bride's family, worship is first offered to Ganesh. Then the Vanra goldsmith slips the 'Bahi' or 'Kalya' around the girl's wrist. The *prasad* of Ganesh is then offered to the bride. The *saga(n)* brought from the bridegroom's house is also presented to her. The function is rounded off with a feast.

It would be proper to draw here the attention of the reader to the development of a new social behaviour

between the bride and her kin after the fixation of the date of marriage-procession on the *Lakha-bi-ye-gu* day. It is the most momentous period both for the bride and her kinsfolk. It is not only the family in which she is born which is concerned with her, but also the families of all her parents' kin. She is the daughter of the community and her departure is now as sure as death. Soon she would no more belong to them since she would be joining another family, the family of her procreation. To her husband's family would she belong. This realisation is manifested in the custom of *Painaja*. The bride hereafter does not take her meal in her parents' house. Every day she has to visit the house of one of the families of her father's relatives including both affinal and consanguineal. First she has to visit, all the *Fukee* families. Then she has to visit the families of cognates. The last family which she visits and where she dines at night is that of her mother's brother. For her it is the closest and most beloved family among all the cognates. Her visit to her mother's brother's house usually falls on the day of the marriage-procession. On this day itself there is a feast in her parents' family for all the *Fukee* members. But the bride is conspicuous by her absence and may be enjoying the farewell dinner at her mother's brother's house.

The *Painaja* custom is an indication of the strong kinship-bonds which exist among the Newars as distinct from the Gorkhas who do not have such a custom. The significant point to note is that among no other community in Nepal is the farewell dinner to a girl, who is going to be married, given such an institutionalised form. This custom helps to identify the daughter of the family with the daughters of those entire families which are bound together by the ties of kinship.

The marriage-procession is called *la-swa-wa-ne-gu*. It means the taking out of a marriage procession. It denotes the act of going to the house of the bride's parents

and fetching the bride. It is also known by the term *Janta* derived from Nepali. The Gorkhas employ the term *Jantee* to denote their own marriage procession. The *Janta* always proceeds to the bride's house after sunset. The normal practice is that the invitees should join the marriage procession only after having taken their usual dinner at their own homes.

In a Newar marriage-procession, the bridegroom is conspicuous by his absence. He remains at home, while his elders and friends go to fetch the bride for him. The only exception is the Munshi sub-caste among the *Chhatharia* Newars, who do not follow such a custom. In their marriage procession the bridegroom is indispensable. A few Newars have, however, started the practice of bridegrooms accompanying the procession. But such cases are rare, and even in these, the bridegrooms are meant not for anything else than to look impressive at the procession. For, the bridegroom has no ceremonial act to perform at the bride's house. These bridegrooms who head the processions do so under the force of the prevailing Hindu custom of the Gorkhas and the Indian migrants who look down upon a Newar marriage owing to the passive role of the bridegroom.

On the day of the marriage-procession, a grand feast is held by the bridegroom's family. It is confined to the kinsmen. A few close friends may also be invited to this feast, but not all the invitees who join the marriage procession. The feast is arranged in three groups. The agnates are separated from the rest of the invitees. Again relatives other than the agnates are separated from the friends of the family. Such ordering of the participants in the feast has the desired effect of reinforcing the sentiments of agnatic solidarity and distinguishing cognates from the non-relatives.

In the above mentioned feasts a variety of buffalo meat dishes, flattened rice, all kinds of Newari sweets,



radishes, fried black-soyabean and several kinds of boiled seeds are included in the menu. The food has to be generally served—at least curd—by the sons-in-law of the house who are appointed to welcome the guests. A similar feast is also held on the bride's side for their own similar relatives and friends.

In the evening preparations are made for the marriage-procession. The procession is arranged in the traditional style. Two persons, each carrying a *sukunda* lamp, are placed at the head. Then follow the men of the Kusle and Kasai castes playing on their musical instruments. Now-a-days the Parbatia caste Damai is, in addition, employed to provide the music. The procession is headed by the eldest male member of the family or by the *Thakali*, head of the *Dewali* group. Besides, the eldest female member of the patrilineal group preferably the *Thakali-Naki*, is also required to accompany the procession in the case of a few castes. But among the Shresthas and other high caste Newars such a role is assumed by a woman of Jyapoo caste. Then follow other relatives and friends who in turn are followed by the bearers of worshipping material and the *dooly*, the traditional palanquin.

There is a special feature to be noted in respect of the persons who carry the worshipping material. In the marriages of the high caste Newars, these persons must be dressed as Tibetans. The explanation given for this practice is that these men are intended to impress upon the bride's party that the bridegroom's parents own a business-house in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. These men in Tibetan dress, together with the bearers of the *dooly*, are the first to reach the bride's place. Until then, the whole procession has to wait at a distance.

When the procession reaches its destination, the bride's people welcome it and the guests are conducted to a hall where they are served with betels, cigarettes and dry-fruits. It is, however, not a traditional prac-

tice to feast the members of the marriage procession, as is observed among the Gorkhas. After an hour or so all the processionists leave the bride's place, except the elders of the bridegroom and a few chosen friends, who stay for the night. Meanwhile the bride's people busy themselves with the functions that are to follow. These are exclusively confined to themselves and the members of the bridegroom's party do not participate in it.

The details of the ceremonies that take place there are as follows. First, Ganesh is worshipped. The other deities to be worshipped include, as usual, Bhairava, Bhagwati, *Ashta-Matrika* and the kul-deity of the bride's parents. When the worship is over, a communal feast takes place in which all the kin of the bride participate. This feast is known as *Sambaja-Nake-gu*. At this feast the priest sits at the head, followed by the bride, next the *Thakali* and then the other members in order. The elders of the bridegroom's family who remain there during the night may or may not be invited to join the feast. Then the *Thai-bhu* ritual takes place. The bride is served with food in the *Thai-bhu* dish. When the feast is over, the place is cleaned and washed with cow-dung solution.

The next event to follow is the offering of *Saga(n)* to the bride, and gifts which are possibly brought by the relatives. The traditional wedding presents are mostly copper utensils. The bride's parents also present, at least, a set of woollen clothes, saris, blouses, a shawl, two *tolas* of gold and eight *tolas* of silver. A big wooden box and a spinning-wheel are the two most essential traditional items to be given to the bride by her parents. The bride's mother's brother is expected to present a cow to her. And if he intends to gift a cow, two cords—one small and one big—are given to the bride as a token. A similar symbolic presentation is made when an immovable property is given to the bride as her dowry. If she is given a house, a brick

is the token; and if a piece of land, a handful of soil is put into her hands.

While the function is still going on in the house, a person is sent on behalf of the bridegroom's party to make a formal call on the bride's family, demanding that the bride be sent along with them. Such a call is made thrice. Each time the person goes up to tell the bride's party that since the girl has to be given away, there is no point in making delay whatsoever. Each time he comes, the bride's family offers him *saga(n)* and feasts him sumptuously. At the third formal call, the bridegroom's representative is supposed to insist upon that the bride be sent along with him. With the third formal call the farewell function starts.

This function is called *Gue-kaiye-gu*, the offering of betel nuts by the bride to her kin. The betel nuts are provided by the bridegroom's party. *Gue-kaiye-gu* signifies that the hour of departure for the bride has come. The bride now starts taking leave of her parents' kin by presenting ten betel nuts to each of them.

The distribution of betel-nuts by the bride follows, as usual, age seniority, beginning with the *kul* deity. The *Thakali* of her parents' *Dewali guthi* receives ten betel-nuts on behalf of each of the *Dewali* deities and also in the name of other gods and goddesses. Then the *Thakali* receives his own share. Those who receive betel-nuts last are the parents of the bride, to whom it is presented in a small bag, ritually known as *putu-gue*. Every relative who receives betel-nuts may have already presented the bride with some gift; but if not, this is the occasion for it.

While presenting the betel-nuts to the relatives, the bride is not expected to touch the feet of her seniors, except that of her mother.

The completion of *gue-kaye-gu* indicates that the bride is now ready to leave for the bridegroom's house. By this time the members of the marriage procession will have

already returned and been ready to take away the bride.

Just before the bride joins the bridegroom's party, another ritual is performed. This is called *Tuti-Bagi-Nhye-Ke-Gu*, which means making the bride wear the *bagi*, the leg-ornament. In this, the *Thakali* or the eldest male member of the bridegroom's group touches the feet of the bride and ties *bagi* to her feet. When this is over, the father of the bride or the eldest male member from her patrilineal group, as the case may be, lifts the bride up and carries her on his shoulders to the *dooly* and performs the ceremony of *Du-phanga-taye-gu*. This consists of covering the *dooly* with *du*, an embroidered shawl. The *dooly* is then lifted up by the bearers. This is the most momentous hour, an occasion of the grim realisation that now the daughter of the family no more belongs to her parents' home. Weeping starts, while the procession slowly begins to move, headed by the bridegroom's elders amid loud music.

The procession stops at the temple of Ganesh of the bride's parents' locality and, along with the bride, circumambulates the temple three times and then proceeds further. When the procession reaches the outskirts of the village or locality, it has to halt for a formal leave taking. The priests of the two sides engage themselves in ritual conversation. The priest on the bride's parents' side initiates the talk by saying: "Now hereafter, our daughter belongs to you people. She is so innocent; please treat her kindly — as your own daughter. See that she is happy." Then, on behalf of the bride's parents, he requests the bridegroom's priest to excuse them for the inconveniences caused to the groom's party at the bridal home. The bridegroom's priest replies suitably. He says, "Don't worry, she is as much our daughter as yours. We shall make our best efforts to make her happy. And, as for the inconveniences, there is nothing to be complained about. We did not have them, in the least. On the contrary, we were accorded the

best of hospitality and we thank you for that." After such formal conversations, the bride's people bid good-bye to the marriage procession and get back home. The procession moves on.

The bride, in most cases, is not taken straight-away to the bridegroom's house. She is first taken to a different place in the vicinity of the bridegroom's locality. Only after day-break is she taken to the bridegroom's house. This is known as *Sisi-taye-gu*. Meanwhile, just as when it started, the procession first proceeds to the temple of Ganesh on reaching the bridegroom's locality. It circumambulates the temple before proceeding to the groom's house.

The procession halts at the entrance of the bridegroom's house for the *Du-chhai-ke-gu* ceremony. All the female relatives of the bridegroom await at the door-way the arrival of the bride in order to welcome her in. Among these, the *Thakali Naki* and the *Noku-Naki* are the chief ladies who assume ritual leadership. The two ladies stand at the entrance. And the bride stands before them at the ritual spot known as *Chhetrapal*. She is flanked by two maidens on either side, representing *Syangini* and *Byangini*, each holding a traditional lamp known as *Sukunda*. The priest officiates in the function which starts with the worship of Ganesh, followed by the *kul* deity of the bridegroom, Bhairava, Kumari and the goddess of wealth. After this the *Thakali Naki* proceeds to give a ritual welcome to the bride. With a burning wick soaked in *ghee* she performs the *arati* of the bride; and showers rice and flowers over her. Soon after this the ritual of *Shiparathi* or *Pathi-Lui-gu* is performed by the *Thakali Naki*. The grain-measuring pot called *Pathi* is three times filled with fruits and flowers which are showered over the bride. Then the *Thakali Naki* daubs the forehead of the bride with vermilion and curd. The bride is now ready for being conducted to the house through the ritual of *Lasa Kusa*. But whether

or not she is to be immediately led to the place where the ceremonies are to take place is a matter of discretion. She may be allowed to take a little rest before she participates in the marriage rituals.

The first ceremony that takes place in the bridegroom's house is known as *Honke-gu*, the worship of the sacred fire. This is the first time when the bridegroom appears on the scene. He takes his seat facing the sacred fire. To his left sits his bride. The priest officiates in the *Hawan*. Occasionally the priest asks the couple and the relatives of the bridegroom to offer a mixture of incense and rice to the sacred fire. Besides the sacred fire, the several other deities that are worshipped include Ganesh, *Digu-Deya*, *Aga(n) Deya*, *Kumari*, *Pithas* and *Bhairava*.

After *Honke-gu*, the ritual of introducing the bride to the kinsfolk of the bridegroom begins. This is done as usual by the presentation of betel-nuts to each of the relatives of the bridegroom. It is similar to *Gue-Kai-gu* which is performed at the bride's parents' house. First, the *Thakali* of the *Dewali-guthi* of the bridegroom receives from the bride five betel-nuts each in the name of Ganesh, *Aga(n)-Deya*, *Kul-deity*, *Digu Deya*, *Bhairava* and *Kumari*. Then he accepts ten betel-nuts for himself. Thereafter, the bride presents betel-nuts one by one to each of the remaining relatives of the bridegroom. Every time she offers betel-nuts, she shows respect by bowing down with folded hands. Finally, she circumambulates the bridegroom, presents him too, with betel-nuts and bows down to his feet. The bride's hands are then washed and she is given flowers after which the couple worships the deities mentioned above. The *Thakali Naki* then puts a *teeka* made of a mixture of curd, rice, vermilion, first on her own forehead and then on that of the bride. After this, the *Thakali Naki* performs the ritual of cleaning the place in front of the couple with a broom. The cook has to appear now on the scene for a ritual. In a small leaf-

dish, he is given a share of food to be offered to the sun. For this ritual service, he is paid two Nepalese half-rupees.

The next ceremony is *Thai-bhu*, when the newly-weds taste food together. This is one of the most important parts of the marriage. It is designed to give social recognition to marital bonds. The bridegroom and the bride have to share food from the same plate. The *Thai-bhu* should, at least in theory, contain 84 items of food, called *Chaurasi Vyanjan*. Out of this, the bridegroom and the bride offer in turn a little food to the various gods and evil spirits with a view to propitiating them. This is called *Bali-taye-gu*. Only then does the ceremony of "eating together" start. It is known as *Sabja(n)-Nake-gu* and is in fact an equivalent of the Gorkha ceremony where the bride has to eat the left-over food from the bridegroom's plate.

The "eating together" ceremony is followed by the ritual of *Kalampo*. It is meant to ward off the influence of evil spirits. After every ceremonial eating, this ritual must be practised. A lighted wick is placed in a leaf-dish containing the left-over food and is thrown into the *Chhwasa*. The person who carries the food to the *Chhwasa*, it is believed, should not look back.

If the bride has not already undergone *Barha*, a special ceremony called *Sapya-ke-gu* is performed after *Honke-gu*. *Sapya-ke-gu* or *Kesh Vandhan* signifies a pretension on the part of the bridegroom to win over the bride. All the material needed for this ceremony is sent by the bride's parents. The hair of the bride is oiled, combed and tied into five knots by the bridegroom. The knots are made over the crown of her head and tied with red ribbons. Two combs, one silver and another ordinary, are inserted by the bridegroom into the chignons. He has also to apply *Aja* (collyrium) on her eyes and smear vermilion on the parting of her hair. While the bridegroom smears vermilion on her head, the bride is blindfolded with a piece of

cloth. The bridegroom later presents the bride with the *Jwalah-Nhaika* and *Shina-Mhu*. The *Thakali Naki* or the eldest female member of the family has to perform her usual role in this function also. She stamps *teeka* marks on the foreheads of the couple and presents them with traditional sweetmeat. The *Thakali Naki* also presents the bridegroom with a big earthen pot, containing sweetmeat—made of dry-fruits and jaggery—known as *Kalya Marhi*. To the bride she presents another type of sweetmeat called *Marhi-Kasi*. She then proceeds to present the bride with the *Tau-Maka*, which consists of a number of earthen pots placed one above the other in a pyramid form. Each of these pots contains a variety of grains, the bottom-most pot containing parched mecca. A piece of *Kali-Marhi* and some parched mecca are then given to each of the relatives present at the moment. When this is over, the bride exchanges a little of *Chhusya-mussya* with the bridegroom for the *Kali-marhi*. The ceremony gets over with the showing of *Jwalah-Nhaika* to the bride.

The bridegroom and the bride are not allowed to sleep together till the *vana-jala ritual* is completed. For this, the couple, accompanied by the *Fukee* members pay a visit to the presiding deity of the locality. After making an obeisance to the deity, the bridegroom has to perform *Sincho-faye-gu*, the ceremony of applying vermilion on the bride's forehead. A duck or a goat is generally sacrificed on this occasion in honour of the deity. Those who cannot afford a duck may substitute it with an egg. After this worship, the ritual of *saga(n)* takes place. Starting with the couple, each of the relatives is given *saga(n)* by the *Thakali Naki*. All of them sit together to eat it. Subsequently the ritual-eating of *Samai* follows. When they return home, the bride and the groom are regarded as husband and wife on all scores and are allowed to share the same bed. This ceremony also makes it incumbent on



the part of the parents to allot a separate room to the couple.

The same evening the members of the bride's parents' family and their relatives come to the bridegroom's place for the ceremony of *Khwa-swe-gu*. The purpose is to "see the face" of the bride. They bring with them several kinds of traditional Newari sweetmeat which include *Nya*, *Bya(n)* and *Bhattoo marhi*. *Nya* is in the form of a fish, *Byan*, a frog and *Bhattoo*, a pigeon. The members of the bride's parents' family are received on arrival by the bridegroom's kinsfolk and are offered betels. No adult female member accompanies this group. When all are seated, the bride comes and takes her seat, but not the bridegroom who should not be present at this function. The bride is offered *Saga(n)* on behalf of her parents' family. A set of new clothes is also presented to her. The bride leaves the place for the moment and reappears in the dress presented to her by her parents. She then gives ten betel-nuts to everyone of her parents' relatives who in turn give her some coins.

After *Khwa-Swe* the bride is taken away by her parents to their home along with the bridegroom. The bridegroom does not accompany them right from the start. The tradition is that the bride and her parents should go a little distance and wait there for the arrival of the bridegroom. This is the first time that the bride's parents and their relatives formally meet the bridegroom. He had so long been just a stranger to the bride's parents' family and he is to be considered a stranger till he is introduced to the members of the bride's parents' family and their relatives at a subsequent ceremony called *Fukee-Mha-si-ke-gu*. In it the bridegroom presents ten betelnuts to each of the relatives of the bride's parents. From the point of view of the bride's members, it is called *Gue-saki*, accepting the betelnuts. The procedure is like the one followed at the time of *Honke-gu*. The *Saga(n)* ritual takes place after this.

All of them sit together to eat *Saga(n)*. This is also the time for cracking jokes, in which mainly the unmarried daughters of the family and friends of the bride participate. The same night a communal feast is held in which the *Fukce* members of the bride's family have to sit together to dine with the bridegroom. This signifies the recognition of the bridegroom by the bride's members. After the feast, the two families are united and the bridegroom is now no more a stranger. Hereafter, if any death occurs in the family of his wife's parents, he has to observe death-pollution, as his wife does, for a period of four days.

Marriage songs are a speciality among many of the Himalayan communities but among Newars this does not seem to be so. I had the occasion to attend a number of Newar marriages but in none of these could this practice be found. However, a Newar gentleman has drawn my attention to a ditty which refers to the advices given by the parents of a bride while she prepares to go to her husband's home. In it the father asks his daughter to proceed to her husband's home but, in case she did not like to live there, asks her to come back as a free woman after four days. This song is significant inasmuch as it refers to the liberty enjoyed by a woman to abandon her husband at her will. But nowadays no such song is sung.

A note of seriousness is maintained throughout the marriage, possibly to emphasise the new responsibility that the woman has to shoulder as against the care-free life in her parents' home.

The Gorkhas in this respect present a contrast. Their marriage is punctuated with songs, mirth and gaiety. They have a custom called *Ratauli* which is rather unique. On the day when a Gorkha marriage procession leaves for the bride's home, all the women of the locality and of the family of the bridegroom's side get together at night to play *Ratauli*. They play lovers and beloveds—the women themselves assuming the role of men. The women repre-

senting men attach to themselves artificial male organs and indulge in mock sexual acts with other women. The night is thus spent in symbolic display of sexual frenzy, accompanied by songs and music. Men are tabooed from seeing this feminine orgy.

As would be seen from the foregoing description, a Newar traditional marriage is a long series of ceremonies involving little or no role of the bridegroom till the bride goes to her husband's home. It involves a great deal of expenditure on feasts. The Newars have, however, introduced an innovation: they have adopted the *Swayamvara* marriage. In a *Swayamvara* marriage, the bridegroom and bride go to a temple of Ganesh and the former is garlanded by the latter. Thus the marriage is solemnized. This type of marriage is gradually becoming popular in the town of Kathmandu. People in the village of Panga have not, however, adopted it. In the eastern part of the Valley, the Newars of Bhaktapur town still prefer either the traditional marriage or marriage by elopement.

Sometimes to dispense with the cost of feasts and the *lakha*, a third variety of marriage is adopted. It is a variant of the traditional type. Both the bridegroom's and bride's parties agree between themselves to solemnize the marriage secretly and to carry out all the stages of traditional ceremonies without inviting any of their relatives. This spares the huge expenditure on feasts.

But the most common method of obtaining a wife is to elope with a girl of one's choice. This not only hits at the orthodoxy of the parents, but also spares a man and a woman of the financial burden that the traditional marriage involves. Elopement is often occasioned by the obduracy of the girl's parents; but at times a man resorts to it when he is unable to bear the marriage expenses. Thus, he runs away with the girl and hides her for four days, after which he can bring her out. Both of them are now legally and socially regarded as husband and wife. But if

the parents are able to find out their eloped daughter within four days, they can claim her back. Such a girl, despite the possibility of having cohabited with her lover, is regarded a virgin.

The status of a woman who becomes a wife by elopement is in no way diminished. She enjoys the same social privileges and legal rights as enjoyed by any other wife. Though in the beginning the parents of the bride show displeasure, they subsequently take it as a matter of course and the normal relationship is soon established.

Marriage by elopement is more common among the castes of lower economic status, though it is not totally absent among the well-to-do high caste Newars. In theory the high caste Newars generally consider elopement disgraceful. All the same it is tolerated. This writer came across a Buddhamargi priest, all of whose four daughters had eloped with their lovers. The girls were not subjected to any stigma, because their lovers were of the same caste.

The Jyapoos find in marriage-by-elopement a convenient way to overcome financial obstacle. Elopement is prevalent among the other communities of Nepal as well. It is practised by the Gorkhas, who, however, always make a distinction between a wife obtained through formal marriage and the one who is simply kept as a wife. This distinction is reflected in matters of social privileges and inheritance rights.

#### REFERENCE

1. Chittaranjan Nepali (in Nepali) — General Bhimsen Thapa, p. 206-7

## 9. THE FAMILY

ON marriage the bride loses membership of her natal family and becomes a new member of her conjugal family. The loss of the old membership and the gaining of the new one have far reaching consequences as regards her legal, social and political rights. From the point of view of her family of birth she is an out-group member. Her closer links with her conjugal family are reflected in the ceremonial rights and obligations which she loses in one home and gains in the other. Thus, in the event of her death her obsequies are performed by the members of her husband's group. On her death her parents and other kin have now to observe only a four-day death-pollution. She, too, need not observe hereafter a thirteen-day death-pollution in the event of a death in her parents' family or in any of their *fukees*. Now she has to observe only a four-day pollution. But in relation to her own conjugal family and its kin the pollution-observance is for a thirteen-day period, showing her ritual solidarity with this group.

The new relationship emerging from her marriage is also expressed in terms of her right to participate in the ancestral worship and communal feasts. On marriage, she is excluded from participation in the *Dewali* worship and the ceremonial feasts of her parents' group.

The links with her natal family are not, however, abruptly terminated on her marriage. She may still be regarded as a member of her natal family for a year at least, from one important point of view. She is permitted to join in the worship of her parents' *Dewali* and feasts for a period of one year following her marriage. It implies then that she is not yet a full-fledged member of her husband's group since she has yet to be ceremonially admitted to her husband's *Dewali* and the feasts connected with it.

Break in the residential continuity of the bride is another important consequence which follows her marriage. The bride has to leave her parental home to join the home of her husband. The shift of residence may, however, be deferred, if she is too young to assume her wifely responsibilities. This usually happens when an early marriage takes place. In such a circumstance, both the uniting families agree to allow the bride to live in her parents' home till such time as deemed necessary.

The emotional attachment of the bride to her parents' family is, however, very strong. In this respect the Newars are quite noteworthy. Here, it is interesting to note that a married woman while referring to her parents' home says *Jhi-Thaye* or *Tha-Chhe*. It means 'our house' or 'in our house'. In contrast with it, her husband's home is not referred to as "ours". The descriptive term *Bhata-chhe* is used. It means 'husband's house'. While expressing that she has to go to her conjugal home she says *Bhata-Li-ni-gu-Chha*, which means going to the home of husbands (in a general sense) or husband (in a particular sense). The close relation with her parents' home is further expressed not only in terms of tender feelings but also in terms of innumerable contacts. For a year or two, a great part of the bride's time is spent in her parents' home with only occasional visits to her husband's home. It is a widely prevalent practice among the Newars for the mar-

ried daughters to come to live with her parents for a few days in a week until she gives birth to her first child.

After the lapse of a year or two, visits to her parents home slow down in frequency. She, nevertheless, continues to maintain fairly good contacts with her parents. The nature of Newar marriage-ties, confining to a limited area, as stated earlier, contributes to the existence of close relationship between the married daughters and their parents.

A woman, when she has come to her natal home, cannot go back of her own accord. It is deemed indecent on the part of a woman to go back to her husband's home without being sent for. Many a time it so happens that the husbands do not send for their wives with the intention of deserting them. Such instances are not rare in the Valley of Kathmandu. The 29 women from Kathmandu and one from Panga who are recorded under "desertion" in the sample were actually cases where the husbands did not send for them. It was reported that there was no hope of their being called back. This convention serves an important social purpose, though it has its own defects. On the one hand it enhances the prestige of the woman and makes her feel every time that she is wanted in her husband's home. On the other hand in a community in which divorce is widely practised and in which women have comparatively greater opportunities for dispensing with their husbands, this convention is the only means for men to get rid of their wives. This practice, therefore, acts as a compensatory factor in favour of the husbands who otherwise do not have the unilateral right to desert their wives, if they so desire. However, a wife deserted thus retains her legal claims till the marriage is dissolved. After a good deal of time, the wife takes it for granted and the best course for her would be to agree to a divorce.

Though residential transfer of the bride to her hus-

band's home is one of the outcomes of marriage, there is an alternative arrangement under which the husband comes to live with his wife in his father-in-law's house. This arrangement is known by the term *Ghar Jawain* which is found in India as well. This term is borrowed by the Newars from the Gorkhas. Under this custom a man, who does not have a son but only daughters, may invite one of his sons-in-law, to live in his house, instead of sending away his daughter to her husband's home. Instances of this custom are also found in historical records. King Jayastithi Malla, the Newar Malla sovereign of Nepal, is said to have been a *Ghar-Jawain*.<sup>1</sup> He succeeded to the throne of Nepal by marrying princess Rajalla Devi. In one of the inscriptions attributed to the Malla period, Jayastithi Malla is introduced as Rajalla-Pati, which means husband of Rajalla.<sup>2</sup> This, therefore, not only indicates that it was a custom at least among the Mallas in the early times, but also suggests that a subordinate position is accorded to a *Ghar-Jawain* in relation to his wife.

At present, however, *Ghar Jawain* is looked down upon by the Newars, and no man, who is conscious of his prestige, would choose to be a *Ghar Jawain*. People are forced to accept such a derogatory status only on grounds of poverty. Parents are also very reluctant to allow their sons to be *Ghar Jawain*. In Panga village, only two instances of this practice were reported. In addition, a blacksmith was reported to be contemplating to have a *Ghar Jawain*. There were also a few instances of it reported from Kathmandu town. In the 224 sample families, there was not a single instance of it. We can, therefore, say that the institution of *Ghar Jawain* is not widely prevalent among the Newars.

The reasons for keeping a *Ghar Jawain* is always said to be the failure of a man to beget a male issue. In all the instances referred to above, this was the reason given. The usual practice is to ask the husband of one's youngest



daughter to come to live in the house as a *Ghar Jawain*. Under the institution of *Ghar Jawain* the property is always inherited by one's own daughter and not by the son-in-law.

The *Ghar Jawain*, along with his wife and children, is regarded as an out-group member by the kin of his father-in-law since he and his family belong to a different lineage-group. Mere residential transfer of the man from his own home to that of his father-in-law's, does not alter the fact that he and his family always belong to his own patrilineal group. A *Ghar Jawain*, therefore, cannot perform the obsequies of his father-in-law, nor of any member of the latter's family, though his son may do so.

The *Ghar Jawain* more often than not comes in conflict with his father-in-law's kins-folk. He is very often the cause for the withdrawal of tender feelings subsisting between his wife and her parental kin. Such a conflict at times takes a serious turn, specially when his father-in-law dies intestate. A typical example of it is provided by the case of one Mangaldas who had become a *Ghar Jawain*. The father-in-law of Mangaldas died before he could transfer his property in favour of his three daughters, including the wife of Mangaldas. The two sisters-in-law of Mangaldas were not then married. They all lived together and Mangaldas looked after the property as well as managed the shop of his deceased father-in-law. The kin of his father-in-law wanted to take possession of the property but they could not, because there were still two unmarried daughters of the deceased, who could be regarded as legal heirs. Mangaldas, desirous of having a *de facto* control over his father-in-law's property, knew this too well and, therefore, he took all possible precautions to see that his two unmarried sisters-in-law lived with him. He also planned not to arrange for their marriages with a view to preventing his father-in-law's kin from advancing any claim to the property. Somehow or other the kin of

his father-in-law succeeded in persuading those unmarried girls to live with them. After some time they were married off. Now the ground being clear, Mangaldas and his family were forcibly driven out of the house and deprived of the shop also. This example is enough to show the bad blood that a *Ghar Jawain* creates, apart from his being looked down upon by society.

Polygyny is comparatively rare among the Newars in contrast to the Gorkhas who widely practise it. Though many rich Newars in the Valley are found keeping concubines, the majority in the community still do not have more than one wife at a time. A Newar prefers to be polygynous only under one condition, i.e. when the first wife fails to bear a child for him.

In the 257 marriages recorded both from Panga and Kathmandu there are only eight instances of polygyny. Five of these relate to the Kathmandu sample and the rest to Panga. These together form 3.12 per cent of the total marriages. In all these cases the husbands were found to be living with not more than two wives. The reasons given for these polygynous marriages was the failure of the first wife to bear a child. In each of these cases, the consent of the first wife was invariably obtained before contracting the second marriage. The average age-at-marriage of the first wives in these cases is 15.12 years and their average age at the time of their husbands' second marriage is 32.37 years. Their husbands' age-at-second marriage is 33.37 years and the average age-at-marriage of the second wives works out to 20.05 years. Taking the age of 15 years as the child bearing stage of the Newar woman, the husbands in question appear to have married a second time only after waiting for about 16 years. Looking at the sentiments for a child and the social needs that are attached to it among the Newars, it is quite normal for a man to have a second wife, when the first wife fails to bear a child even after such a long

time. The gap of age between the husband and the second wife in these polygynous marriages is 12.87 years, which is rather high. This can be explained by the fact that late marriages among Newar women are rarely to be found. Therefore, a man who needs a second wife must look for a woman within the lower age groups.

While polygyny is approved of but not so widely practised,\* polyandry is non-existent; and cannot be even thought of. It may be mentioned in this connection that B. H. Hodgson had remarked in 1880 that the Newars were once known to have been polyandrous.<sup>3</sup> But he did not give any evidence in support of his statement. However, there are some grounds to suspect former existence of polyandry among the Newars, as some of the customs among them are suggestive of survivals. For example, the kinship terms used to designate the husband's brothers, *Dara Bhata* and *Kija Bhata* which mean 'elder husband' and 'younger husband' respectively, suggest in this direction. Further, as already stated, while referring to one's conjugal home, a Newar woman says, *Bhata-Pini-gu-chhe* which implies not 'husband's house' but 'husbands' house' (used in plural). In the *Benke-gu* ceremony of the child, the recognition of fatherhood by placing the child on the lap of the father also points out to this direction. Moreover, the customary freedom of a Newar woman for the successive re-marriages and divorces also shows that this could only be a step forward from the stage of polyandry.

At present the custom of levirate is not practised by the Newars. It is also legally prohibited in Nepal. The elder brother's widow occupies a position sentimentally on a par with that of the mother and, therefore, she has to be approached with reverence. The younger brother's wife is treated on a par with daughters-in-law. Levirate

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\* A recent legislation in Nepal has prohibited polygamy. It has also fixed the age difference between husband and wife to a maximum of 20 years.

appears to have been widely prevalent in the former days among all the four varnas and 36 castes of Nepal. It was later prohibited by an order of General Bhimsen Thapa during the first half of the 19th century. In one of his dispatches, Gen. Bhimsen Thapa had referred to the existence of this custom and he had laid down certain punishments for those who practised it.<sup>4</sup>

Marriage among the Newars can be dissolved in two ways: By resorting to the regular divorce procedure and by the wife's running away with her lover. Under the system of formal divorce, both the parties mutually agree to break the marriage-bonds by signing the divorce papers called *Par-Pachuke-Patra*. But none of the parties can effect a divorce by his or her own unilateral decision. But the second method vests enough liberty in the woman to dissolve marriage. A woman, when dissatisfied with her husband, picks up a lover and runs away to live with him. The prevailing custom recognises only the payment of compensation to the injured husband, and not her return to his home.

About a century and a half ago, according to Kirkpatrick, the Newar woman was at liberty to divorce one man after another on the slightest pretext.<sup>5</sup> O'Malley<sup>6</sup> wrote in 1911 that Newar women used to leave their husbands and remarry whenever they wanted. The only intimation necessary, he reported, was to place two betel-nuts on her bed while leaving the house. She was then free to choose another husband. The above statements still hold good, subject to some modification. While the placing of the betel-nuts on the bed as an intimation for the dissolution of marriage is still resorted to, it is no longer a popular feature now. It is confined to the Udas and Manandhar castes only.

O'Malley had further remarked that a woman could undo her marriage bond by placing two betel-nuts on the chest of a dying husband. This practice, too, is in exis-

tence, but is followed only by the Buddhamargi castes. I found three such cases in Kathmandu, two of which relate to the Udas caste and the third to Chitrakar caste—all Buddhamargi Newars. Recourse to this practice is taken when the wife is quite young and issueless.

The placing of betel-nuts on the chest of the dying husband frees the woman from the obligation of observing death-pollution and mourning for a year. A woman, desiring not to be a widow, finds it an expedient device. On the part of the kin of the deceased also it is much welcomed, since the divorcing wife forfeits her claim to her deceased husband's property. Though this practice is recognised, it has almost fallen into disuse now. The rarity of cases in this regard is enough to support my view. In the village of Panga no one is reported to have followed this practice. With them, the usual way to divorce is either to sign the divorce papers or to elope with a lover.

As regards the liberty of a woman for abandoning her husbands one after another, it has been much restricted now. Though in theory the society still recognises such unlimited liberty of a Newar woman, it has come to be curbed under the force of public opinion. A woman contracting a fourth husband is legally deemed to be on a par with a prostitute though socially she retains her original status.

Divorce is allowed on many grounds such as adultery, barrenness, affliction of venereal or incurable diseases and marital incompatibility. But most divorces that take place among the Newars, it appears, are due to conflict between the wife and her mother-in-law. A few examples which are to follow are typical and illustrative of the circumstances that generally lead to dissolution of marriage.

Chandra Bahadur, a Shrestha by caste, was married in 1947 at the age of about 25 to a woman of 20. His marriage was arranged by the parents. The couple loved each other very much and lived happily for two years.

His wife was, however, alleged to have not been able to pay much attention to her mother-in-law. Consequently, her mother-in-law felt offended and decided to get rid of her. Without the consent of their son, the parents sent away the daughter-in-law to her parents' home. Chandra Bahadur could not oppose it. Mrs. Chandra Bahadur was not called back for about two years. Chandra Bahadur's parents arranged for his second marriage. Hearing this, Mrs. Chandra Bahadur, without caring for the convention of being sent for, returned to her husband's home. Her parents-in-law prevented her from entering the house by bolting the doors. Chandra Bahadur was helpless, though he wanted to welcome his wife. He could not question the authority of his parents. His mother poured down cold water on her daughter-in-law from the window. The police intervened in the matter and caused the door of the house to be opened. And Mrs. Chandra Bahadur entered the house. Three days later the divorce papers were signed with mutual consent of both the parties. The divorced woman was living in her parents' house during my enquiry.

Durga Ranjitkar was married at 22 to a girl of 20. The couple had education, respectively, upto standards X and VIII. They wanted to live according to their progressive outlook, enjoying freedom to move about together. But this militated against traditional Newar life. The parents of the boy did not like their daughter-in-law to enjoy freedom of this kind. They, therefore, sent her to her parents' home, never to be called back. Divorce was effected later with the mutual consent of both the parties.

There is another instance in which a man was forced by his parents to divorce his wife on the grounds that she neglected domestic responsibilities. Hari Bahadur was married when he was 25. His wife bore him three children, the first after two and a half years, the second a year later, and the third after an interval of one and a half years. By this time the conflict between the wife and her

mother-in-law had reached a breaking point. The former was sent to her parents' home and never called back. Hari Bahadur could not oppose this. After a few years, Hari Bahadur's wife went to the court praying for a maintenance allowance. The husband told the court that he was prepared to take his wife back with him. But Mrs. Hari Bahadur agreed to live with her husband, provided they lived separately from her parents-in-law. Hari Bahadur was not prepared to accept this condition and the court gave the ruling that the wife be paid Rs. 800 every six months till she contracted a second marriage.

There is a fourth case relating to dissolution of marriage as a result of conflict between the woman and her mother-in-law. It was alleged that Nani Chhori was not allowed by her mother-in-law to have conjugal life with her husband. Therefore, she came back to her parents' home. Six months later she was called back by her father-in-law, but Nani Chhori was again subjected to cruelty by her mother-in-law who did not, as usual, allow her to share the bed with her husband. Annoyed with her mother-in-law, she came back to her parents' home. The divorce was effected by mutual consent.

The fifth case is of Dwarka who was married at the age of 15 to a girl of 14 in 1940. The marriage was negotiated by their parents. Both the families were quite well off but the couple had no education. They lived a very happy married life for 12 years. But they were childless. The parents of Dwarka compelled him to bring a second wife, though it was much against his will. The parents of the first wife advised their daughter not to create any scene but proceed with the matter quietly. One day the first wife's parents invited their daughter and son-in-law to a feast. After the feast, the parents-in-law politely declined to send their daughter to Dwarka's home. They plainly told him that, since he had married a second time, there was no point in sending their daughter along with

him. Later the divorce was effected. The divorced woman was living with her parents at the time of this inquiry.

These examples show that the conflict between a woman and her mother-in-law is commonly the cause for a divorce. In such cases, the husbands appear to be helpless against the decision of their parents. In a Newari family an individual is unable to revolt against the decision of the elders. The conflict can be understood if we knew the nature of responsibility that a bride has to assume in her conjugal home. In a Newari household very rarely, even if it is quite well off, is a servant employed. Traditional views insist that all domestic work should be done by the housewives themselves. Women have to cook, clean the utensils, wash the clothes, fetch water and serve all the senior members of the house. These duties generally fall upon the daughters-in-law. The youngest daughter-in-law is the one who is hit the hardest. Apart from these, a daughter-in-law is expected to be always submissive and be at the beck and call of her mother-in-law. Conflict is, therefore, bound to arise, when a daughter-in-law fails to fulfil the roles traditionally expected of her. In such conflicts, it is the mother-in-law who has always the final say in the matter and the son can hardly go against his mother's decisions.

While the traditional conflict between her mother-in-law and a woman plays a major role in the occurrence of divorces, there are other causes too which lead to such a situation. Dhirajman, a Jyapoo, was married when he was 12 to a girl of 10. They lived together for many years, but the wife bore no child. Moreover, she was suffering from goitre. As she used to neglect household chores, and also lacked domestic etiquette, she was sent back to her parents' home. And Dhirajman married another woman. The rejected wife was living in her parents' home at the time of this inquiry.

Another example of marriage dissolution is provided by



the case of Damodar. Damodar was married to Shanta Devi from Banepa. It was a case of early marriage. The boy had pock-marks all over his face. On attaining maturity, the girl did not like her husband. Meanwhile, she fell in love with another man with whom she ran away to Palpa (West Nepal). She bore two children to her second husband. Damodar did not bother about her and married another woman.

There are cases relating to the dissolution of marriage on the ground of theft by the wife. Of these, one relates to Bhaktapur region. Nani (40), a Shrestha woman, was married at the age of 12. She stopped living with her husband after five years, as she was accused of stealing a golden ring. Nani's husband was not prepared for a divorce. Thereupon she sought legal remedy and the court decided in favour of a divorce. Nani was given back the entire *stridhan*. She, too, had to return all the ornaments given by her husband. After two years, Nani went to live as wife with another Shrestha man. She had two sons and three daughters at the time of my inquiry.

Another instance of divorce as a result of stealing habit of the wife is again from a Shrestha family. X was married at the age of 22 in 1942 to a Shrestha woman of 20. The couple lived happily for two years and had a baby. The wife, it was alleged, started stealing the property of her husband. This irritated the husband. He brought another woman as his wife. The first wife eloped with a lover. The baby was being brought up by its maternal grand-parents during my field work.

Quite an important reason for divorce is the conflict between co-wives in a polygynous family. There are three instances on which information was available. In all these cases, the woman either went to live with her parents, preparatory to a divorce by mutual consent or took to a second husband, resulting in an automatic dissolution of the first marriage.

From the few representative examples of marriage dissolution given above, it would be seen that it is easier for a Newar individual to break the marriage-bond by the unilateral decision of either of the parties. The husband is, however, granted divorce only on the ground of adultery. If he fails to make out a case for adultery, he would not obtain a divorce. Therefore the alternative for him is to send his wife away to her parents' home, never to be called back. The wife has thus no choice but either to live a life of enforced separation or submit to her husband's proposal for a divorce. In the former case she is entitled to alimony.

But on the wife's side, divorce is far easier. When she is bent upon abandoning her husband, she cannot be prevented from doing so. If regular divorce is not possible, she elopes with her lover, which has the effect of automatically dissolving the marriage.

When a woman leaves her husband and takes another man, the injured husband is entitled to the return of marriage cost from his rival. Such expenses are fixed by law and vary from caste to caste.

The principle of fixing the amount of marriage cost is, it is stated, based on the number of *lakha* and not on the actual expenditure on marriage. The payment is calculated at the rate of Rs. 2.00 per *lakha* sweet, as earlier stated.

The amount of compensation decreases by half according to the number of husbands a woman has left. Thus while the first husband gets the full compensation, the second husband gets half of what he would have paid to his predecessor, if the woman takes to a third husband. But the third husband gets nothing, if the woman leaves him also and takes to a fourth one. For, such a woman, as stated earlier, is legally treated as a prostitute and no compensation is admissible on her account. It may be remarked here that so long as the woman does not violate the caste endogamy, the frequent changing of

husbands does not affect her social and legal status, though she may be much looked down upon by the society.

Irrespective of whether a marriage is dissolved through regular divorce or desertion, a woman is always entitled to her *stridhan* given to her on her marriage by her parents, relatives and friends. She has, however, to return the ornaments given to her by her divorced or deserted husband. A Newar woman always keeps a list of such *stridhan*, a duplicate copy of which is retained by her parents.

In the event of the dissolution of marriage, the children always belong to the father. If a child is too young to be separated from its mother, it is allowed, by mutual consent, to be in the mother's custody, in which case the divorced father must defray the cost of its upbringing. The prevailing law stipulates that the child should remain with the mother till the age of 12.

Many women, due to the fear of the loss of respectability, especially when they are quite advanced in age, do not desire re-marriage. In such a case, women are entitled to a maintenance allowance so long as they do not re-marry. The minimum maintenance allowance fixed both in kind and cash includes daily two *manas* of rice and other necessary food material on a proportionate basis, two sets of clothes per year and a fixed amount of cash depending on the economic status of the husband.

In spite of such freedom for the dissolution of marriage, many a Newar woman does not like to break the marriage-bond. Her sentiments and love for her unkind husband may be judged from her strong disinclination to leave him and her attempt at reconciliation. Evidence of this can be provided by the description of the *aba-sa(n)*, a penance undertaken by a wife with a view to making a final attempt at rapprochement. When the wife is living in her parents' home, on account of her not being called back by her husband, she tries to manifest her deep affections for her husband by fasting. A certain place of wor-

ship or a temple is selected to start the fast. It is observed either in the month of *Sravan* or *Kartik*. The important temples which these rejected wives choose for this purpose include Adinath at Chaubar, Bungadeya on the bank of Bungamati river, Pasupati on the bank of Bagmati and the Swayambhu temple. During the period of fasting they lie down on the ground and live on three palmsful of water. On the sixth day, their husbands are expected to come to fetch them back. A husband who comes to fetch his wife holds a grand feast in which all his consanguineal relatives are invited to participate; the wife is then brought back home in a procession. If the husband does not turn up on the sixth day, the fasting wife is taken away by her parents who hold a similar feast for their own kinsmen. Thereafter, the rejected wife is considered as a free woman and can marry any body whom she likes without any legal obstacles. No compensation can be claimed by her failing husband when a re-marriage takes place in this situation. The failure of her husband to come to fetch his wife is regarded by the Newars as a failure to honour the marriage contract and, therefore, the marriage is treated as dissolved. In 1958, twenty such married women were reported to be observing *Aba-sa(n)* at the Adinath temple alone. They belonged to the adjoining regions of Patan, Chaubar, Panga, Kirtipur and Nainagam.

Let us now proceed to examine the data on re-marriage, divorce, desertion and widowhood.

Of the 353 married men and 381 married women, only 13.8 per cent have re-married. Obviously the majority of them (79.2 per cent) were leading unbroken married life during this inquiry. As between the two sexes, men seem to form a higher percentage (23.8) to their married total than women (4.9). Even if we include the 38 women in the sample, who have been living in their parents' home because their husbands did not call them back, the com-

TABLE I

	Males		Females		Total	
	No. of persons	Percentage	No. of persons	Percentage	No. of persons	Percentage
Married once	256	72.6	324	85.0	580	79.2
Divorced but not re-married	7	1.9	1	0.2	8	1.0
Deserted but not re-married	6	1.7	38	9.9	44	6.0
Re-married after the failure of marriage	84	23.8	18	4.9	102	13.8
Total	353	100.0	381	100.0	734	100.0

bined percentage comes to only 14.8. That is to say, that men are more affected by the dissolution of the first marriage than women. This clearly shows that women, in spite of their customary privilege to remarriage, do not show a high incidence.

The average age of these re-married men and women were 48 years and 37 years, respectively, at the time of inquiry. The average age-at-first marriage of these husbands works out to 17 years, while their average age-at-re-marriage is 24. Thus it seems that re-marriage of these persons has taken place after about 7 years of the first marriage.

TABLE II

Causes of Re-marriage	Males		Females	
	No. of persons	Percen- tage	No. of persons	Percen- tage
Due to death of the spouse	42	50.6	2	11.1
After divorcing the first spouse	12	14.1	7	38.9
After the women had eloped	22	25.9	9	50.0
Polygamous marriage	8	9.4	-	-
Total re-married persons	84	100.0	18	100.0

The causes of re-marriage show that most of the men (50.6 per cent) have re-married because of the death of the spouse. The incidence of polygyny is as low as 9.4 per cent. In the majority of these polygynous marriages, the ground was always the failure of the wife to bear a child.

Standing divorces work out to only one per cent of the

total married persons. As between men and women, the latter appear again to be hardly significant. But it is more than offset by the high percentage of women who are separated from their husbands without any prospects of being called back. These women form 9.9 per cent of their married total. As against this, the percentage of men, whose wives left them, comes to 1.7. On the whole, divorce and desertion together form a percentage of 3.6 for men and 10.1 for women to their respective sex-wise totals. This goes to support our earlier contention that the Newars do not now too frequently avail of the customary privileges of divorce and re-marriage.

While simultaneous multiple marriages by men are only a few, successive multiple marriages have been a feature of the Newars. Of the total 84 men who were recorded as living with other than the first spouses, as many as 61 are found with their second wives only; 14 with third wives and only one with the fourth. In all these cases, the majority (50.6 per cent) had to contract marriages, as we have already seen, owing to the death of the first wife.

As regards the 18 re-married women, none of them is found living with a third husband. Although some instances of wives living with the husbands other than the second ones have been cited from other sources in the beginning, the absence of such wives in the sample substantiates our earlier contention of its rarity. Women do not like to change their husbands so frequently since it has come to be looked down upon. The present attitude of men towards chastity may be judged from the case of a Mandhar who is reported to have sent away his bride to her parents' home when he discovered that she was already carrying some other man's child. The Jyapoos of Panga, too, stress that a woman should take a husband only once in her life.

There are 31 widowers and 69 widows in the sample. Their percentages to the total of 553 married men and 381

married women come to 9.6 and 18.1, respectively. There are only 19 widows below the age of 45 years; the youngest widow is in the age group of 20-24 years. The average age of these widowers and widows is 49.68 years and 52.98 years, respectively. Thus it is quite obvious why among the people who recognise re-marriage of women, widows should be found only in the higher age-groups. As compared with the Panga sample, the Kathmandu sample shows more widows in the younger age categories. In Panga there is only one widow who is below 34, while in Kathmandu there are six in this age group.

The traditional Newar family is a patrilineal joint household consisting of the descendants of several generations having common arrangement for cooking and joint ownership of property under a single head. The joint family grows with the addition of sons' wives and children. It may be of interest if we give in what follows a few examples of such joint families.

There is a joint family, for instance, in Kathmandu whose head is Machhe Narain, a Manandhar by caste. It consists of forty members, spanning three generations—father, sons, sons' sons and their children. Originally this household was of a much bigger size comprising as many as 120 members. It was recently split into three component parts when Machhe Narain's two brothers set up their own separate households. The reason advanced for the splitting up of the original joint household was that it had become too unwieldy. Machhe Narain is quite well-to-do and holds a high post in the Government.

Another example of large-sized joint household is again reported from Kathmandu. It belongs to the Jyapoo caste and includes 70 members.

A third example is from the town of Pokhara in western Nepal. Chandra Bahadur, a businessman and Shrestha by caste, reported that his household had formerly comprised the descendents of as many as thirteen generations. It was



so unmanageable that very recently the elders among them agreed to break it into smaller component units. A fourth example is again from the same town. This household also belonged to a Shrestha, Ramkrishna by name. It consisted of about 100 members. In the Valley of Kathmandu such large-sized joint families are not uncommon. Whenever the financial position is good, a Newar is inclined to live in the traditional type of joint family. In this respect they present a similarity to the Tharus of Tarai, their neighbours, but differ from the Gorkhas.

The large-sized Newari households as stated earlier is now-a-days on the wane. The more common pattern of household at present seems to be that which consists of a man, his wife, his unmarried daughters and several of his married sons with their wives and children. Sometimes a polygynous household may consist of two or more lineal households strung together during the lifetime of the polygynous father.

The present trend of the smaller size of households can be attributed to many factors, chief among which is the tendency to break away from the joint family after the death of the father or in his own lifetime. The cause contributing to this is more often than not the incompatibility between the housewives and, sometimes, lack of enough accommodation in the house. This results in the mutual agreement among the brothers to separate. Each brother then sets up his own joint household with his married sons and, in due course, each becomes again a large-sized household through the marriages of grandsons. Generally, in the lifetime of a father, the married sons may not separate, as the division of property cannot take place without the consent of the father whose authority is unquestioned.

It may be remarked here that the Newari joint family has specific characteristics which make it distinct from the normal Hindu joint family. Despite residential and pro-

perty separation, several joint families act as a single unit among them for purposes of social and ceremonial functions, be it domestic or communal. We have already seen this in their ceremonies where the ceremonial leadership is assumed by the *Thakali* and his wife.

Let us now proceed to examine data on the Newar family. We have data relating to 224 sample families from the Valley of Kathmandu which include two singletons. The data are drawn from both the urban area of Kath-

TABLE III-A  
Kathmandu Sample

Gradation of the family.	No. of persons in the family	No. of families	Percentage
Singleton	1	1	0.58
Very big	2 to 3	25	14.80
Small	4 to 6	63	37.28
Medium	7 to 12	63	37.28
Big	13 to 20	10	5.92
Very big	21 and over	7	4.14
Total		169	100.00

mandu and the rural area of Panga. Of the total sample families, 168 are from the first region and the remaining 55 from Panga. The Kathmandu sample relates to five castes—Vanra, Shrestha, Udas, Jaypoo and Manandhar. The Panga sample includes only two castes—Shrestha and Jyapoo.

Only a limited number of castes can be found in the rural regions. The rural regions are in fact predominantly occupied by the Jaypoo caste, with the Shrestha following it.

Of the 169 households, as much as 74.56 per cent

are of small and medium size. Households consisting of two to three members form a low proportion. Big and very big families are also not so frequent. The usual size of the family in Kathmandu, therefore, appears to consist of 4 to 12 members. Excluding the singleton, there are 285 adult males and 302 adult females; 46 old-aged males and 40 old-aged females; 311 boys and male infants; and 284 girls and female infants. The average number of persons per household is 7.55. The adults average 3.49 per unit, the non-adults average 3.54 per unit, and the old-aged 0.51.

Coming to the Panga sample, it will be seen from Table III-B that once again the majority of households consists of 4 to 12 members. It can also be found that

TABLE III-B

## Panga Sample

Gradation of the family.	No. of persons in the family	No. of families	Percentage
Singleton	1	1	1.82
Very small	2 to 3	11	20.00
Small	4 to 6	22	40.00
Medium	7 to 12	19	34.55
Big	13 to 20	2	3.63
Very big	21 and over	—	—
Total	—	55	100.00

the tendency is, comparatively, towards the formation of smaller-size households. There is, however, one solitary example of a household comprising 24 members. This household belongs to a Jyapoo who is financially well off. The disintegrating tendency of large-sized households in Panga, it would appear, is due to the low economic status

of the people. Excluding the singleton, there are 82 adult males and 72 adult females; 22 old-aged males and 21 old-aged females; 66 boys and male infants; and 74 girls and female infants. The average number of persons per household is 6.24. The adults average 2.85 persons per unit; the non-adults 2.59 persons per unit, and old-aged 0.79 persons per unit. Thus Panga shows comparatively more dependants in the old-age group as compared with the Kathmandu sample. The largest unit of household is of the Shrestha caste (8.98 persons per unit), followed by the Manandhars. The Jyapoo has the smallest household unit. On the whole, the average number of persons per house in the urban area of Kathmandu is more than in the rural region.

But numerical strength alone is not sufficient to throw light on the composition of the family. The range of relationship as encompassed by the members of the household is the important angle for the study of the family. What are the types of family from the point of view of relationship? With a view to making such a study the sample families (after excluding the two singletons) have been classified into three major types according to the relationship of the members living in the households. These are: nuclear, intermediate, and joint. Each of these major types has been further divided into sub-types in the following manner :

*Nuclear* and its three sub-types :

(i) normal family consisting of husband, wife and unmarried issues; (ii) incomplete family of husband and wife without issues; and (iii) broken family of father or mother with unmarried issues.

*Intermediate Family* : This is neither nuclear nor joint. It includes those which consist of one of the parents living with a married son and other unmarried issues; or

a married man with his unmarried brothers and sisters. Such families have been divided into three sub-types:

(i) vertical: father or mother with a married son and other unmarried children; (ii) horizontal: man, his wife and unmarried brothers and sisters; (iii) both-ways: father or mother with married son and other unmarried brothers and sisters.

*Joint Family*: This denotes two or more nuclear families both on the vertical and horizontal planes. It presupposes a condition of the commonness of residence, cooking and common ownership of property. Such families have been divided into four sub-types:

(i) vertical family: parents with married son (with or without other issues); (ii) horizontal family: married brothers; (iii) both-ways: parents or either of the parents with married sons with or without issues (lineal descendants); and (iv) ortho-cousins (married or not) living together after the death of the father; or father's brothers with ego's married brothers.

Analysing the total of 222 sample families (excluding two singletons) the percentages of the nuclear and joint families are equal.

As between Panga and Kathmandu, there is a slight difference in the incidence of the joint family, the proportion being a little higher in the former case.

Considering the family composition of Panga castes, 62.50 per cent of the Shrestha families are joint, while the Jyapoo families are joint to the extent of only 44.68 per cent. Economically the Shresthas are much better off. The Manandhar caste shows the highest percentage (58.82) of jointness in family and the Jyapoo, the lowest.

TABLE IV

Types of families	Kathmandu		Panga		Total	
	No. of families	Percentage	No. of families	Percentage	No. of families	Percentage
Nuclear	79	47.02	24	44.44	103	46.40
Intermediate	12	7.14	4	7.41	16	46.40
Joint	77	45.84	26	48.15	103	7.20
Total	168	100.00	54	100.00	222	100.00

Caste-wise analysis does not show any progressive increase in the incidence of the joint family from the rural region to the urban region as we have noticed in the case of household membership. On the contrary, both the castes, namely, the Shrestha and the Jyapoo, show a disintegrating tendency of the joint family when we move from the rural region of Panga to the urban region of Kathmandu. This appears to reverse the conclusion reached earlier. Such a reversing tendency is primarily due to the Jyapoo. They are economically poorer in Kathmandu as compared with their counterparts in Panga. Their status as casual labourers is rather low and perhaps this is also factor in their having a smaller size in the joint family. The cultural influence of the non-Néwars, principally the Gorkhas, is also bound to affect the family set-up of the poor among Newars. This influence is, however, non-existent in the village of Panga where the Gorkhas are in a microscopic minority.

The proportion of persons served by the joint family is significant, because it reveals the extent to which the individual member's life is affected by the type of the family. If we analyse the family from this point of view, we find that as much as 64.70 per cent of members in the 222 sample families live in joint families. Those living in nuclear families are even less than half the strength of members living under joint families. Here again we see that in the rural region of Panga the strength of members living in joint families is greater by 1.65 per cent than that in Kathmandu town. But if we exclude the Jyapoo from the sample of Kathmandu, we notice that the strength of members living in joint families in Kathmandu is as high as 71.60 per cent.

Thus it is clear that the lower percentage of the strength of membership under the joint family in Kathmandu is due to the Jyapoo. Otherwise, the trend of increase from rural to urban area is clearly maintained. We

TABLE V

Type of the family	Kathmandu		Panga		Total	
	No. of persons	Percentage	No. of persons	Percentage	No. of persons	Percentage
Nuclear	392	31.50	100	29.76	492	30.75
Intermediate	55	4.25	18	5.34	73	4.55
Joint	821	64.25	219	64.90	1040	64.70
Total	1268	100.00	337	100.00	1605	100.00

may, therefore, conclude that, after making due allowance for the Jyapoos as a factor for lowering down the proportion of joint families in the urban area — owing to their low economic status — the incidence of jointness is higher in the urban area of Kathmandu than in the rural region of Panga.

Of the total 79 nuclear families in the Kathmandu sample, as many as 59 units belong to sub-types, normal and incomplete. These consist of husband and wife with unmarried issues; or without issues. The percentage of these to the total of 222 sample families comes to 45.12. Among these there are two families which include either a married daughter or daughter's daughter. As against this data of the Kathmandu sample, there are 20 family units in the Panga sample. It constitutes a percentage of 36.04 of the total families of Panga. We, therefore, see that the majority of the members living in nuclear families are covered by the relationship of husband, wife, children and either of the parents.



The majority of the intermediate type of families appear to be consisting of either of the parents, with one married issue or all unmarried issues. Its percentage is 75 to the total families under this type. The family units consisting of man, wife and his unmarried brothers has a percentage as low as 25. In the Panga sample, there is not even a single family consisting of a married man with his unmarried brothers.

The degree of relationship in the joint family reveals that the majority of families are of the third sub-type. It includes parents, married sons, married grand-sons and their issues. The coverage of generation is generally three to four. In the Kathmandu sample such family units account for as much as 55.84 per cent of the total joint families in that sample. The corresponding figure for the region of Panga is 65.38 per cent. The second major type of joint family consists of parents and married sons with or without issues. In Kathmandu, this type accounts for 22.08 per cent of its total joint families, while in Panga the corresponding figure comes to 15.38 per cent.

From the above analysis of families, it is revealed that, though the traditional type of family consisting of the descendants of several generations as stated earlier has become rare, the Newars still live predominantly in joint families. The usual joint family is of three to four generations. Leaving the Jyapoos out, the comparison of the two samples of Kathmandu and Panga reveals that the tendency towards the joint family is more in the urban area than in the rural region. Well-to-do Newars always prefer to live under the joint family. The greater incidence of the nuclear family among the Jyapoos is mainly due to their poor economic condition.

The causes for the breakdown of the joint family are many: More often than not, it is the conflict between a woman and her mother-in-law; and sometimes it is the quarrel among the wives of the brothers that lead to the

breaking of the joint family. When antagonism becomes beyond control, the household is broken into its component units by mutual agreement.

Education is not a factor for the break-down of the joint family. There is not a single person in the nuclear families of the Panga sample who has even primary education. On the other hand, in the Kathmandu sample, many among those who live in joint houses are highly educated, and the desire to live jointly is stronger among them. But this is not to say that the conflict-situation may not be sharpened, if some of the wives living in joint families are educated. Being educated, the wives are likely to be unable to adjust themselves to the traditional set-up and, as such, they instigate their husbands to live separately.

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## 10. KINSHIP

TO describe and explain the kinship terms of the Newars, let us start with the basic familial unit from which all relationships emanate. The terms used for these relatives are *Bhata* (husband), *Kala* (wife), *Abu* or *Bwa* (father), *Ma* (mother), *Daju* or *Ara* (elder brother), *Kija* (younger brother), *Tata* (elder sister), *Kehen* (younger sister), *Kaye* (son), and *Mhyaye* (daughter). All these terms, barring those for brother and sister, are elementary and individualising. The terms for brothers and sisters are not only used for designating the ego's own brother and sister but also for those who stand to the ego in similar relationship. Further, a distinction is made between the elder and the younger brother.

If we go upwards in the grandfather's generation, father's father is designated by the term *Aja*, a term which is also current in Marathi and Hindi. An alternative term *Baje* or *Bajya* is also used side by side; rather say *Baje* or *Bajya* is more in vogue. Both *Aja* and *Bajya* or *Baje* do not have any base with the term for father and, therefore, appear to stand on their own. The term for the lineal grandmother is either *Aji* or *Bajai*. These terms are the feminine derivatives from the term for grandfather. The terms used for the lineal grand-parents are also applied to designate mother's parents.

Going still upwards, we meet the lineal relative of the third ascendant generation. The male lineal relative, that is great-grandfather, is called *Tapa-Aja* or *Tapa-Bajya*. These are clearly seen to be the derivatives from the term for grandfather with the prefix *Tapa* which means distant. The terms for great-grandmother is *Tapa-Aji* or *Tapa Bajai*, the feminine derivative from the terms for great-grandfather. The grandparents of one's mother are also designated by these terms. Similarly in the fourth ascendant generation, the great-great-grandparents are designated as *Ghain-ghain-Aja* or *Ghain-ghain-Bajya*. About a century and a half ago,<sup>1</sup> the term for great-great-grandparents were *Iya-Ajhaju*, *ju* being a term of respect.

Moving downwards in the second descendant generation, we meet the lineal grand-children. In contrast to the treatment given to the lineal relatives of the second ascendant generation and upwards, these relatives are designated by a single term *chhai* without making any distinction not only between son's son and daughter's son but also between the two sexes. All are referred to as a class irrespective of their sex.

Moving still downwards a similar classificatory term is used. Thus the persons of the third descendant generation are *chhai*; of the fourth, *wie*; and of the fifth, *kwi*. In the treatment of these descendants, the principle involved is not only what Lowie and Kirchhof call 'generation'<sup>2</sup> but also non-bifurcation of sex.

Analysing the terms of collaterals we find that first degree collaterals in the first ascendant generation are father's brother and father's sister on the father's side and mother's brother and mother's sister on the mother's side. Of them, the father's brother is identified, as among other Nepalese, with father by using the descriptive-derivative terms *Tari-Bwa* (elder father) and *Chiri-Bwa* (younger father), these being derived from the term for father. An alternative term *Kaka* is also side by side used to denote

father's younger brother. The mother's elder and younger sisters, called *Tari-Ma* and *Chiri-Ma*, are identified with the mother and it will be seen that the terms for them are derived from the term for mother. The terms used for designating father's brothers are also applied to the husbands of mother's sisters and the terms for mother's sisters are applied to the wives of father's brothers. Therefore these terms are classificatory and derivative. Father's sister and mother's brother are, however, designated by the individualising terms *Neeni* and *Paju*, respectively, not derived from any of the primary terms. The differential treatment given to the father's sister and mother's brother is also reflected in their social functions, as described in the chapter on ceremonies.

Similarly the collaterals in the second ascendant generation and upwards are designated by the classificatory and descriptive terms. In each of the ascendant generations, such relatives are designated by a compound term derived from combining the terms for one's own collaterals in the father's generation with the term used for the lineal of that particular generation in question. For example, father's father's brothers are *Tari-Aja* or *Tari-Bajya* and *Chiri-Aja* or *Chiri-Bajya* and father's father's sister is *Neeni Aji*. The same terms are also applied to designate the collaterals of the ascendant generations on the mother's side.

The first degree collaterals in the first descendant generation are the children of brother and sister. A man differentiates his son, *Kaye*, and daughter, *Mhyaye*, from that of his brother's, *Kayecha* and *Mhyacha*, by using the suffix *Cha*. The terms for brother's children are thus derived from the terms for one's own son and daughter. The ego more or less identifies his brother's children with those of his own but differentiates his sister's children from them. He applies a single term *Bhincha* to designate his sister's children, ignoring sex difference. A woman applies these terms in reverse. She calls her sister's son

and daughter as *Kayecha* and *Mhyacha* but her brother's children as *Bhincha*.

As regards affineal relatives, the treatment adopted in the use of kinship terms by a man is different from that by a woman. There are no elementary terms to designate a man's or woman's affineal relatives. The terms used for designating these relatives are the very terms used for the consanguineal relatives with the addition of suffixes which serve as a means of distinction. By compounding the term *Sasa* with the term for his consanguineal relatives, the ego designates all his affineal relatives. Thus a man's father-in-law is *Sasa-Bwa*, mother-in-law is *Sasa-Ma*, wife's father's sister is *Sasa-Neeni*, wife's mother's brother is *Sasa-Paju*, wife's sister is *Sasa-Tata* or *Sasa-Kehen*, wife's brother is *Sasa-Daju* or *Sasa-Kija*, wife's sister's son and daughter are, respectively, *Sasa-Kaye* and *Sasa-Mhyaye*; but wife's brother's son and daughter are designated by a single term *Sasa-Bhincha* ignoring sex difference.

A woman, on the other hand, does not use the prefix *Sasa* in respect of her affineal relatives. She designates all her affineal relatives in the ascendant generations by the very terms used for them by her husband for whom they are consanguineal. But unlike her husband, she uses the suffix *Ju* in this respect. For example, husband's father and mother are called *Ba-ju* and *Ma-ju*, respectively; husband's father's brothers are called *Tari-Baju* and *Kaka-Baju*; and husband's father's sisters are *Neeni-Maju*. Similarly husband's grandparents are *Aja-ju* (male) and *Ajima-ju* (female) and great-grandparents *Tapa-Aja-ju* and *Tapa-Ajima-ju*. All these affineal relatives are to be respected by her and, therefore, she uses the suffix *ju*.

With regard to the affineal relatives in the husband's generation, she treats them on a different footing. For these relatives she uses the descriptive-derivative terms tracing relationship with them through her husband. Husband's elder brother is *Dara-Bhata*, husband's young-

er brother is *Kija-Bhata*, husband's elder sister is *Ta-Bhata* and husband's younger sister is *Kehen-Bhata*. The distinction made between husband's elder brother and younger brother; and elder sister and younger sister is conditioned by the behaviour expected of the woman. Those who are senior to her husband in age have to be respected and those who are junior have to respect her. The distinction is also the outcome of the social function which a woman has to fulfil in accordance with the seniority or juniority of her age-status in the family.

The kinship terms used by a wife to designate her affineal relatives in the descendant generation are the same as used by her husband for whom these relatives are consanguineal.

From the foregoing discussion we arrive at the following broad features of the Newar kinship terminology:

i) In the treatment of lineal relatives in the second ascendant generation and upwards, the terms are not based on the term for father. But the terms for lineal relatives in the third ascendant generation and upwards are based on the terms for grandfather, *Aja*. The terms which designate the relatives on the father's side are also applied to similar relatives on the mother's side. The collaterals in these generations are referred to by compounding the terms for the lineals in that generation with the terms for collaterals in the father's generation.

ii) In the second descendant generation and downwards, there is not only the merging of the collateral with the lineal but also no distinction between the two sexes. The terms for the relatives of each generation is fully classificatory.

iii) The terms for the father's generation are individualising and descriptive. Father's brother, mother's brother, father's sister and mother's sister are distinguished from one another. But the terms for father's brother are derived from the term for father and the terms for

mother's sister are derived from the term for mother.

iv) In the ego's generation the terms for the brother and sister are classificatory.

v) In the children's generation the ego and his sister differentiate his or her children from those of the other. This is done by using the classificatory term *Bhincha* by a woman to designate the children of her brother and by a man to designate the children of his sister.

It has been contended that kinship terms are not mere linguistic phenomena. They have social significance and are said to reflect not only the present pattern of social behaviour but also the past nature of the social structure. Having regard to this statement, let us examine the nature of the Newari kinship terms.

To start again with the basic familial unit, the term *Bhata* for husband is a term having its affinity with the Hindi and Bengali term *Bhatar* for husband. On the other hand it shows linguistic affinity with the Prakrit term *Bhatta*<sup>3</sup> or Sanskrit term *Bhartr*<sup>4</sup>. In one of the Newar folk-songs the term used for husband is *Bhalta*<sup>5</sup>. If the latter term is taken to be the older Newari term for husband, then it shows that affinity with Prakrit would be difficult.

In Sanskrit, *Bhartr* is taken to mean supporter.<sup>6</sup> The present Newari term *Bhata* conveys a similar idea by virtue of the husband's position in relation to his wife. The adoption of *Bhata* to the exclusion of an alternative term *Pati* fits in the Newar's traditional conception of marriage. To a Newar woman, as we have seen, her husband is always a supporter and not a master in the true sense of the term *Pati*. The institution of marriage and divorce points out in this direction. A woman in the past could be theoretically free to change husbands without being ex-communicated by the society. We have earlier noted that her husband cannot lay a claim on her, if she



desires to desert him. Her deserted husband can only demand the marriage cost.

The term used for the wife is *Kala*. There does not, again, appear to exist a Newari term for wife. The Bhatgaon lower class Newars, however, use the term *Misa* as a substitute for *Kala*. But *Misa* is a generic term for woman. May we, therefore, suggest that before the term *Kala* came to be adopted the term *Misa* was employed to designate a wife?

*Kala* appears to show linguistic affinity with the Sanskrit term *Kalatra*. Among the Newars *Kala* is etymologically taken to mean the goddess of wealth (Laxmi). The identification of wife with Laxmi is consistent with the traditional view regarding the higher status of a woman. As Laxmi is never stable, so also is a woman. This is accepted at least in theory by the Newars. This has perhaps led the Newars to take a lenient view of a wife's going to live with another husband. We have stated elsewhere that in the former days a woman coming to live with her eighth husband, after leaving the previous seven, used to be called *Sapta Laxmi* and she used to be much welcomed in the house. Though the jealousy of the males would no longer tolerate such laxity on the part of a woman, the traditional belief still exists.

The privileged position of the wife, apart from the alleged freedom she enjoys regarding sex matters, is also reflected in the ceremonies and functions. Chief among these is the welcome accorded to her at the entrance when she enters her husband's home for the first time. We have noticed that she is led into the house through the *Lasa-Kusa* ceremony just as the *Dewali* deity is conducted into the house. Further, the fact that her mother-in-law makes the ceremonial handing over of the key of the house to the bride speaks of her high status. It signifies that the management of the house is now the responsibility of the bride.

The traditional social value woven round the term *Kala* is, however, not reflected in the day to day behaviour. A wife is always regarded subordinate to her husband. She is expected to place her head on her husband's feet and drink the ritual water in which he has dipped his toes. While addressing her husband she is not expected to call him by his name; she uses the addressive or descriptive term *Hala* which is connotative of respect and her acceptance of his superiority. If there is a child by him, she addresses him as the father of so and so. The husband, on his part, always assumes of being superior. He addresses her "eh!" showing that he is superior to her; if he has a child by her he addresses her as mother of so and so. The addressive terms used by the husband and the wife, though not etymologically reflective of their present statuses, are yet connotative of their mutual behaviour, since they are couched in such tones.

Apart from such behaviour, the rights and obligations which a wife has also emphasize the superior position of the husband. A wife's status in ceremonies and rituals is counted on the basis of her husband's position. A widow is always regarded as something inauspicious and a woman loses her ceremonial rights and privileges on the death of her husband. An example to this is provided by the position of the *Thakali Naki*. So long as the *Thakali* is alive, his wife, irrespective of her age, becomes the *Thakali Naki* of the consanguineal group. On the death of her husband her functions are transferred to the wife of another person who succeeds as the new *Thakali*. In matters of inheritance also, the wife is always dependant on her husband. She has the right to a share in the property of the family through her husband. Her husband can dispose of the property without entertaining any of her claims. She has the right only to her *stridhan* which she brings from her parents' home. The position of a Newar wife, therefore, does not materi-

ally differ at present from that of a Gorkha wife except in matters of divorce and re-marriage.

The terms *Abu* and *Bwa* for father appear to have affinity with the Nepali term *Ba* or *Babu*. They also show some phonetic resemblance with the Tamang term *Ava* for father. We cannot, however, decide whether from *Ava* the Newari terms *Abu* and *Bwa* have been derived. In the good old days, the terms *Bwa* or *Abu* were, however, not to be found, at least in so far as the available recorded facts show. Oaldfield<sup>7</sup> (1877) gives *Buba* as the Newari term for father in contrast to the then current Nepali term *Baba*. Whether the present terms *Abu* and *Bwa* are later adoptions, we cannot say. The possibility is that these terms may have been in existence among the lower class Newars of the Valley, simultaneously with the term *Baba* among the high castes.

Etymologically it is not possible to interpret these two terms except that these connote a deep emotional attitude. Being a member of the joint family, the father is one among the several members who enjoy little authority. We have already seen that it is the *Thakali* of the Dewali Guthi or the head of the individual joint family who is the ritual and social leader. The only function a father has to fulfil in relation to his child is the acceptance of fatherhood at the time of *Macha-bu-Benke*. The other ritual function of the father is that of being the chief mourner if any of his children dies. A father, no doubt, has to assume responsibility—economic, social and ritual—if he is the head of his family. But such a responsibility is incumbent upon him not as a father but as the head of the family. There is, however, a marked recognition of the position of father in his individual status as distinguished from other relatives. The individualising kinship term used for him is consistent, since inheritance passes through him to his sons. It is obligatory for a son to perform the father's *shraddha* and the festival of seeing

'the face of the father' places him in a category quite distinct from those of other relatives.

As regards the term for mother, the Newars are nearer to the speakers of Hindi and other Indian languages than to the Gorkhas. They employ the term *Ma* for mother in contrast to the Nepali term *Ama*. The older Newari term *Muma* also exists alongside. The latter term is more in vogue among the aristocratic Newars as also among the royal Gorkhas. *Ma* is, however, the most popular and widely prevalent Newari term. In its addressive expression, *Ma* becomes *Yo Ma* which reveals intense emotional content. Among the lower caste Newars the addressive term *yo Ma* becomes *Yo Maya* and the moment an individual addresses mother in the latter manner, one is sure to know that he is from the lower caste.

From the point of view of behaviour, the Newar mother is not different from any of her counterparts elsewhere. She is kind and partial to her own children. She receives obedience due to her kindness and love, whereas a father commands obedience from his children through awe. Like father, the mother has comparatively little social and ritual leadership in the domestic ceremonies connected with her own child, unless her position happens to coincide with the status as the chief lady of the house or the consanguineal group.

The obligation which the youngest son has to fulfil in the event of the death of his mother is not reflected by the kinship term. We have pointed out elsewhere that in the event of the mother's death, the obsequies are preferably performed by the youngest son. It is again the youngest son who is preferred to become the performer of annual *shraddha* of the mother. In Kathmandu I had come across quite a number of cases in which the annual *shraddha* of the father was performed by the eldest son and that of the mother by the youngest. Does this preferred choice for the youngest son reflect some past social practice of

the Newars? In a way it does. Looking at the custom of continual divorce and remarriage among the Newars, it is quite easy to account for this role of the youngest son. It is probable that at the time of the death of a woman it would be her youngest son by a different husband who would be present by her death-bed. And naturally, on her death, he is the person who has to perform her obsequies and *shraddha*. What was once a necessity has, perhaps, now become a custom.

Coming to the terms for siblings the term *Kaye* (son) and *Mhyaye* (daughter) do not seem to have any affinity with the terms used by the surrounding people to designate their sons and daughters. One fails to find even a remote connection of these Newari terms with the terms in the Indo-Aryan speeches of India. No such terms, not even a faint suggestion of them, could be found in the Indo-Aryan kinship terminologies compiled by Professor Ghurye.<sup>8</sup> It is, however, strange to note the phonetic similarity of *Kaye* with *Kao* (son) of the Dafla language and *Mhyaye* with the Kanauri term *Meo*. Besides *Kaye*, an alternative term *Putā* is used, which appears to have affinity with the Prakrit term *Putta*.

With regard to the terms of address, the Newars and the Gorkhas behave alike. Though the Newars still use the traditional addressive terms such as *Kaye-Macha* (for son) and *Mhya-Macha* (for daughter), the Nepali terms *Babu* for son and *Nani* for daughter are also employed. Each of the terms in both the sets is a generic term denoting the sex of a child. The Nepalese terms of address are, however, becoming more in vogue among the Newars.

The son has a special position in the Newar family set-up. We have more than once mentioned that his importance is primarily associated with the strong cult of ancestral worship. The son is the person who performs the obsequies of his parents and offers annual oblation to

them. We have already noted some of these functions in connection with the terms for father and mother.

The terms for daughter distinguish her from the son. She goes to join her husband's patrilineal family and, therefore, belongs to her husband's *Dewali* group. She observes a four-day death pollution after her marriage, in case some body dies among her paternal kin. Nevertheless, the individualising term used for a daughter sets her apart from the brother's daughter or from any other person who stands in the relationship of a daughter to the ego. If she were to remain unmarried under the institution of *Burhi-Kanya* she would be entitled to have an equal share of her father's property along with her brothers, though on her death such a share of property would revert to her brothers. Naturally, therefore, she has to be distinguished from others. A daughter's son is allowed, in the absence of any *fukee* members, to set fire to the corpse of the ego. A daughter has numerous ritual obligations to perform in her family of birth, and she is to be invited, if married, on the occasions of feasts and festivals.

With regard to the respect due from children, while the son is expected to pay obeisance so much as to place his head on the feet of his parents, the position of a daughter is different: she is given a differential treatment on a higher plane. Thus unmarried daughters are never allowed to touch the feet of either of the parents or of the other elders. While greeting her elders, she has simply to say *Bhagiyati*. The daughter is invariably regarded as a human form of goddess Kumari; and this is indicative of the strong mother-cult among the Newars. This cult finds its manifest expression, as we have noticed, in the worship of Kumari. The position of a married daughter changes only slightly in this respect. The sacredness attached to her when unmarried is a little modified only in relation to her mother. For, after her marriage she is expected to touch the feet of her mother. She, however, retains her sacred

position in relation to other members of her parents' family and kin.

The terms for brothers and sisters have significance both in respect of the range of their applicability and the distinction they serve to make between the elder and the younger. Except the term *Daju* for elder brother, none of the other terms falling under this group appears to show affinity with the corresponding Nepali terms.

The elder brother has to be approached with respect. Owing to the seniority of his age, he is entitled to be the head of the joint family. The younger brother is just like one's own son. He has to be looked after and economically supported. In the absence of any male member in the ascendant generation in the joint family, the elder brother becomes the ceremonial head. He has to perform the functions hitherto done by the father. For example, in the *Kalya-Nhya-Ke-gu* ceremony (slipping the silver ornament over the wrist of the bride), the elder brother of a prospective bridegroom can perform this function, provided there is no male member in the father's generation to do this job. In connection with the term *Daju* (elder brother), it may be pointed out that, strangely enough, in Newari folk-songs a lover is always referred to as *Daju*. But it is difficult to account for this practice.

The terms *Tata* and *Kehe(n)*, used to designate elder and younger sisters, respectively, are difficult to be traced to their possible origin. Like the terms for brother, they connote relationship of blood, and are symbolic of the affection between brother and sister. The distinction made between the two sisters on the basis of age is quite understandable; for, the elder sister, like the elder brother, is to be approached with respect. The elder sister is like a mother; the younger sister is to be affectionately treated and looked after. The series of social functions a brother has to perform in relation to his sister and sister's son show the strong bonds existing between them. In the

absence of any senior male member a brother has to perform all such functions at the time of the marriage of his sister as would have been performed by the *thakali* or the eldest male member in the father's generation. But such functions are not performed by him as brother; it is rather as the head of the family.

The Newars differ from the Gorkhas in respect of some of the functions of the brother in relation to his sister. At the time of the marriage of a sister, among the Gorkhas, a brother has to offer parched paddy to her. In addition, he has to lift her up and carry three times round the sacred fire. Such functions of a brother are not to be met with among the Newars. Indeed, a Newar brother has no ritual function in the marriage of his sister.

The use of classificatory terms for brother and sister does in fact indicate that the ego should behave with his classificatory brothers and sisters in the same manner as he behaves towards his own brother and sister. For the ego and his classificatory brothers and sisters (except his *Fukee* brothers and *Fukee* sisters) belong to different *Dewali*-groups. Therefore, the children of the maternal uncle, of the paternal aunt and of mother's sister will not have the same rights and privileges as enjoyed by his own brothers and sisters. Such differentiation of functions, rights and privileges are reflected in the *Dewali* worship, birth, death and other domestic rites. But what is consistent with these classificatory terms is the tabooing of marriage with the cross-cousins.

Going upwards in the second ascendant generation, the terms *Aja* and *Aji*, used in a classificatory sense, indicate in some respect a non-distinction of the functions in relation to the grandparents. This accords well with the fact that the Newars allow a daughter's son to perform the obsequies of his grandfather, if his own son is not available. From the view-point of property-succession, the daughter's son does not, however, have the legal rights, unless a will



is made in his favour. Such equivalence of the two categories of relatives—paternal grandparents and maternal grandparents — can be explained in quite a different way. The nature of Newar social organisation, with the practice of the local concentration of marriage-ties, enables a married daughter to spend a good part of her life with her parents and this would naturally lead her children to be greatly associated with her brothers' and sisters' children. Her children will, therefore, follow the practice of her brother's children in addressing her parents. This, however, raises a question as to why don't the children similarly call their mother's brother as father, if residence were to be a factor in kinship terms. This can be explained by pointing out that the mother's brother has specific functions in relation to his sister's children and as such he is bound to be individualised.

Going still up, the treatment given to grandparents is given to the great-grandparents also. Here it may be seen that the great-grandfather is regarded as something distant. This is obviously so because very few persons survive to see their great-grandchildren coming to age. The expected behaviour pattern between a person and his great-grandchildren is insignificant. Similarly the lineal relatives in the fourth ascendant generation is still further removed in time, and a person is not at all concerned materially except when blood relationship is to be traced through them. The great-grandparents, if ever they survive, are so old that they are very likely to be confined to their rooms and not be accessible to great-grandchildren. In such old age, they are apt to be invalid. Hence the prefix *Ghain-ghain* which conveys the idea of "coughing by an old man."

The complete merging of collateral with the lineal in the second descendant generation and downwards, as already stated, accords well with the explanation just given. From the point of view of grandfather, a grandchild has

no particular function. Therefore, it is logical enough that he should use a classificatory term to designate his grandchildren indicating no sex-differences.

The relatives of the third ascendant generation and upwards being still further removed from the persons of the second descendant generation and downwards are, therefore, to be treated on the same principle as in the case of the grandfather's parents.

The differentiation of sex in the second ascendant generation and upwards, and its non-distinction in the second descendant generation and downwards, needs some explanation. This may be due to the need for keeping a complete list of the blood relatives up to seven generations for the purpose of marriage and *shraddha*.

Let us now examine some of the terms for collaterals which have not been discussed elsewhere. The terms for father's brothers *Tari-Bwa* (elder father) and *Chiri-Bwa* (younger father) are employed no doubt to distinguish father from them. The prefixes *Tari* and *Chiri* are used to denote the seniority and juniority of these relatives in relation to father. These relatives are distinguished from the father only by the use of suffixes. The etymological meanings of these terms suggest that father's brothers are also fathers who are, however, distinguished from one another on the basis of age-difference. Although an alternative term *Kala* is simultaneously used to designate father's younger brother, its use does not make the earlier term less common. *Tari-Bwa* and *Chiri-Bwa* are, therefore, the traditional kinship terms of the Newars. In this respect, the Newars come closer to the Gorkhas who designate their father's brother as *Thulo-Ba* (elder father) and *Kanchha-Ba* (younger father). The differentiation of father's brother on the basis of the seniority or juniority of their respective ages accords well with the family organisation of the Newars, among whom age is correlated to status and authority. At the same time the identification

of father's brothers with father, as distinct from the other collaterals, in the father's generation is in consonance with the solidarity of patrilineal relatives.

In mutual behaviour both father's elder and younger brothers are to be treated on a par with father. In a family like that of the Newars, father's eldest brother is the real authority and ceremonial leader. The children are throughout very much connected with the father's eldest brother who is the head of the family. He is responsible for their upbringing and education. Father's younger brother has to be equally respected. Father and father's younger brother have to work in economic partnership with the father's elder brother.

The terms *Tari-Bwa* and *Chiri-Bwa* suggest an additional evidence of the former existence of polyandry among the Newars. Only in a polyandrous society are the children likely to address the brothers of father as father. Moreover, when we take into consideration the terms *Dara-Bhata* (elder husband) and *Kija-Bhata* (younger husband) used by a woman to designate her husband's brothers, we get more confirmation of it. We have already mentioned elsewhere the woman's way of referring to her husband's home. An additional evidence is to be found in the custom of accepting the fatherhood of the child at the time of the *Macha-Bu-Benke-gu*.

Another important relative in the collateral line is the mother's sister. She is also graded according to the seniority or juniority of her age. Mother's elder sister is *Tari-Ma*. She is alternatively called *Dhoma*, a term more current in Bhatgaon. *Tari-Ma* and *Chiri-Ma* etymologically mean 'elder mother' and 'younger mother'. They are thus identified with mother. Of course, they are the potential wives of father's brothers. Therefore the equivalence of the terms for father's brother's wives with that of the mother's sisters are consistent with each other.

The behaviour of the ego towards his mother's sister

is somewhat like it is towards his own mother. The ego always shows emotional closeness towards such relatives. In the event of ceremonies connected with his child, they have to be invited. They have to bring *saga(n)* on such occasions. In the event of the marriage of a girl, her mother's sisters also receive their respective shares of *Lakha* brought from the bride-groom's house.

The two other collaterals in the first ascendant generation are mother's brother and father's sister. It is difficult to trace the origin of the terms *paju* (mother's brother) and *Neeni* (father's sister). Neither of these terms shows any linguistic affinity with the corresponding terms current in the Indo-Aryan languages. The term *Paju* is compounded of two terms — *Pa* and *ju*. *Ju* is a suffix indicating respect. So far as *Pa* is concerned, it must have been derived from some earlier term which is now difficult to be traced. The term *Neeni* for father's sister is peculiar to the Newars. Curiously enough, this term appears to indicate some phonetic similarity with the old Greek term *Nennos* for father's sister.<sup>9</sup>

The individualisation of the above two relatives from the rest is correlated to the specific functions they have to perform in relation to the ego. The father's sister and mother's brother both have to fulfil a series of obligations in the events connected with the ego's household. But so far as the ego himself is concerned the role of mother's brothers far outweighs the role of father's sister. If we refer to the discussion on ceremony we would find that the mother's brother has every time to fulfil some obligation.

The father's sister has, nevertheless, a series of ritual functions to perform in the household of the ego. In the series of social events, she has to send the ritual materials and presents on her behalf. Her role is unavoidable especially when a death occurs in the ego's family. But such continuous obligations she fulfills not as father's sister but

as the daughter of the house. Her role as father's sister is very limited. She has to perform only two important functions: one at the time of the hair-cutting ceremony and the other at the *yihee* of the girl. The ego on the other hand has certain social obligations towards his father's family, not as an individual relative, but as the head of the family in the absence of his father, since from the point of view his father's sister's children, his household is the maternal uncle's household.

As noted earlier, the mother's brother is the most important individual in the life of an individual apart from his ceremonial duties. He is expected to help and look after his nephews and nieces, if his sister leaves her husband's home. It is a common practice for an individual to spend much of his childhood in his mother's brother's house. He has to be loved and respected; he should never be scolded nor treated to harsh words. He must not be allowed to touch the feet of his mother's brother. Whatever he does and says are to be tolerated. Thus a *Bhinchā* enjoys much liberty and freedom in his mother's brother's house.

In the first descendant generation, the terms *Kayecha* and *Mhya-Cha* used by a man to designate his brother's children and by a woman to designate her sister's children go well with the existing social pattern of the Newars. The terms *Kaye-cha* and *Mhya-cha*, as stated earlier, are only slightly different in the etymological sense from the terms *Kaye* for son and *Mhyaye* for daughter. This distinction is maintained by adding only the suffix *cha*. With the use of such terms the ego identifies his brother's children in some sense with his own and differentiates them from his sister's children (*Bhinchā*). This is obvious in a patrilineal and patrilocal society in which several brothers live together with their wives and children in a joint household, while the daughters leave for their husbands' homes. If an ego does not bifurcate his own and his brothers' chil-

dren from his sisters' (*Bhincha*), there is likelihood of confusion arising with regard to the rule of inheritance. Besides, once again there has to be a bifurcation between his own children and his brothers', since his own son has specific functions with regard to him. These functions have already been noted in connection with the terms for father and mother. Similar is the explanation for these terms used by a woman in reverse. In addition, if a brother's son or daughter dies, a man has to observe death-pollution for thirteen days, whereas in the case of a married sister or her children the period of pollution is only four days. A woman also on her part observes only a four-day death pollution in case her brother's child dies. The classificatory term *Bhincha* used by a man to designate his sisters' children; and by a woman to designate the children of her brother can therefore be explained as being entirely due to the familial organisation of the Newars, which maintains the solidarity of the patrilineal group. A single term *Bhincha* used to designate both the sexes is, however, something different from the Gorkhas who are also patrilineal and patrilocal: they differentiate between the male and female by using the terms *Bhanja* and *Bhanji*. What is the specific function associated with such a non-distinction between a male and a female so far as the brother's children (from the point of view of a woman) and sister's children (from the point of view of a man) are concerned? This can be accounted in part by the non-differentiation of functions between the male *Bhincha* and the female *Bhincha* from the point of view of the ego.

It has to be seen now whether the explanations given above are supported by the affinal terms used by a woman in her husband's home and by a man in his wife's parents' home. The parents of a man and of his wife refer to each other as *Samdhi*. It is a Nepali term which is now much in vogue. Their obligations towards

each other is limited; their behaviour is one of mutual respect and avoidance so far as the opposite sexes are concerned. There is, however, one important social fact in this connection which culturally marks the Newars off from the Gorkhas. Among the Gorkhas, a person does not eat food or drink water in the house of his or her *Samdhi*. But the Newars do not observe this restriction.

The kinship terms that a daughter-in-law (*bhau-macha*) uses in her husband's home conforms to her membership in her husband's home. Her behaviour towards persons elder to her husband is that of respect and obedience; and towards the younger ones, it is similar to her husband's behaviour towards them. She has to treat all these relatives as her blood relations. That is why she uses the same kinship terms as used by her husband to designate these relatives but with the suitable addition of *ju* in respect of the elders because she has to show respect and humility to them.

All types of obligations, pollution-observances and privileges are applicable to her in the same manner as to her husband in the event of any function or death in her husband's consanguineal families. On the other hand, a contrast is presented by the new relationship acquired by a son-in-law. He has obligations only towards the members of his wife's parents' household. Even so, unlike his wife in his home, he observes only a four-day death-pollution, if someone dies in his wife's parents' family. Except he and his wife, no other member of his family observes any degree of pollution in relation to his wife's parents' family.

For a woman, her husband's mother-in-law is *Maju* and her husband's father is *Baju* as against her own mother and father whom she designates as *Ma* and *Ba* (or *Bwa*), respectively. She is in turn designated by the elder relatives as *Bhau*, who should receive affection from them.

The husband's elder brother, *Dara-Bhata* is treated more or less on a par with the father-in-law. It is indecent to refer to or address him by his name. In addressing him, the standard Nepali term *Jetha-ju* is at times used. But there exists no observance of avoidance between her and her husband's elder brother, a feature which stands in contrast to that of the Gorkhas, which fact further suggests Newar polyandry. She is treated by her *Dara Bhata* with affection. He addresses her as *Bhau* a term used to designate one's own daughter-in-law. Similarly, the husband's younger brother, *Kija-Bhata* is like a son to a woman. She is addressed by him as *Tata-ju* meaning more than an elder sister who is to be respected almost on a par with his mother. Husband's elder brother's wife is designated as *Pi-Bhata* and husband's younger brother's wife as *Bhali-Macha*. Among the higher caste Sivamargi Newars the last two affineal relatives are designated as *Pili* and *Mayali*.

A woman treats her husband's elder brother's wife with due regards and addresses her as *Tata-ju*. The husband's younger brother's wife is *Bhau*. These two relatives could have been the elder and younger sisters of a woman. But this fact is not reflected in the kinship terms. There is no equivalence of the terms used for a woman's sisters' husbands, *Jicha Daju* (elder) and *Jicha Bhaju*, with the terms for a husband's brothers, *Dara Bhata* and *Kija Bhata*, which should in fact have been so owing to the practice of a group of brothers marrying, respectively, a group of sisters.

Husband's elder sister is *Ta-Bhata* whom she should respect and husband's younger sister is *Kehen-Bhata* by whom she is to be respected. But husband's elder sister's husband is *Jicha Daju* which means a brother through the marriage-tie. Husband's younger sister's husband is *Jila-ja(n)*. Under the Newari custom of exchange mar-



riage husband's both sisters are the potential wives of the woman's brother.

A Newar woman, as we have noticed, identifies her husband's brothers' children with the children of her own sisters, calling them *Kaye-cha* and *Mhyaye-cha*. Only the suffix *cha* differentiates these children from her own children for whom the terms used are *Kaye* and *Mhyaye*. It suggests two types of consistency with the familial organisation of the Newars. Firstly, the identification of husband's brothers' children with those of the woman's sisters' is fully supported by the practice of a brother-group marrying a sister-group, as mentioned above. Secondly, it points out the familial unity of brothers in a patrilineal extended family from which married daughters are excluded.

For a man, his wife's consanguineal relatives in the ascendant generations are to be respected and he should not marry any woman from these generations, since he places them in the categories of his own consanguineal relatives of the corresponding generations.

Wife's elder sister who is designated as *Sasa-tata* is to be approached with politeness and respect. She is the person to whom the man is related as *Jila-ja(n)*. Marriage with wife's elder sister is a taboo. There is avoidance between them. But wife's younger sister is *Sasa-Kehe (n)* which means she is related as 'younger sister'. She is, however, a potential wife and joking relationship between her and the man exists.

Marriage with the wife's sisters' daughters is prohibited. They are designated by the ego as *Sasa-Mhyaye-cha*, the term being a compound of *Sasa* (showing affinal relationship) and *Mhyaye-cha*, used for designating the daughter of his own brother. The restriction on marriage with one's wife's sisters' daughters is in consonance with the kinship terms used for them; for the wife's sisters would have been the wives of one's own

brothers; or the wife's younger sister would have been the ego's own second wife. But strangely enough a man can marry his wife's brother's daughter whom a man calls *Sasa-Bhincha*. Conversely, a woman can marry her father's sister's husband, *Jicha-Paju*.

We have so far discussed the organisation of relatives from the viewpoint of an individual. The relationship can also be expressed in terms of households. By this device one is able to set apart his patrilineal group from the rest of the relatives. From the point of view of the ego's household there can be four such groupings. These are: *Fukee-Khala* including *Daju-kija khala*; *Mhya-masta* (daughter's families); *Paju-khala* (maternal uncle's family); and *Sasa-Khala* (father-in-law's family). There exists mutual rights and obligations among these households on the one hand, and between these and the ego on the other. For a people like the Newars with an abundance of ceremonies and feasts such a categorisation of relatives serves quite a useful purpose. It avoids sending invitation to every member of the household at the time of some social event. Of all these, a person can always look to his maternal uncle's household for help and sympathy. On the other hand, the daughters' families are closer to an ego's household. Such a reducing of relatives into set categories results in the formation of different concentric circles of kin and affines according to the closeness to the ego.

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## 11. NEWAR PANTHEON—I

**I**N this chapter and also in the subsequent one, it is intended to deal with the structure and function of the Newar pantheon. It is therefore complementary to the discussion on ceremonies and festivals.

The Newar gods and goddesses reveal on the one hand an intermingling of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs and practices; and on the other, a predominance of the lower aspects of religion, characterised by such rituals as would be considered un-Brahminic by the orthodox Hindus. Besides, many of the deities which play a vital role in the Newar social life are clearly seen to be of aboriginal origin though they have been given the garb of divine personages of the higher order. To understand the divinities of the Newars, let us start with their primitive ideas and beliefs about their gods and goddesses.

According to B. H. Hodgson<sup>1</sup> the Newari language does not contain terms for God and creation, if we exclude the Sanskrit terms *bhagwan*, *deo* and *deota*. He further remarks that whenever a Newar individual expresses the idea of God without resorting to Sanskrit terms, he is driven to periphrasis and says *Adhji-ju-Deo*. He suggests that this term is compounded of *Adhji* (grandfather) and *Deo*. Thus by reverence for his ancestors, a Newar comes

to revere his maker, whom he calls literally the father of his father. At present, in the Valley, there is no such term used by the Newars to designate their gods and goddesses, subject to one exception in the case of Akash Bhairava. *Aja ju* (not *Adhji ju*) is an alternative designation for this god which is still current.

Another context in which the term *Aja ju* is used at present by the Newars, apart from its use for the designation of one's grandfather, is at the *Gathe Mangal* festival on the 14th of the dark-half of *Sravan*. This is the occasion when a person of the Pore caste, while impersonating the demon Ghantakaran, goes about the streets in the morning shouting *Aja ju* which is, by its implication, taken to mean "I am the father of your father." When the tradition of calling the god *Adhji ju*, as Hodgson has mentioned, is taken into consideration with the present practice of the Newars to look upon a person as a semidivine being after his *Burha Junko* ceremony, it gives rise to the supposition of some kind of ancestor worship. This supposition is further reinforced when we consider its connection with the early custom of depositing the bones of a dead relative and erecting a *chaitya* over them; and with the cult of the *Dewali* worship. These provide a chain of evidence which tends to show that the primitive religion of the Newars may have originated in ancestor worship. But one cannot conclusively say so, in the absence of an intensive work on the subject.

With regard to the creation of mankind, Hodgson further relates a somewhat strange narration from the Newar Buddhist literature which bears a close resemblance to the biblical story about the origin of mankind. According to this anecdote, originally the earth was uninhabited by human beings. During those early periods, the inhabitants of *Abhisara Bhawan* (abode of Brahma) used to visit the earth frequently. Once it so happened that when these half-male and half-female beings, who

were devoid of the sexual urge and who had not noticed their distinction of sex, came as usual to earth, Adi Buddha suddenly created in them a violent longing to eat some of the earth, which tasted to them like almonds. After having eaten the earth, they lost their power of flying back to the abode of Brahma. Consequently, they were doomed to remain on the earth and to eat its fruits for sustenance. The eating of these fruits aroused in them a deep erotic feeling and impelled them to cohabit for the satisfaction of their sexual urge. Thus the earth began to be peopled with mankind.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever may be the primitive beliefs and ideas of the Newars about their gods and about the origin of mankind, they fully share at present the current Hindu beliefs and practices with the exception of a few, which however remain peculiar to them. At present they are either Buddhists or Hindus. The Newar religious life moves within these two limits. But the majority of the deities are still in their lower aspects. Although these divinities, barring a few ones, are also believed in and worshipped by the local non-Newar Hindu communities of the Valley, it is only with the Newars that these have ceremonial relationships. For, in none of the religious events connected with these deities do the non-Newars figure at all, except in the case of Pashupatinath, Dattatraya and Narayan at whose temples the priests are non-Newars.

As the Newar religion is clothed in the garb of Hinduism and Buddhism, the nature of its pantheon must be examined in the context of the tenets of these two religions. As for Hinduism, it is not thought necessary to discuss it here, since it is not different from what is found in India. Buddhism, however, needs some description, because Nepalese Buddhism differs in some detail from the orthodox Buddhism as commonly understood in India. By Nepalese Buddhism here, what is meant is Newar

Buddhism. The salient features of Nepalese Buddhism are recapitulated so as to arrive at a better understanding of the Newar divinities.

At its higher level, Newar Buddhism is essentially monotheistic and is based on the belief in one supreme God, that is Adi Buddha. Adi Buddha is regarded as the sole self-existent one, pervading the whole universe. He is believed to have appeared in the water in the form of a flame on a lotus flower, when the Valley was a lake. He is called Swayambhu and is always worshipped in the form of a flame. Adi Buddha wished to change himself from one into many. This resulted in the creation of five divine Buddhas. These are Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratna Sambhava, Amitabha and Amog Siddha. These divine Buddhas were ultimately absorbed into Swayambhu and are no longer concerned with the world. Each of these divine Buddhas is supposed to have his feminine consort, Bodhi Sakti with whose union each is said to have produced a divine Bodhi Satwa who, by rotation, is charged with the affairs of the world. Ever since the beginning of time, three Bodhi Satwas took their birth in order to create and govern the systems of universe on the dissolution of which, after having accomplished their purpose, they were re-absorbed into Adi Buddha. According to Newar Buddhism, the present world is the work of the fourth divine Bodhi Satwa, Padma Pani, who is also identified with the local god, *Matsyendra-nath*. Padma Pani, it is supposed, would be re-absorbed on the dissolution of the present world, after which the responsibility of creating and governing the next world shall devolve on the fifth Bodhi Satwa.

Another peculiar feature of Newar Buddhism is the recognition of the Hindu triad, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. It is claimed by the Buddhist Newars that, with a view to relieving himself of the cares and responsibilities of governing the world, Padma Pani created Brahma,

Vishnu and Mahesh and delegated to them, respectively, the power of creating, preserving and destroying the world. He is further believed to have called into his service Indra, Ganesh, Hanuman, Garuda, Lakshmi and Saraswati—who are all regarded merely as the servants of Padma Pani, the lord of the Universe, who alone wields the power and possesses the attributes of Adi Buddha.

After the divine Bodhi Satwas come the countless mortal Buddhas. They are called mortal because they were born of human parents and had to live their life on the earth and attained the divine status only through penance and austerity. Among these, Sakya Sinha is the last and the most prominent. He takes his rank among those historical personages such as Vipasu, Sikhi, Vishwa Bha, Krakuchand, Kanak Muni, and Kashyapa of the remote past, who came into the Valley, attracted by its sacredness. Again, each of these mortal Buddhas is believed to have his spouse. Below them rank the mortal Bodhi Satwas: Mahamati, Ratnadhara, Akashganga, Saka Mangala, Kanak Raja, Dharmodhasa and Ananda. Still below them are the saints who have not yet attained the Buddha stage. Among these are included Manjusri and his two wives, Bardar and Makeddar (interpreted by the Hindus as Laxmi and Saraswati, respectively).

Of all the Buddhist divinities, only four can be said to have any real influence on the Newars. They are Amitabha, Padma Pani, Sakya Sinha (Gautam Buddha), and the mortal Bodhi Satwa Manjusri.

Newar Buddhism is characterised by the absence of monastic institutions\*, existence of caste and the adoption of almost all the Hindu deities, which mark it off from its other variants elsewhere. What strikes one most with regard to Newar divinities is that they have been

\*This is not to contradict the recent attempt at the revival of monastic institutions. Such a revival has nothing to do with the social organisation of the Newars.

essentially given the clothing of Newar thoughts and ideas which reflect the Newar social life.

Between Newar Hinduism and Buddhism there is more mutual recognition and exchange of beliefs and rituals than conflict. Thus the *Nepala Mahatmya* says, "to worship Buddha is to worship Siva" and *Swayambhu Puran* reciprocates the same by recommending the worship of Siva.<sup>3</sup> This is amply borne out by the religious practices of the Newars. In the majority of cases the only basis for distinguishing between a Buddhist and a Hindu is the employment of priest. Otherwise, they worship both the sets of gods and goddesses. Although the Vanras and Udas, the two orthodox sections among the Buddhists, may not regularly visit the Hindu shrines such as of Siva and Narain, they regard all the other Hindu gods and goddesses, such as Bhairava, Bhagwati and Ganesh, as an essential part of their practical religion.

Of the Hindu gods, Siva or Mahadeo occupies the highest place. It is from this cult that the Hindu Newars derive their group name Siva Margi. The principal temple dedicated to Siva is that of Pashupati, the most sacred shrine of the Hindus in the Valley of Kathmandu. Pashupati is worshipped as the lord of animals and regarded by all as the guardian-deity of Nepal. It is represented by a huge phallus emblem with the five figures of Siva engraved on it. These figures represent Siva in his different meditative *mudras*. Legend connects this deity with the Mahadeo of Badri Kedar who is said to have settled down in the Valley as Pashupati in the form of a deer and a flame.<sup>4</sup> The cult of Siva or Mahadeo clearly shows its origin from the west. Its introduction into the Valley is said to be later in time than Swayambhu and Guheshwari.<sup>5</sup> Levi takes the view that some aboriginal pastoral deity has been metamorphosed into Pashupati, consequent on the introduction of Hinduism.<sup>6</sup> Although the high caste Buddhamargi Newars, such as the Vanras and



Udas, do not worship Pashupatinath as a supreme god, they venerate him and visit his shrine to pay their obeisance. The rest of the Buddhamargi Newars do not differ at all from their Hindu counterparts in religious attitude towards this deity. It is significant to note that this deity is accessible only to Maharashtrian Bhat Brahmins who serve as priests of its temple. To the Hindu Newars, Pashupati is the protector and giver of prosperity.

Another important temple dedicated to Siva is of Koteswar Mahadeo. Siva also plays a very intimate role as Nrityanath. He is represented as the god of dance and music and in this form he is exclusively worshipped by the Newars. It is more popularly known in Newari as *Nasa Deya*. With the exception of the Chhattaria and Shrestha Newars, all the Newar castes have their respective music-groups which look upon Nrityanath as their patron deity. Nrityanath or *Nasa Deya* is figured as a dancing Siva, a feature which bears closest affinity with the dancing Siva of South India. For the Newars, *Nasa Deya* forms part of their group life. The introduction of this deity is attributed to King Siva Deo Burman, son of Guna Kama Deo (circa 571 A.D.) from the *Satarudra* mountain.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes *Nasa Deya* is shown to be without a head. It is installed at the back-wall of every temple. Sometimes it is found to have its own independent temple also.<sup>7 a</sup>

The status of *Nasa Deya* is very strange, for it is not accorded as high a rank as Mahadeo. A significant point to note in connection with this deity is that it is offered animal sacrifices, rice-beer and liquor. The chief function of this deity is to preside over music. In a year a particular day is dedicated to its worship. Besides, it is also worshipped when an individual enters the caste music group of *Nasa Khala*.

Siva as *Lukuma Deya* is popularly worshipped by both the religious sections of Newars. But the worship of

this deity is not met with among the non-Newar Hindus of the Valley. *Lukuma Deya* derives its name from the fact that it is a hiding Siva. The Hindu Newars trace the origin of this deity back to the Hindu legendary episode of Mahadeo and Bhasmasur who by his penance obtained a boon from the former. The boon gave him the power of reducing to ashes anyone on whose head he laid his hand. According to the legend, Bhasmasur attempted to test the efficacy of this boon by touching the head of the boon-giver himself. In order to save himself from the danger, Siva is said to have assumed the form of *Lukuma Deya* and remained hidden from Bhasmasur. In keeping with this belief, this deity is, therefore, always kept hidden amidst garbage and covered with a stone. Once in a year, on the fourteenth of the dark-half of Chaitra, it is uncovered and worshipped with great veneration. Its worship is believed to insure good-health and protection to the family.

Siva is also worshipped in numerous other forms for different purposes. More often than not this deity is worshipped in the form of a phallus. The tall stone-phallus, about five feet high, located at Jaisi Dewal tole in Kathmandu, where women desiring to have a child go to embrace it, is one of the examples of Siva fulfilling a role in the Newar society.

Of the other higher Hindu deities, Vishnu occupies a prominent place. Vishnu or Narain is venerated and worshipped by the Newars more popularly as *Naran Deya*. The Hindu part of the Nepalese legend credits Vishnu with having converted the lake into the Valley of Kathmandu. Vishnu is said to have come to the Valley along with Brahma and Maheshwar in the form of a deer and remained in the Valley with Sheshnag and a cow.<sup>8</sup> If this is taken into consideration with another legend which says that the first dynasty which ruled over the Valley of Kathmandu was of the Gopals or cow-herds, it

would suggest the fact that the cult of Vishnu may have been introduced for the first time by the cow-herds who have now been absorbed into the Jyapoo caste. The fact that Narain is extremely popular among the Jyapoo caste goes to support this view. Again an observer in the Valley of Kathmandu would not fail to notice that many Buddha idols bear a close resemblance to Vishnu idols.

Of the important temples of Vishnu, there are at least six which are regarded as the main Narains of the Valley. These include Changu Narain, Vishanku Narain, Sikha Narain, Ichhanku Narain and Machhe Narain and Bula-Nil-Kantha Narain. Besides, numerous other smaller temples are also dedicated to Narain. Most of these temples are without a priest. Between Siva and Narain a point which is ethnologically significant is that the latter is the *kul* deity of many Newars. In Panga village, the temple of Narain stands in the centre of the settlement and there is no priest attached to it. Annually it is worshipped by a Jyapoo family from Kathmandu town, whose *kul* deity it is supposed to be. Narain is generally represented as resting either on a bed of serpents with their hoods spread over his head or in standing posture. Machhe Narain is believed to have been originated from a fish from which it derives its name. In Bhaktapur town, a temple is dedicated to Wakpati Narain. This deity is worshipped by the Newar peasants as the harvest-god. Animal sacrifice is seldom offered to Narain in contrast to the other deities.

Of the main temples of Narain, as stated earlier, five have either a Parbatiya or Deo-Bhaju Brahmin as priest. In the case of Bula-nil-Kantha Narain, the priest is a *Mahant*, who belongs to the *Nath* sect. Bula-Nil-Kantha has a peculiar explanation connected with its appearance in the Valley. According to a current legend, a Jyapoo, while digging his rice-field noticed that blood was oozing out from the earth where his spade had struck. He was told in his dream that he had cut the toe of Narain who

lay buried in the field. Later the deity was restored. It is represented by a colossal stone idol of Vishnu resting on Shesha Naga. Narain is popular also in the form of Saligrama stone. It is worshipped by almost all the Hindu Newars in the same manner as the non-Newar Hindus do. The fact that saligrama stone is abundantly found in Kali river suggests that its worship might have been introduced from Western Nepal.

The worship of Krishna as an incarnation of Narain is popular among the Newars. Krishna occurs in Newar mythology very frequently. At one place he is described as having come into the Valley to aid his son Pradumnya in a battle against his enemies.<sup>9</sup> The chief temple dedicated to Krishna is the Krishna Mandir at Patan, which is said to bear South Indian influence on its architecture. This temple is said to have been built by Siddhi Narsingha Malla in 1637 A.D.<sup>10</sup> Another local tradition, as stated elsewhere, connects the building of this temple with the Tamots who live in that town and who claim to have come from Mathura. On the eighth of the dark-half of *Bhadra*, a *mela* (fair) is held at this temple. Thousands of pilgrims from all over the Valley flock to this temple.

In so far as the Newars are concerned, the worship of Krishna takes on a slightly different line. They celebrate the birthday of Krishna by decorating their houses and the streets with pictures of Krishna and Gopini. The fair at the Krishna Mandir, on the other hand, is participated in mostly by the Gorkhas. On the eighth day of Krishna, processions are taken out at several places. Boys are dressed to represent Krishna, Balram and Gopikas and drawn in cars through the streets. In such festivals it is the Jyapoos who play a prominent role. As regards the non-Newars, they are simply spectators. *Krishna Jatra* is especially popular in the regions of Patan, Kirtipur, Panga, and Thankot—the places which, according to the local

tradition, are described as the ancient abode of the cowherds.

An important temple of Narain is that of Jagannath, dedicated to the lord of Jagannath Puri. This temple stands facing the Newar Malla Raja's palace in Kathmandu. It is in Pagoda style and is replete with ornamental wood-carving depicting different poses of the sexual act. Another temple of Jagannath stands at the southern extremity of Kathmandu on the bank of the Vishnumati. But these are rarely visited by the Newars and therefore they do not play a significant role in their daily life, although the deity is believed in and revered much.

The cult of Rama is not so popular among the Newars. There are a few temples in the Valley dedicated to him. On the Ram Navami day, some Hindu Newars may fast like the other Hindus. But Rama worship is by no means popular. Another fact which goes to show the comparatively less attention given to Rama worship is the status of Hanuman (the ape-god). In Newar worship Hanuman does not have a place at all.<sup>11</sup> At the old palace of the Newar Malla Kings in Kathmandu, an idol of Hanuman stands at the gate, and is deemed to enjoy no better status than that of a gate-keeper. At the temples of Rama at Jaisi dewal and Pashupati, Hanuman is worshipped, but as infrequently as his Lord. Bhatgaon is however an exception. The river flanking the northern side of that town is called after the ape-god as Hanumante. On its bank there are two ghats, known as Ram ghat and Hanuman ghat, respectively, where the temples of Rama and Hanuman stand. The Newar legend says that on his way back to Lanka carrying the hill containing the life-giving plant, *Mrityu Sanjivini*, to revive the life of Lakshman, Hanuman had stopped there to rest. Such exceptional importance of Hanuman in this town is due to its being predominantly a Hindu area. But in comparison to the popularity of the divinities like Siva, Narain, Krishna,

Bhagwati, Bhairava and Ganesh, the cult of Rama may be taken to be insignificant.

The second set of deities which are of lower order but of practical importance to the Newars comprises Ganesh, Kumar, Bhairava and Bhairavi and their various forms. They are closely associated with the domestic life of the Newars. Among these, Ganesh occupies a prominent position. Maharashtra which is well noted for the worship of Ganesh lags behind the Valley where this deity receives the most favoured treatment. Numerous temples are dedicated to Ganesh, and practically no region, no town nor locality is without a Ganesh temple.

We have already noted how the worship of Ganesh by the chief lady of the house, *Thakali-Naki*, is a prerequisite to all the Newar domestic ceremonies,<sup>12</sup> which indicates its supreme importance. In the temple of Ganesh, the idol is generally represented in a sitting posture, as in India, bedaubed with vermilion. But at one place it is found seated on a serpent-bed. The main function of Ganesh is to remove obstacles to human work. But it is also worshipped as the bestower of a good husband or child.

The temples dedicated to Ganesh in the Valley are innumerable. Each town, each locality and each house has its own Ganesh idol. Of these, four temples are considered as the chief ones. These are Surya Vinayak at Bhatgaon, Siddhi Vinayak at Sankhu, Asoke Vinayak at Kathmandu and Vighna Vinayak at Chaurbar. A human being deified as Ganesh is also worshipped at Bhatgaon. The idol of Ganesh at the entrance of Talleju temple in Bhatgaon, according to the local belief, is of a deified South Indian Brahmin (probably a Maharashtrian Brahmin) of Agnihotri clan. Similarly Asoke Vinayak in Kathmandu is regarded as an incarnation of a Manandhar man (Teli by caste).

Ganesh's Fourth (Ganesh Chaturthi) which falls on the fourth of the bright-half of *Bhadra* is celebrated by the

Newars. But the day is more important in connection with some other event than with Ganesh. The festival of Asoke Vinayak in Kathmandu is celebrated on the eighth of the bright-half of *Aswin*, whereas in Panga, Ganesh *Jatra* is held on the second of the dark-half of *Bhadra*.

Tuesday is held to be sacred in regard to Ganesh. Along with the Hindu belief of Ganesh being the son of Parvati, the Newars also hold the belief that Parvati herself was able to accomplish her desire to have Siva through the aid of Ganesh in whose honour she had taken a vow. Ganesh, therefore, like Siva, is believed to have the power of bestowing a good husband to a woman. Ganesh is the *kul*-deity of many Newar castes. The Kasai caste of Panga regards Ganesh as its household deity. How deep seated this belief is can be judged from the popularity of fasting by Newar unmarried girls in honour of Ganesh on Tuesdays.

All the principal temples of Ganesh in the Valley, except that of Surya Vinayak, are served either by the Gubhaju or by the Achaju priests. In most cases, the Jyapoo is the *deva-pala* in all these temples. In Bhaktapur, the temple of Surya Vinayak is served by as low a caste as the Pore. There is another temple of Ganesh in Bhaktapur which is served by a Du(n)yee-ya(n) Newar, a low caste.

Bhairava is worshipped in a multitude of forms such as demons, deified human beings and animals. Tradition asserts that the most ancient Bhairavas in the Valley were Pachali and those of Bhaktapur (Bhatgaon) and Sanga (to the east of the Valley) and Nayakot.<sup>13</sup> These seem to have come to the Valley with the different sets of people.

It is difficult to find a place in the Valley, which is not pervaded by Bhairava. The prominent location of Bhairava however is the corner of a street or any site which has an unusual and strange appearance. With the majority of Newars it is the dominant deity along with its

consort, Bhairavi, and Ganesh. In all the ceremonies, propitiation of Bhairava is the most essential feature. The large number of festivals held in its honour and the display of its mask on numerous occasions reveal its importance.

The principal temples dedicated to Bhairava in the Valley include Akash Bhairava, Kal Bhairava, Bag Bhairava, Pachali Bhairava and Mahakal Bhairava. The temple of Akash Bhairava is in Kathmandu town. All Hindus and Buddhists worship this deity and regard it as the guardian-deity of the Indra Chowk locality of Kathmandu town. The hereditary priest and the *Deopala* (caretaker) of this temple are a Vanra and a Jyapoo, respectively. In its aboriginal form, it has its temple on a hillock on the south western foot-hill of the Valley where the Du(n)yee-ya(n) Newars dwell. The management of this temple is carried out by the Du(n)yee-ya(n)s. It is this deity whom they invariably invoke. The deity derives its name from the belief that its face is always upturned towards the sky because if its eyes were to fall on any object, that object would be destroyed at once. Akash Bhairava is also identified with Eklabya, the Bhilla prince mentioned in the Mahabharat. The Du(n)yee-ya(n) Newars however prefer to call this deity *Sava Deya*. In Newari, *Sava* means Savari, the Bhilla woman mentioned in Ramayana. Etymologically interpreted, *Sava-deya* means the god of Savari. It thus shows cultural affinity with the Bhilla race of India. On the *Indra Jatra* day, Akash Bhairava is impersonated by a Du(n)yee-ya(n) Newar by wearing a mask. He is accompanied by two *ganas* known as *Bhakus*. Another tradition refers to this deity as a Rakshasa prince who had gone to witness the battle of Mahabharat. This tradition goes on to say that the Rakshasa prince was asked by Krishna on whose side he would fight. To this he replied that he would fight on the



losing side. Krishna thereupon fearing that he was sure to assist the Kauravas, beheaded him with his discus, *Sudarshan chakra*, and caused his head to be thrown back to his home in the Valley of Nepal. This legend also explains the tradition of representing Bhairava in the form of its mask. How blood-thirsty Akash Bhairava is can be found from the description in the chapter on festivals.

Kal Bhairava is located in Kathmandu. This deity is represented by a big black idol. It has no temple as such. The idol has a very frightful appearance and is shown as trampling upon a demon. In contrast to Akash Bhairava, its worship is not so regular and popular. There is no festival in its honour. One of the chief functions which this deity serves is to preside over oath-taking. The common belief is that if a person tells a lie before this deity, he would die of blood-vomiting. Therefore anyone wanting to extort truth from a person takes him or her to this place to make a statement. Belief in the power of this deity is so strong that no one ever dares to tell a lie in its presence. In the past, Government officials were sworn in before this deity on the annual occasion of *paijñi*, a custom under which Government servants had to be annually reappointed in their respective posts.<sup>14</sup> Kal Bhairava enjoys a fairly better status outside the Valley in places such as Ridi and Palpa in western Nepal. Tradition ascribes the introduction of Kal Bhairava in Palpa from Kathmandu Valley to King Mukund Sena.<sup>15</sup> In each of these places, the chief temple is dedicated to this deity. In his honour an annual festival is held in which the local Newars participate in large numbers. Looking at its nature and worship, Kal Bhairava appears to be a later addition to the already existing Bhairavas of Nepal. Tradition assigns that it was brought from Banaras. The temple of Kal Bhairava in Banaras supports this view.

Another important Bhairava which is more aboriginal in form is Bagh Bhairava. As the name indicates, this

deity is worshipped in the form of a tongueless tiger with a gaping mouth. Its temple is situated in the settlement of Kirtipur; and is worshipped as the presiding deity of the region. In its honour an annual festival is held on Singha Sankranti (the first of the dark of Bhadra). For the Newars of Kirtipur and adjoining regions, its festival is the chief event of the year, which involves festivity and merriment. While the local castes such as the Vanra and Shrestha are connected with its worship, it appears to be primarily the godling of the Jyapoos, who strongly believe in its power of ensuring peace and protection. There is no doubt that the temples of Bhagwati and Buddhas abound in Kirtipur; yet, even if these are popularly worshipped, they do not figure much in the daily life of the Jyapoos. The fact that many Jyapoo families of Kirtipur, Panga and Nagaum regard Bagh Bhairava as their *Kul*-deity indicates the intimate connection of this deity with them. Even the story of its origin connects it with the local Jyapoos. It is said that some of the *Nanda Gwa* (cowherds), while tending their cattle in the ancient times, when the Kirtipur region was a dense forest, made a clay tiger. Leaving it there they went away into the forest to bring a leaf to provide it with a tongue. On their return they were astonished to see the clay-tiger turned into a real tiger. They saw that the cattle were missing. On being asked where the cattle had disappeared, the tiger opened its mouth and the boys saw the cattle huddled up in its belly. It was thus that the Bagh Bhairava came into existence.<sup>16</sup> In keeping with this legend, even to this day it is the hereditary function of a Jyapoo family to bring a leaf from the forest and put it in the tiger's mouth to represent its tongue. If we were to believe this folklore, it could be found out that it connects the tiger-god's origin with the ancient cowherds—*Nanda Gwa*—who had established the first ruling dynasty in the Val-

ley. The fact that the Kirtipur region (and especially Than-kot lying farther south in the Valley) still forms the main habitat of the *Gwala* or *Nanda Gwa*, who are now merged with the Jyapoos, further substantiates the possible introduction of Bagh Bhairava by the cowherds. In this connection it may be mentioned that the cult of Bhairava shows strangely enough its affinity with Baghoba or Vaghdeo of Maharashtra which G. S. Ghurye mentions in his book on the Mahadeo Kolis.<sup>17</sup>

A feature worth mentioning here is that the priesthood of Bagh Bhairava belongs to a low-caste, the Kusle. The Kusle is in charge of *Nitya Puja* (daily worship); and whatever offerings are made to the deity are appropriated by him. But on important religious occasions a Vanra acts as the priest.

Bagh Bhairava, though it is intimately associated with the life of the people of Kirtipur and the adjoining regions, is not so popular with the Newars of other regions in the Valley. From their point of view it is simply one of the forms of Bhairava. They rarely come to Kirtipur with the specific purpose of worshipping it.

Outside the Valley the only place where Bhairava is worshipped in its tiger form is the Nayakot Valley, further north. Nayakot being situated at a lower level (about 2,000 feet than Kathmandu) is warmer and very notorious for the devastating *awal* fever. In Nayakot, Bhairava as a tiger-god is greatly feared and worshipped and its festival forms the biggest annual event there. However, the festival is more popularly called after Bhairavi. It is as much the belief among the local Newars as among the non-Newars that at the close of the great festival of Bhairava in the middle of April, the local goddess, Bhairavi, releases the destructive plague upon all who venture to trespass the tiger's favourite haunt in the Tarai.<sup>18</sup> Its annual festival is marked by many a sacrifice of buffaloes to appease the goddess and her consort (See Chapter 13). The

chief participants in the festival are the Jyapoos and Vanaras; the non-Newars are merely spectators. Of the two tiger Bhairavas worshipped one each at Kirtipur (in Kathmandu Valley) and Nayakot, the one at the latter place is stated to be one of the most ancient Bhairavas of Nepal.

Another Bhairava which commands belief and worship of the Newars is Pachali Bhairava. The term *Pachhali* is derived from Panchalinga (five phallus-idols). The term itself is suggestive of the form of the deity which is said to comprise five phallus-idols, now buried under the stones.<sup>19</sup> The symbol of *linga* clearly indicates that it is one of the forms of Siva. But strangely enough, this deity is identified by the Newars with the demon Bir Bhadra, a reference to which occurs in the *Sosthani*.<sup>20</sup> It is believed that he is the king of Phirping, a region in the southern extremity of the Valley. Meat, ducks, eggs and liquor constitute the main items of offerings in its worship. In spite of the belief that it is not supposed to accept blood, sacrifices of animals, particularly of ducks, forms the chief event in its propitiation. But the Newars cleverly cut the Gordian knot by making the sacrifice in a quadrangle known as *betal* just a few yards away from the main deity, which is supposed to be its resting place. According to Levi, Pachhali Bhairava is the protector of the soil (*Kshetra pal*) of the southern region of the universe.<sup>21</sup>

Pachali Bhairava is more closely connected with the Jyapoo, Manandhar and Kasai than with any other Newars. Its special connection with the Jyapoos can be seen from the fact that after its annual festival, the mask-head of this deity is kept in a Jyapoo household and worshipped daily by its *Thakali* as a family deity. Its annual *Jatra* (festival) is the occasion for the *wala* ceremony of the Jyapoo and Manandhar boys. The boys go there and spend a night fasting and return home the next day when

the mask of the Bhairava is brought in procession to the house of the Jyapoo where it has to be kept and worshipped till the next festival.

Another Bhairava known as Unmateswar Bhairava fulfils a different function in the life of the Newars of Kathmandu. Its temple stands near the temple of Pashupati. It is represented by a huge stone idol, about five feet high, with a long penis in erect posture. Women suffering from sexual frigidity or menstrual irregularity go to worship the genital organ of this deity. It is believed that the mere sight of this deity is enough to render a woman seized with a strong sexual desire.

There are numberless forms of Bhairavas which are feared, venerated and propitiated by the Newars. On important festival days innumerable masks of the Bhairavas are displayed on the streets. The most popular way of representing Bhairava is to have its face engraved on a huge earthen jar filled with rice-beer. It is not possible to enumerate all these Bhairavas; the nature of the difficulty can be judged from Levi's estimate that there are about five million Bhairavas in Nepal.<sup>22</sup>

The Bhairavas are therefore more intimately connected than Siva or Mahadeo with the life of the Newars. In their divine aspects, they are protectors but they are equally wrathful and difficult to propitiate. They are always blood-thirsty. The aboriginal character of this deity can be seen from its being ritually connected with the lower caste Newars. The office of the *devapala* in the majority of cases is held either by a Jyapoo or a person from the depressed caste. In all the domestic ceremonies, Bhairava is represented by a jug filled with *Janra* (rice beer). Rice-beer is, therefore, an indispensable part of the cult of Bhairava.

Bhairava is also worshipped as a godling which presides over physical force. Any object that symbolizes power is regarded as Bhairava and worshipped. The com-

parative rarity of Hanuman worship is perhaps explicable from the function assigned to the Bhairavas, who are believed to dwell on the wheels of the cars of Machhendranath, Kumari and Bhairavi. Before these deities are drawn in processions, during their respective festivals, the figures of Bhairava, engraved on the wheels and on the front of the yokes of the cars, have first to be worshipped and animal sacrifice made to them. Bhairava, therefore, is symbolized, apart from being regarded as the destructive form of Siva, as the divine instrument of locomotion. During *Navaratri* days even automobiles are offered goat sacrifices as these are believed to represent Bhairava.

With regard to the female divinities of the Newars, they are as numerous as their male counterparts. Every god is believed to have his female associate. Even the Buddhist pantheon, we have noted, is not without its respective *Taras* (wives). Thus the Newar conception of the family of gods is only a reflection of their own family organisation. Goddess worship has diverse manifestations, ranging from the highest female triad to the local *Mai* (mother) who is more popularly known as *Ajima*.

Among the three higher goddesses—Saraswati, Laxmi and Parvati—the first occupies the most important position in the Newars' day-to-day religious life. Saraswati is regarded by them not only as the goddess of learning but also as a symbol of creation. The Valley abounds in her temples. Every locality as in the case of Ganesh, owns a Saraswati temple. On the *Sri Panchami* day the Hindu Newar boys and girls flock to her temple for the purpose of being initiated into schooling. Besides, on the occasion of marriage and *Kaita Puja*, the worship of Saraswati forms an important aspect of the rituals.

The Buddhist Newars replace the name Saraswati with Manjusri. Under this name, the deity is worshipped as a male god. According to Buddhist mythology of Nepal, Manjusri is said to have come from China and

converted the lake into a fertile valley. Manjusri is regarded as one of the mortal Bodhi Satwas by the Buddhists, besides being the god of learning and creation. Manjusri is sometimes depicted with two hands and sometimes with four, always holding a raised sword in the right hand. One of the chief functions of Manjusri is to preside over handicrafts. Dr. Oaldfield mentions that during spring Newar women used to take their girls to the shrine of Manjusri at the Phool-Choa mountain as soon as the girls learnt to operate the spinning wheel.<sup>23</sup> There they worshipped the handle of the spinning wheel along with Manjusri. Between Manjusri and Saraswati there does not seem to be any difference of function. Both are required to render the same services to their respective followers. It is difficult to say whether these two deities are one and the same or different. But in the western part of the hill of Swayambhu there is a temple dedicated to the divinity of learning. The Hindu Newars worship this deity as Saraswati; and the Buddhists as Manjusri.

Of the remaining higher goddesses Laxmi is more popularly known as Mahalaxmi among the Newars and her picture is worshipped in their households. But she does not have an independent temple, which explains why she rarely figures in the practical life of the Newars. Parvati, too, though believed in and worshipped, is not very popular. The two other goddesses worshipped as wives of the higher gods are Brahmayani and Indriani. The former is the wife of Brahma, the creator; and the latter of Indra. But these two do not enjoy as high a status as the female triad mentioned earlier. In fact they are worshipped on a par with the lower forms of female deities and regarded as forming a part of the Ashta Matrikas.

Like Bhairavas, the female goddesses are very popular among the Newars in their lower forms. These are variously known as Durga, Bhagwati, Kali, *Mai* or *Ajima* and Kumari. Many of these lower deities are worshipped

mainly on account of their practical importance. They are more feared than venerated. What provokes their worship is the need to keep them pacified so as to avoid calamity on the community. Of such deities, Guheshwari is the supreme one. She is a form of Kali. Her temple is located near the shrine of Pashupatinath. Guheshwari is worshipped in the form of a hole and is regarded by the Buddhist Newars as the place wherein lies the root of the lotus flower on which Adi Buddha, the self-existent one, appeared in the form of a flame. The Hindus regard it as the anus of Uma. When Uma died of jumping into the sacrificial fire, her bereaved husband Mahadeo carried her corpse on his shoulders and began to wander from place to place in a state of madness. Different parts of Uma's corpse fell at different places giving rise to *Pithas*. The part consisting of her *Yoni* (vagina) fell at Kamrup or Kauru Kamaksha, while the anus dropped in the Valley. According to both Hindu and Buddhist interpretations, Guheshwari symbolically represents fertility and is the supreme goddess of the Valley. Her function in the Newar life is an important one. In practically all the Newar domestic ceremonies she is indispensable. She is represented in these ceremonies by a long-necked copper jug known as *anti* filled with home-made liquor. In the Parbatia caste's domestic ceremonies this deity, however, does not figure at all.

Guheshwari is worshipped in her temple by all Hindus and Buddhist Newars. For Buddhists, too, she is the highest form of female deity on a par with Adi Buddha. A festival is held in her honour on the tenth of the dark-half of Margsir. Her priest is a Newar of Achaju caste; and the *devapala* is a Kasai. Another caste which has a function in relation to her are Manandhars who have to worship her once in a month. Animal sacrifice is profusely made in honour of this goddess.

Durga or Kali is also popular among the Newars. The



most popular temple dedicated to her is the one at Bhaktapur. But this deity is accorded more or less a local worship. The famous temple of Kali is that of Dakkhin Kali on the top of the hill of Firping, towards the south of Kathmandu. Her idol is represented by a ghastly figure totally mongoloid in features as distinct from the idols of other divinities. Here again the temple priest is an Achaju Newar, while the Kasai is the *devapala*.

There are other forms of Kali or Durga. Typical of them is Talleju Bhagwati, who is a sectional deity. In Nepalese mythology she is mentioned as Tulja Bhawani, the *kul*-deity of Hari Singh Deo, a descendant of the Karnatic Prince, Nanya Deo. According to tradition, this deity had remained buried under the waters of the Saryu river at Ajodhya. One day she appeared in a dream to the King of Ajodhya and asked him to rescue her from her watery abode. With Nanya Deo, she was brought to Simirawn Garha where she was worshipped as the *Kul*-deity of the Karnatic dynasty. The traditional story goes on to say that she expressed to Hari Singh Deo her wish to be brought into the Valley. Later the Malla Kings of Nepal regarded her as their *Kul*-deity and in all the four Malla capitals—Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, Patan and Kirtipur—her temples stand. All these temples are within the precincts of the palaces of former Newar kings. During the hey-days of the Mallas, she was the supreme deity, but now she has been relegated to the background. Her temples are open to the public only during *Navaratra* when she is offered buffalo-sacrifices. The Malla Newars still look upon her as their *Kul*-deity and to them, besides the priest Joshi Newar, is reserved the right of touching her idol.

Talleju still commands high veneration and worship from all the Newars as she is sentimentally attached to them. The Parbatia or non-Newar Hindus of the Valley also look upon her as a form of Bhagwati but they make

offerings to her only in their capacity as Hindus. On the contrary, for the Newars, she forms a part of their culture.

Durga or Kali is worshipped also as *Jogini*. Of the temples dedicated to her are Bajra Jogini (at Sankhu), Bijeshwari (at Kathmandu), Khadga Jogini and Nila Tara Jogini. All these Joginis accept animal sacrifice. Liquor and rice-beer form a necessary accompaniment in their worship. Though for most of the Newars they are not the objects of daily worship, in their annual festivals they are worshipped by all. The non-Newars look upon them as different forms of Kali or Durga, but do not regularly worship them.

Next comes in order, a number of deities all classed as Varahis. Of them there are again four principal ones. These are Sweta Varahi, Nila Varahi, Vajra Varahi and Dhanwantri Varahi, located, respectively, at the four corners of the Valley. There are numerous minor idols of Varahis which are worshipped regionally. Varahis ensure protection to the buildings and temples.

The above mentioned forms of goddesses are not so significant as are their still lower forms. For they are connected with some of the intimate aspects of the Newars' practical life.

Of the female pantheon of such lower order, *Ajima* (*Sitala*) is regarded as the most malignant one. The rage that small-pox spells in the Valley has made this goddess an indispensable part of the Newar pantheon. With no tradition of vaccination among the Newars, except among a few enlightened people, small-pox is a common scare among them. The belief in *Ajima* is so strong that people are very much reluctant to get themselves vaccinated. In Panga Village, I was told that it was hard to find a vaccinated person from the older generation. Even among persons of the younger generation, cases of vaccination could be met with only in a few Shrestha families. It is not uncommon to meet large num-

bers of people with small-pox marks. In recent times, the Government has been popularising vaccination but with little or no success. We can therefore well understand the great role of *Ajima* as protector against small-pox.

*Ajima* is regarded also as the goddess of infant diseases. Whenever a child falls sick, it comes naturally to a Newar to worship this deity. In the absence of this worship, even the local physicians refuse to attend to the victims. *Ajima* is believed to have six more sisters and this belief corresponds to the seven kinds of pox diseases prevalent in the Valley.

As *Ajima* figures very prominently among the Newars, it is also accepted as one of the members of the Buddhist pantheon. *Ajima* is regarded by the Buddhists as the mother of Sakya Sinha (Gautama Buddha) in the course of one of his many human incarnations.

The principal place of *Ajima* worship is at the temple of Swayambhu, where the priest is a Vanra. In the domestic worship of *Ajima*, the *Aji* or the professional midwife acts as the priestess. Among the items of food to be offered to this deity, dried frog-meat is most essential. The Kasais are the customary dealers in this ritual meat.

The other lower forms of Durga or Kali worshipped are the various *Mais*, who are endowed with extreme malignant powers and whose propitiation and appeasement, are, therefore, very essential for the protection of the community. One cannot draw a clear line between *Ajima* and *Mai*. Very often they fade into one another, and are still known as *Ajima*—as Bhairava is called *Aju*. *Mais* are also known by the general appellation of Bhairavi, the consort of Bhairava. Such *Mais* are represented by round stones. The important temples dedicated to *Mais* in the Valley are those of Lumari Mai (also known as Bhadrakali), Luti Mai, Kankeshwari Mai (also known as *Ajima*), Luchumari Mai, Indriani, Swa Bhagwati, Maite Devi and Nar Devi. Almost all the temples of *Mais*,

with the exception of Nar Devi and Bhadrakali, are situated at the Newar cremation grounds over which they are supposed to preside. *Mais* are also supposed to be the guardian deities of their respective localities. Every year a festival is held separately in honour of each of them. These are also the occasions when animal sacrifice becomes the chief mode of propitiation. Each of these deities is connected with some particular caste whose members are the members of the *guthi* charged with the management of the temple. A very important fact to note in connection with these malignant female deities of the lower order is that their *deva-palas* are invariably drawn from the untouchable castes such as the Pore, Kusle, Kasai and Chyame, who are entitled to touch these deities. During the annual festivals, however, the Vanra priest or an Achaju or Joshi may perform the priestly functions.

Of these *Mais*, Swa Bhagwati is regarded as the goddess of witchcraft. The Newars believe that witches frequent her temple at mid-nights to invoke her. Bisen Devi, the presiding deity of the village of Panga, also belongs to this class of female goddesses. Her temple is situated at two different places—one in the centre of the village where she receives daily worship from a Kusle priest. In her aboriginal form, she has a temple at Bhajangle, a little distance away towards the east of the village where she is supposed to preside over the crematorium. There she is represented by a row of a few rounded stones. At the time of her annual festival, the people of Panga and its adjoining villages participate and it is the chief event in the local community. Goats and buffaloes are sacrificed, while liquor and rice-beer are profusely offered to her. The sphere of influence of Bisen Devi is however restricted to the Panga region only. Like Bisen Devi every locality, village or town has its own *Mai*, in whose honour an annual festival is held.

An important type of *Mai* is Annapurna whose temple is situated in the locality of Asan in Kathmandu. This deity is represented by a big *Pathi* (grain measuring pot) which serves to indicate its role as the goddess of corn. It is said to be the *Kul*-deity of the *Thaku-Ju-Ju* Newars. She presides over the grain market situated in that locality.

In the worship of the female divinities the Newars are unique inasmuch as they have the practice of worshipping a human being in the form of *Kumari*. This is entirely a Buddhist cult but nevertheless equally accepted by the Hindu Newars for worship. In every *Bahal*, a girl who has no scars on her body is worshipped as the living form of Kali or Durga. Worship of such a human *Kumari* is a preliminary to all the domestic ceremonies of the Newars. Besides, such Bahals' *Kumaris*, there is also a main *Kumari* recognised as the *Kumari* of the State. The expenses connected with her office, is met out of a special endowment, called *Kumari Guthi*.

The State *Kumari* is periodically selected from among the Vanra girls on the last night of Navaratra after a trying test. The girl is left alone in a room where the heads of hundreds of sacrificed buffaloes are piled up. She is asked to tread her way over the heads of the buffaloes. If she is not in fear, she is considered fit to be the *Kumari*. She is then installed in her office. Annually a festival is held in her honour during which she is drawn in a car through the streets. The same night when her car is brought back to her place, the King has to come for paying his homage to her, as stated elsewhere. It is the general belief of the Newars that the Valley of Nepal belongs to *Kumari* and therefore every year the ruler has to receive from her a fresh mandate to rule the country till the next *Kumari jatra*. In addition to her propitiation during the *Kumari* festival, she receives regular worship during the Navaratra.

The *Kumari* is at once replaced when she is known to be approaching her first menses. The replacement is done in the manner already described above.

An ex-*Kumari* can marry and lead a family life. But men are usually reluctant to marry her—because she is regarded as an unusual woman. As the belief goes, the husband of an ex-*Kumari* rarely survives, if ever. In Kathmandu I came across an ex-*Kumari* living as a spinster at the age of over 50. Two other ex-*Kumaris* were also met with; they were comparatively young, but widows. This writer was told that their husbands had died very shortly after their marriage. The *Kumari* is looked upon with much veneration even by the non-Newars, including the Gorkhas. But in their ceremonies and rituals she does not figure at all.

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2. Ibid, p. 63
3. Landon, P. — Nepal, Vol. II, p. 211
4. Wright, D. — History of Nepal, Cambridge, 1877, p. 81.
5. Ibid.
6. Levi, S. — Le Nepal, Vol. II, p. 357-365.
7. Wright, D. — Op. cit. p. 125.
- 7a. Nasa Deya is the guru of ten other deities. See Hamilton, F. — An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1819, p. 35.
8. Wright, D — History of Nepal p. 125.
9. Ibid, p. 107.
10. Ibid, p. 223.
11. Levi, S — Le Nepal, Vol. II, p. 329.
12. The Gorkhas, who are Brahminic, worship Ganesh, too. Among them Ganesh is represented by a betel-nut placed over a mound of rice.

13. Wright, D — Op. Cit, p. 105.
14. Landon, P — Nepal, Vol. II, p. 12.
15. Northey and Morris — The Gurkhas, p. 21.
16. Wright, D — Op. cit, p. 161-162.
17. Ghurye, G. S. — Mahadeo Kolis, Bombay, 1957, p. 42.
18. Landon, P. — Op. cit. Vol. II, p. 28.
19. Wright, D. — Op. cit, p. 214.
20. *Sosthani* is a sacred story like *Satyanarayan Katha* which is very popular among the Nepalese. It deals with a Brahmin woman who had to bear the consequences of enraging Siva.
21. Levi, S. — Op. cit. Vol. II — p. 382.
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## 12. NEWAR PANTHEON — II

**O**F the deified saints and heroes who are worshipped by the Newars, Manjusri and Machhendra Nath are the most prominent ones. We have already discussed the role played by Manjusri as a Buddhist male substitute for Saraswati. As regards the origin of this deity, there is some controversy. According to Nepalese chronological history, he came from China from a place known as Pancha Shirsha Parvat.<sup>1</sup> Levi gives a fine account of this deity. He places the location of Pancha Shirsha Parvat, known in Chinese as *Out-ai-chan*, towards south-west of Peking. At this place, a huge temple, probably of Asoka's time, is consecrated to Manjusri. On balancing the facts, Levi concludes that Manjusri belonged to Buddhism of India which was adopted by China and later passed on to Nepal when Sino-Nepalese relations came to be established. Levi adds that Manjusri was at first a Hindu deity.

Machhendra Nath's popularity and the deep sentiments of the Newars for him emanates from the vital role he plays in the agricultural life of these people. The attitude of the Newars towards him is just like it is towards their own mothers, who feed and love them. He is regarded as the god who blesses them with rain and bumper crops. He is that divine personage who ensures



material prosperity. The Newars regard his festival as the greatest among their national festivals.

The sentiments woven round this god of rain and harvest, who is represented by a hewn block of wood, dark-red in colour<sup>2</sup> — which shows its original character — can be understood only when we consider the Valley's absolute dependence in the past on local food production. Owing to the geographical conditions, which isolate the Valley from the rest of the world, import of food is extremely difficult and dependence on local agricultural production increases proportionately. Agricultural prosperity depends on adequate rainfall, which is again in the hands of Machhendra Nath. It is therefore only natural that Machhendra Nath is looked upon as a benevolent deity concerned not only with the causing of rains but also with feeding the people. This can be judged from the general belief of the Newars that Machhendra never allows any person to go without his daily meals. Such a belief finds its reflection in a traditional story which tells the regularity and punctuality with which Machhendra discharges his function. The story relates to an incident when his mother wanted to put him to test. She kept an insect hidden in a small box, wrapped in many folds, without her son's knowledge. Next morning when the box was opened she found to her great surprise that there was a grain of rice for the insect to feed upon, which was the deed of Machhendra. So she came to realize how her son was the primary agent for the existence of life on the earth.

A Newar, while praying to Machhendra does not make ambitious demands. He simply says "*Haku Jaki Sinke Ne De Ma*" ("O mother\* give me *Hakuwa* rice and fermented radish to eat").

On a higher level, as we have noted elsewhere, Machhendra is regarded as the manifestation of Padma Pani, the

<sup>2</sup> Though a male god, he is, in this prayer, called 'mother'.

divine Bodhi Satwa who is regarded as the creator and protector of the present universe. The Hindus look upon him as the famous Hindu saint of similar name. Although the appellation of Machhendra in general is thought to be derived from his having been once upon in the form of a fish (a belief also current in India), the Buddhists have their own variant of it. According to them once Padma Pani took the form of a fish in order to listen to the secret conversation between Siva and Parvati and, consequently, was called Machhendra or Matsyendra.

The present god Machhendra Nath, worshipped by the Newars, suggests the fusion of at least three different personalities. This leads us to discuss the story of his introduction into the Valley. But before that let us describe the present location of the temple of Machhendra Nath. His temple is situated in the town of Patan where he is kept for six months preceding his annual festival. For the other half of the year, he is kept in the temple situated further south on the bank of the Bungamati river, where he is more popularly known as *Bunga deya*. According to tradition, the temple at the Bungamati is the original abode of the deity where he chose to remain at the time of his arrival in the Valley of Nepal. He appears to have been brought from still further south during the reign of King Narendra Deva about the middle of the 7th century.<sup>3</sup> The same tradition also tells us that Machhendra had to be brought because of the long-drawn-out draught caused by Gorakhnath. Gorakhnath came to know that his spiritual guide (*Guru Machhendra Nath*) was then living in the Kopotak mountain, engaged in meditation and as such he was not ordinarily accessible to anybody. Being anxious to meet his *guru*, he devised a plan. He caught the nine Nagas\* of the Valley and sat

\* Machhendra Nath exercises his power to cause rain through the instrumentality of the Nagas who are regarded as the agents.

over them for twelve years thereby causing a severe draught. Hid did this because he knew Machhendra Nath would surely come to rescue his people from their distress. The draught impelled King Narendra Deva to seek advice from Bandhudata Acharya to save his country from the catastrophe. Together they went to the Kopotak mountain and requested Lokeshwar, as Machhendra was called there, to accompany them to the Valley. Having acceded to their request, Machhendra took the form of a bee and entered into a *Kalash* and was thus brought into the Valley. As soon as he arrived at the southern extremity of the Valley, there was a heavy rainfall, and the draught came to an end. Machhendra Nath finally decided to take his permanent abode on the banks of the Bungamati where his temple stands now.

The foregoing story thus puts the introduction of Machhendra Nath as early as the 7th century. But the Valley, which is known to have had a civilization even prior to that period, must have had its own god of rain. This is indicated by the alternative term *Buga* or *Bunga* applied to designate the present Machhendra Nath. *Buga* or *Bunga* in Newari means a small brook. Levi is of the opinion that *Buga deo* is of local origin. He suggests that before Machhendra Nath came to the Valley, the local inhabitants already had a deity called *Buga* who was baptized as the Lokeshwar of Kopotak mountain. Later, when Brahminism was able to assert itself, the followers of Gorakhnath imposed a fresh baptism and greeted it as their own master,<sup>4</sup> Matsyendra Nath.

The period of the introduction of Machhendra tallies with the account by the Chinese traveller Wang Hiuen Tse of the people living in the Valley. The Chinese traveller mentions that the people of Nepal shaved their heads to the level of their eye-brows, pierced their ears, wearing tubes of bamboos or oxen horns, and it was a

mark of beauty to have the ears falling towards shoulders.<sup>5</sup> From such accounts we have the suggestion that the predecessors of the present *Kanphata* ascetics did live in the Valley around that period and we may attribute to them the introduction of the cult of Matsyendra Nath. The present Jogi or Kusle caste among the Newars claiming descent from the former Natha ascetics helps to further support the contention of an earlier existence of such a class of ascetics. It thus undoubtedly points out the imposition of the term Machhendra on a local but influential deity which was perhaps then known only as *Buga*.

An interesting fact which emerges from the discussion of Machhendra Nath is the confusion about his sex. Although Machhendra is regarded as a male deity, some of the features associated with him are essentially feminine. At the time of his festival, he is not only initiated through the initiation ceremonies to be undergone by a Newar male individual, but also through the female rituals of *Barha* and *Yihee*. In addition, while referring to the act of restoring the deity to its temple on the Bungamati, the Newars say *Bunga deo* has gone to her *maitee*. Now, *maitee* is a term used only by a married woman when she refers to her parents' home. The use of the term *Ma* (mother) while praying to him also provides an additional ground suggesting the earlier female form of *Bunga deo*. We are therefore led to suggest that the aboriginal *Bunga deo* may have been a female deity who was later transformed into a male one. We found the same tendency in respect of Saraswati earlier.

The hold of Machhendra Nath over the minds of Newars remains as strong as ever, despite the fact that much of the food grains needed in the Valley is now imported, thanks to the newly-constructed Tribhuvan Rajpath. His power to cause rain is as unquestionable as ever. Landon<sup>6</sup> reports a very interesting incident in

this connection. According to him, spring in 1924 had been unusually dry and fierce and there was a dire need of water everywhere, not only to enable the ploughing and sowing to begin, but even to provide the necessary drinking water. He was told of the people's beliefs that the moment the festival of Machhendra Nath took place and the god was exhibited, there would be rain. Landon observes that there was a little rain-fall when the god was exhibited. It is the firm belief not only of the Newars but also of the other Hindus that on the day of the festival of Machhendra Nath, rain is bound to come. My own experience in the Valley leads me to find the reason for the inexplicable association between Machhendra Nath and rain and enables me to appreciate the Newari beliefs and sentiments in a better light. In June 1957, I was living in Panga Village in connection with my field work when the festival of Machhendra Nath was celebrated. People advised me not to proceed to the festival venue without an umbrella. As it was a clear sunny day, I did not expect that there would be rains. But to my great surprise, I found that as the hour of exhibiting the shirt of Machhendra Nath was approaching, clouds began to gather up in the sky and afterwards it started raining heavily for an hour or so.

There is also a temple of another Machhendra Nath in the town of Kathmandu. But this deity is not identical to *Bunga deya*. It is called "Lesser Machhendra" or "Red Machhendra". Buddhist Newars identify it with Samanta Bhadra. Its festival occurs on Rama's Ninth, which is described in the chapter on festivals.

Outside the Valley of Kathmandu, Machhendra Nath as the god of rain receives little attention from the Newars. Nor is there any festival in honour of this deity in those places except in Dolakha, situated in the east of the Valley.

Although god Machhendra is the principal agent of

rain, side by side the Newars have assimilated other cultural traits in this connection. For example, the practice of milking the cows over the dry sand of the river Bungamati and the magical formula used for making artificial rains are cultural traits borrowed from outside. But all these are subordinated to the cult of Machhendra, who alone is believed to make these alternatives effective.

While Machhendra Nath is an integral part of the Newar society, Gorakhnath holds little popularity. It is a sectional deity and worshipped only by the low-caste Jogi or Kusle. A temple is consecrated to this saint in Kathmandu town just in front of the former Malla King's palace after which the town takes its name. It is called Kashta Mandap. It is generally believed that its entire structure is made out of a single tree. The temple is however, lying in ruins with a huge Siva phallus in the centre of the hall. It is said that when Gorakhnath came into the Valley to meet his teacher, Machhendra Nath, he had performed the *Nag Sadhana* at this particular place. I was informed that the Manandhar caste has to burn daily an oil-lamp on the top floor of this temple. But, as stated earlier, the Jogi or Kusle caste is more concerned with Gorakhnath than any other.

Gorakhnath receives high veneration from the Gorkhas who regard him as their patron deity. The original stronghold of the Gorkhas, which is called Gorkha, is situated far away in the north-west of the Valley. This town is said to be named after Gorakhnath and the chief temple there is dedicated to this deity.

In the class of deified heroes, Bhimsen occupies an outstanding place and is regarded as the god of wealth. He is particularly popular among the trading classes. As the overwhelming trading population of the Newars comes from the Shrestha and the Udas castes, this deity is, understandably very popular among them. Bhimsen is generally located on the first floor of the temple,

a feature rarely to be met with in the case of other deities except Akash Bhairava. The priests and deva palas are all drawn from non-Brahmin castes. In Kathmandu these offices belong to the Vanra and the Jyapoo, while in Bhaktapur these functions are performed by the Kusle.

Bhimsen however does not appear to be of local origin. Tradition<sup>7</sup> tells that Bhimsen came to the Valley from Dolakha a small town situated in the east of the Valley, where the Newars dominate in numbers. In this town, a temple is dedicated to Bhimsen to whom even Siva or Bhagwati is reported to be subordinated. Unlike in the Valley of Kathmandu where its festival is of a sectional nature, in this town and in Cherikot, its festival is the chief event for the local inhabitants and it attracts devotees even from the surrounding regions.

In the Valley of Kathmandu, the *Thako-ju-ju* section of the *Chha-tharia* Newars regard Bhimsen as their patron deity and even to this day tradition insists that the annual festival of Bhimsen should start only when the *Thakali* of the *Thako-ju-ju* families has arrived on the scene.

The cult of Bhimsen is also shared by the other neighbouring tribes. Thus the Tharus in the tarai, according to Mazumdar, worship Bhimsen under the name of Bhumsen<sup>8</sup>. Crooke describes him as one of the chief deities of the Gonds<sup>9</sup>. In Nepal, the Tamangs in the adjoining region of the Valley also worship Bhimsen. But it is not known whether the Tamangs in the region enclosed by the Sun Kosi river and the Likkhu Khola, described by von Furer-Haimendorf as the place of their main concentration, regard Bhimsen as one of their principal deities. For there is no reference to this god in his writing on the Tamangs<sup>10</sup>. Possibly, this cultural trait was due to the influence of the Newars, since the Tamangs living at the higher altitudes are not known to possess it. Levi tells us that the temples and chapels

consecrated to Bhimsen are found along the traditional route from India to the Valley. Bhimpedi at the foot of the hills owes its name to him<sup>11</sup>.

Whichever way Bhimsen might have arrived in the Valley, his popular worship among the Newars as the giver of wealth is a unique thing which is so different from his worship in the other regions. The popularity of Bhimsen transcends the frontiers of the Valley and he receives worship and veneration wherever Newar traders are found.

Gado-ju-ju of Thamel in Kathmandu is another deified human being receiving worship. Gado-ju-ju is regarded as one of the ancient Vaishya Thakuri Kings of the Valley. The very term *ju ju* means a King in Newari. This deity is more familiarly known as *Chaka deva*. An annual festival is held in his honour on the first of the dark half of Chaitra.

God Vishwa Karma is worshipped by the artisan castes of Newars, such as the Vanra (goldsmith), Udas (bronze and copper-smiths and carpenters) and those Shresthas who have taken to the avocations of carpentry and house-building. The Nepali-speaking Kami caste (untouchable) also shares the worship of god Vishwa-karma. That this god is not popular among the Gorkhas is chiefly attributable to the absence of an artisan caste among them.

Like Bhairavas and Bhairavis, the Nagas are as popular as they are numerous. They are believed to be the agents of rain and custodians of treasures. The name, *Nag-hrid* or *Naga-vasa*, the abode of serpents, given to the Valley of Nepal in its traditional history, shows the predominance of snake-cult. It is believed that there are nine different Naga-gods of different colours in the Valley. They are entrusted with different functions.

Of the Nagas, Karkotak receives the highest honour and veneration. According to tradition, when the Valley



was a lake, innumerable Nagas lived in it. The opening of an outlet at the southern mountain by Manjusri or Vishnu, caused the water of the lake to run out in the form of the river, Bagmati. The lake having been dried up, all the Nagas left their abode, except Karkotak who decided to live in Taudah, a big tank still in existence in the southern extremity of the Valley. The Newars still regard this tank as the abode of Karkotak. In the event of a draught, the peasants go to the tank and worship Karkotak. As a part of this worship, as stated earlier, a golden snake is slipped into the tank. According to tradition, it is the privilege of the Panga Newars to drop the golden snake into the tank as it is also their privilege to throw water over Machhendra Nath, whenever there arises the need for praying to the deity for rain.

An incident connected with Karkotak and his wife reflects some of the sentiments of the Newars. Beneath the water of Taudah tank, it is believed, there is a big palace wherein Karkotak lives with his wife. Once when Karkotak's wife suffered from an eye-sore\* Karkotak approached a *vaidya* (physician) in the guise of a Brahmin to fetch the latter home. When the *vaidya* reached the Taudah tank, he was asked by him to close his eyes and jump into the water. The moment the physician closed his eyes, he found himself in the subterranean palace of the Naga King—made of gold, diamonds and other jewels. The queen was seated on the throne. The *vaidya* cured her of the eye-sore. He was again asked by Karkotak to shut his eyes, and when he did he found himself on the bank of the tank. This belief of the people regarding Karkotak's glittering abode beneath the water is inveterate even today.

The Nagas are said to be not immune from human weaknesses, which again is a reflection of the Newar life. An aged Jyapoo of Panga related to me a strange story in

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\* A common ailment in the Valley of Kathmandu.

this connection. He told me that the wife of Karkotak was once committing adultery with another Naga when a Jyapoo caught her *flagrante delicto* and angrily hit her on her back with his *nole* \*\*. The queen ran away in fear and pain. Later she complained to Karkotak about it and wanted her husband to punish the Jyapoo. Karkotak came to the village of Panga and hid himself on the ceiling of the Jyapoo's house. As the serpent King was about to bite the accused Jyapoo, the latter realizing the situation, asked Karkotak why he was after him. The Jyapoo then told him what had happened. Karkotak went back and demanded an explanation from his wife. She confessed to her guilt, after which she was only beaten for her misdeed; but not driven out. This story serves to indicate not only how the relationship between the Newars and the Nagas is inter-woven, but also the traditionally lenient attitude towards sex among the Newars.

After Karkotak, Vasuki is the most popular of the Nagas of Nepal. Levi says that his cult is particularly associated with that of Pashupati<sup>12</sup>. A folklore around him relates how he killed a Naga of Chaubal, who wanted to steal the Rudraksha of Pashupati<sup>13</sup>. It is to this Naga that credit is given for making the other Nagas non-aggressive. He is also believed to be responsible for the absence of theft and serpent-bite in Kathmandu in the ancient times<sup>14</sup>.

Next in importance comes Takshaka. This deity appears to be a much favoured one in the local Buddhist scriptures and reveals the conflict between the followers of Vishnu and Buddha. According to tradition, when Takshaka came to the Valley to perform penance at Gokarna in honour of Pashupati, Garuda, the carrier of Vishnu and mythical enemy of the Nagas, attacked it. Awa Lokiteshwar (Buddha) came to its rescue, while Vishnu came

\*\* A bamboo pole for carrying loads at its two ends by balancing it on the shoulders.

to the aid of Garuda. There arose a fight between Vishnu and Awa Lokiteswar. Peace was however concluded between the two parties. Thereafter Takshaka coiled himself round the neck of Garuda as a sign of mutual friendship. This is represented by the present idol of Changu Narayan which is seen carrying Lokeshwar on its shoulders. This traditional story bears testimony to the withdrawal of hostility between Hinduism and Buddhism.

Besides the above main Nagas, every stream, well, tank and confluence of the rivers is believed to be inhabited by a Naga. Like the Newars, the Nagas are believed to go, once in a year, out of their abodes on Sithi Nakha (the sixth of the bright half of *Jaistha*) to worship their respective *Dewali* deities. That is why this day is selected by the Newars for cleaning the local wells as it is thought that it would then be emptied of the Nagas.

Besides being the rain-givers, the Nagas are believed to help the Newars in many other ways. They cure illness, give health, ensure peace, bestow riches, protect the house and bless them with all kinds of material prosperity.

The reverential and friendly attitude of the Newars toward reptiles is expressed in a variety of ways. It is a taboo among them to kill a snake, although some of the educated men, who have been influenced by modern ideas, do ignore the taboo. However, for the majority of Newars serpent-killing is a sacrilege. The Jyapoos could often be seen praying to a snake with folded hands, whenever they come across one in the fields.

Every Newar house is supposed to be presided over by its own snake-god. Among the men of older generations, there still exists a firm belief that a snake would be found coiled up in their treasure-box. The discovery of a black snake or a dead snake of any colour in the house is interpreted to be a bad omen, sure to bring disaster to the family. *Hawans* are, therefore, performed

to counteract the evil consequence. Whenever a snake is seen in the house or in the vicinity, incense is burnt as a mark of respect to the reptile.

Though the Parbatias and the other Hindu communities, also believe in, and practise the cult of Naga, they do not seem to show the same attachment for snakes as the Newars do. Whenever they (Parbatias) see a snake, they would not refrain from killing it. On the 'Nag Panchami' day the Newars share with the other Hindu communities the festival which involves the worshipping of a picture of the Nagas with the offering of milk and parched paddy.

Frog is another amphibious being which is highly venerated by the Newars. It does not enter into the religious life of the other local communities. The day on which it is propitiated is called *Byancha Janake*. It falls on the 5th day of the bright-half of *Sravan*, the day for the festival of *Rakhi Purnima*. Among the Newars, it is the Jyapoo farmers who are mostly connected with its worship. On the day of *Byancha Janake*, by which time the plants in the paddy fields will have been transplanted, the Newar farmers go to their fields to worship frogs by offering them food, consisting of boiled-rice and nine types of pulses. After offering food, they never visit the fields for four days. This worship of the frog is connected with the belief that it is the frogs that are responsible for the rains by their loud croaking. According to the Newars of Panga, frogs were once responsible for killing a *daitya* who was led by them into a paddy field and made to get stuck up in the mud.

Colonel Waddel<sup>15</sup> (1890) writes that frog worship was performed in the month of *Kartik* (October). Further, he mentions that a priest was employed to utter the following incantation. "Hail Parmeshwara (Lord of the earth), I pray to thee to receive these offerings to send timely rain and bless our crops." On enquiry, I could not

come across any such worship. Maybe, it has since disappeared.

In the veneration of frog, the Newars are not an exception. They seem to share this cultural trait with the people in the plains. O'Malley wrote that the people of Darbhanga believe that the croaking of the frog is readily heard by Indra<sup>16</sup>. Although frog is regarded as the godling of rain, the Jyapoo Newars do not object to eating it. Jugi Singh, a Jyapoo Newar from Panga, confessed that he had once relished frog's meat which he obtained from a Bhotia. It is also not explainable why the dried meat of frog is so essential for the propitiation of goddess *Ajima* as noted earlier.

Of the other animals and birds which deserve to be mentioned here are the cow, elephant, dog, crow, pig, ram and hen. Cow is held in the highest veneration both by the Buddhist and Hindu Newars. Besides daily worship, it receives special religious attention from the Newars on *Kartiki Amavasya* (15th of the dark-half of *Kartik*). The belief centering round the cow is the same as found in Hindu traditions. Cow is identified on the one hand with Laxmi, and on the other, with the divine cow *Kamadhenu*. Cow-dung and cow's urine are used by the Newars, as by the other Hindus, for the ritual purification of the house and the individual. We might say that the Newars go even a step further than the Gorkhas in their veneration for cow. This is clear from the taboo imposed on the employment of bullocks for ploughing the field. While the non-Brahmin Gorkhas do not hesitate to yoke the cow to a plough, such a practice would lead among the Newars to excommunication. They still depend on their traditional hoe which serves them as a substitute for the bullock-drawn plough. How rigid they are in adhering to this traditional custom can be seen from the following instance from outside the Valley. It was reported to me that a few local Newars of Taksar Ghisa Pani (West

Nepal) started using the bullock-drawn plough in preference to their customary hoe—and were immediately excommunicated.

Among the Sivamargi Newars, the cow is believed to help the dead to enter heaven by opening the door with its horns. This is the belief underlying *Gai Jatra* (the festival of cow).

Elephant is supposed to be worshipped on the second of the bright-half of *Kartik*. This is known as *Kisi Puja* (*Kisi* means elephant). In the Valley of Kathmandu elephants are rare and the animal is replaced by Ganesh. Elephant, however, continues to be worshipped by the Hale section of Jyapoo Newars of Kilagul in the heart of Kathmandu town. According to local traditions the present site of Kilagul was covered once with a dense forest, abounding in elephants. The tradition is preserved by worshipping a wooden elephant as a family deity as well as *Kisi Gane* (elephant Ganesh). The *Pula Kisi* (elephant dance) is taken out during *Indra Jatra*. Two persons from the Hale sub-caste put on elephant masks and impersonate the animal. During the dance, no one wearing a cap should go before the performer, lest *Kisi Gane* should be enraged. The Hindu belief that the elephant is the vehicle of Indra is equally strong among the Newars.

Dog worship is an interesting feature in the religious life of all the Nepalese, especially among the Newars. Dog is venerated on many grounds; it is regarded as the faithful servant of Yudhistara; it is also identified as a form of Bhairava or his riding animal. Dogs are worshipped on the fourth of the dark-half of *Kartik*, when it is very amusing to notice in the Kathmandu Valley almost all dogs having their day — with garlands round their necks and vermilion daubed on their foreheads.

Crow worship is performed on the day preceding the dog worship. Crow is offered *Pindas* by the Sivamargi Newars during the *Nhyacnuma* ceremony on the seventh

day after a death takes place in a family. This pinda-offering is called *Ko Bali Pind Tayegu*.

Among other animals worshipped or venerated by Newars, the deified ram, called *Bheda Singh*, is important. It is located in Kathmandu at a small pit at the crossing of two lanes. The local people regard it as a form of Bhairava. Pig is worshipped as Varahi or Dhumbarai and Simbharai. These two godlings are mostly located on the sideways of the entrance to a temple and are venerated and believed in by both the religious sections of the Newars. Pig is much more importantly worshipped in Bhatgaon in the east where it receives the name of Bhukha deya, god of earthquake. It is believed by the local inhabitants that if this god shakes itself it is an indication of an earthquake. Bhukha deya is smeared with oil and vermilion as a part of its worship. It also receives animal sacrifices. The priestly function connected with this deity is assigned to a person of the Kumhale (potter) caste. Pig sacrifice is indispensable for the worship of goddess Nava Durga at Bhatgaon, though normally the animal is tabooed from being touched by the higher caste Newars.

There are a number of material objects and symbols worshipped by the Newars. Many of these they share in common with the other Hindus. Some of them have already been described in other contexts and need not be repeated here. Of such objects, *Dhunjya Bunjya* is an adoption from the Tibetan culture. It is a long pole with multi coloured frills attached to it. Especially at the time of festivals, the pole is spun and balanced on the palm. It is believed to signify the incessant movement of the soul. This trait is not found among the high caste Hindu Newars. It is predominant among the lower castes such as the Jyapoos and Manandhars, who have, to some extent, come under the influence of the Tibetan Lamas.

Two other important sacred symbols are the *Linga* and *Yoni*. The Hindu Newars do not entertain any belief

about these, in striking contrast to the other Hindus. But the Buddhist Newars have not only altered the physical pattern of these symbols but also attributed different meanings to them. They regard *Linga* as an emblem of the lotus in which the spirit of Adi Buddha, in the form of a flame, was manifested to Manjusri; and the *Yoni* is looked upon as the symbol of the sacred spring in which the root of the divine lotus was enshrined and which was the residence of goddess Guheshwari or Dharma<sup>17</sup>.

The carving of the images of Buddhist divinities on the emblem of the *Linga* and the *Yoni*, the latter forming a sort of pedestal on which a column of Buddhist deities rises with the *Yoni*'s outer circumference bearing the figure of a serpent whose mouth and tail are joined up in the front<sup>18</sup>—are indications to the fact that *Linga* and *Yoni* have been adopted by the Buddhists.

Another important symbol is the triangle, the Buddhist adoption of *Yoni*. According to Oaldfield, it is a symbol of female creative power<sup>19</sup>.

In the outskirts of Patan town, a hole is regarded as *Kan-deota* which is propitiated for relief from ear ailment.

The *tulsi* plant is as much favoured by the Sivamargi Newars as by other Hindus. Every house is supposed to grow *tulsi* for daily worship. The higher caste Buddhist Newars do not worship it. They replace it with another plant known as *Bhimpati* in Newari. There is also a tree in Kathmandu which is regarded to have the efficacy of relieving toothache. They drive a nail into it whenever they have tooth-ache.

The Peepul tree (*ficus religiosa*) is not highly venerated by the Newars, a feature which stands in contrast with the practice of the Hindus in the plains. But there is one exception in this regard. The Peepul tree at Lagan tole in Kathmandu is considered to be the mother of Machhendra Nath.

*Rudraksha* (seed of *Eleco-carpus*genitrees), as stated



elsewhere, is held in high reverence by all the Hindus, and the Hindu Newars are no exception to it. It is identified with Siva and has not been assimilated into Buddhist beliefs and practices.

Rivers, tanks and streams are sacred both to the Hindu and Buddhist Newars. The various *tirthas* (pilgrimage spots) situated on the banks of rivers, especially on their confluences, serve to show how important these are for the Newars. In their sacredness, they vie with the Ganges. Levi remarks that there is no river, no stream, no spring nor any humble thread of water which does not have its legends, its *nagas* and its own qualities<sup>20</sup>. The origin of these various rivers, streams and mountains are described in the legendary history of Nepal as the works of gods, goddesses and divine human personages. Some of the worldly benefits accruing from a dip in these rivers and streams include cure of illness, good health and peace, royal power, rich clothes, abundant harvests, happiness, and love, beauty and destruction of enemy. There is only one *tirtha* which washes away sin<sup>21</sup>. It is situated on the confluence of the Vishnumati.

Many of these sacred rivers are believed to be the incarnation of the female goddess, Bhairavi. Among them, Bagmati receives the highest honour from all the inhabitants of the Valley. But so far as the more practical aspects of Newar life are concerned Vishnumati receives greater attention and serves a more important function. The famous Buddhist pilgrimage site called *Lakha Tirtha* is situated on its banks. The Newars of Kathmandu depend upon this river for almost all their domestic rituals. All the Newar burning ghats connected with the town of Kathmandu are located on its banks. The sentiments woven around the Vishnumati and Bagmati can be appreciated from certain Newari songs.

We now turn to a very significant Newar divinity which governs their patrilineal group organisation. It is

called *Dewali* or *Digu Deya* and occupies an important place in the determination of Newar kinship. Every group of families believed to have sprung from a common stock worships its own *Dewali*. Thus it is the basis of unity of the patrilineal group.

The term '*Dewali*' appears to bear some affinity with a similar Sanskrit term<sup>22</sup> *Deva Ali* which means race, family or dynasty of gods. *Dewali*, as the name of family deity among the Newars, suggests their cultural affinity with Northern India where village godlings are called *Diwar*<sup>23</sup>; and with the Marathas whose sub-divisions are based on *Devakas*. *Dewali* worship is said to have been introduced by Vikram Kesari, son of King Vikramjit<sup>24</sup> which suggests that it may have been borrowed from the region of Malwa.

The actual location of *Dewali* or *Digu Deya* is an open field outside the settlement. It is represented there by a heap of stones. Some of the well-to-do Newars have erected walls around the place where their *Dewalis* are located. Almost everywhere in the Valley, one comes across numerous heaps of stones representing *Digu Deya*. These stone deities, known as *Loo(n) Digu* are worshipped in the house of the *Thakali*, the chief of the group, in the form of metal idols of conical shape. These are known as *Lo(n) Digu*. Some Newars have their *Loo(n) Digu* in the form of a vagina.

The worship of *Dewali* takes place twice a year and is known as *Dewali puja* and *Nachha* (the lesser *puja*). The main *Dewali* worship takes place between the first of the bright half of *Baisakh* and the sixth of the bright half of *Jaistha*. The *Nachha* takes place between the first of the bright half of *Bhadra* and first of the bright half of *Ashwin*.

*Dewali* appears to be some dead ancestor whose identity has been lost to antiquity. Its function is very great in the Newar social organisation. In every Newar

ceremony or ritual, propitiation to invoke its blessings is indispensable. This deity provides solidarity to the patrilineal group, whose members are exogamous. Deprivation of participation in *Dewali* worship and its feasts results in an automatic excommunication of a person.

Demon worship is quite common among the Newars. While some of the demons have been lifted from their original status and promoted to the rank of Bhairava like Akash Bhairava and Pachali Bhairava, others are still worshipped though as sectional deities. One among them is the *lakhe* which is the household deity of the Ranjitkar caste. It is worshipped in the form of a mask. During the Indra *jatra*, the mask is worn by a Ranjitkar and the dance is performed. While with the mask on, the dancer is believed to be possessed of its spirit. Liquor and buffalo sacrifice are necessary for its propitiation, which is carried out by the *Thakali* of the group.

Belief in the spirit world is very strong among the Newars, though it is not uncommon among the other inhabitants of the Valley or of the country as a whole. Kathmandu is believed to be the haunting place of the spirits and ghosts as much as it is of gods and goddesses. The Newars in general believe that these spirits roam about freely at night. Of these under-world beings, there are countless varieties. Among them *Bhuta* enters the Newar social life in many ways. Each locality is believed to have its own *Bhuta* which dwells at the cross-roads. This spirit is called *Chhwasa Ajima*. When the Newars speak of *Chhwasa Ajima*, they differentiate one from another by prefixing it with the name of the locality to which it belongs. It is significant to note here that there is only a very thin line of distinction between the lowest form of *Bhagwati* such as *Ajima* (goddess of small-pox) and the *Chhwasa Ajima*. The former appears to be only a little higher in status than the latter. But both possess evil powers. These cross-road spirits harm only when

they are deprived of their usual share of food. Of the places where *Bhutas* appear to abound in, one is Singha Satal in Kathmandu. *Chhwasa Ajima's* influence has to be warded off by offering her food, whenever a feast, a ceremony or any other social event takes place in a Newar household. The belief runs so strong among them that even those Newars who have migrated from the Valley to other regions continue to propitiate *Chhwasa Ajima* and place some food at the nearest cross roads, according to the custom.

When *Bhuta* or *Chhwasa Ajima* possesses a person, he develops stomach pain, loss of appetite and gradual emaciation of the body. Small children are more susceptible to it. Children's afflictions such as diarrhoea, crying-sickness and fever are particularly attributed to *Chhwasa Ajima*, though in fact all infant diseases are supposed to be the work of the cross-road spirits. This explains why local physicians attend to a child's sickness only after having ascertained that *Chhwasa Ajima* has been appropriated.

The food offered to the cross-road deity is known as *Bow-Taye-gu* in Newari which means an offering to be made to the spirit (*Bow*). This consists of a small quantity of wash-water of rice, turmeric powder, and black mass pulse. Meanwhile, it is to be noted that, although *Bow* wields evil power, its function is also to protect the residents of a locality.

The appellation of *Preta* is given to the spirits of persons who had died of accidents as well as those who had lived a sinful life. Persons committing suicide are also said to become *Preta* who haunt houses. The valley is believed to contain numerous *Pretas* as a result of the earth-quake of 1934 when a great many people died. A special sub-type of this is a household spirit called *Sikha*. It is the spirit of a person who had been a member of the family and is therefore regarded as a family spirit. It is

supposed to frequent the house whenever its *Sraddha* or the offering of *pindas* is not in order. When enraged it possesses the members of the family, causing diseases, poverty and loss of peace. The *Sikha* can be appeased only by proper *Sraddha*.

Another sub-variety of *Preta* is called *Khyaka* or *Khya*. It is a female spirit and is generally believed to be of two types — black and white. It is also a domestic spirit and, as such, is believed to haunt every house. The black one is dangerous and potent with calamitous mischiefs, whereas the white one is kind and bestows riches. Sometimes such a spirit is said to appear in human form in the guise of an acquaintance or a member of the family or as a child's playmate.

A sub-variety of *Khya* is *Bara Khya* which dwells in a house where a girl during *Barha* has died. Persons living in these houses are doomed to be unhappy. At least one of the spouses, it is believed, is sure to die, if they live in such a place. Coincidences lead to the strengthening of this belief. In 1957 when I was living in Kathmandu, the house just opposite to my host's — where a Deo Bhaju family was living—was reported to be haunted by a *Bara Khya*. It was rare that a husband and wife together survived there. It is strange but true that the Deo Bhaju neighbour of mine had lost his first wife. Even his second wife, with whom he was living then, appeared to be in no good health. How this belief works among the Newars could be judged from the number of houses, believed to be haunted by *Bara Khya*, which I had come across in the Valley. *Bara Khya*, it may be noted, has to be carefully propitiated daily, when a girl undergoes *Barha* during which time she is supposed to be under the influence of this spirit.

Yet another kind of spirit about which the Newars have a firm belief is *Kichkinni*, a female spirit, very beautiful, with her toes behind. Very often men are

believed to be attracted by her and realize their mistake only when their eyes are attracted by her toes. This type of spirit is, however, not so numerous. During the night, she is believed to be found standing at some corner of the street to beguile the passers-by. While in Kirtipur, I was shown a place in Manandhar tole where *Kichkinni* was supposed to be seen very often. One more spirit which needs mention is *Bosala* which appears as a white horse. It is harmless and is believed to dwell, for instance, in a place like Thahiti Kohabhal. Some of the measures adopted to meet the situations caused by the spirit world have already been described. One of them, rather the last one, is to resort to magical incantations and *hawans* for which the Joshi astrologers and Gubhaju priests are employed. As the belief in spirit world thrives, so do the controllers of spirits.

Between the Newars and other ethnic groups in the Valley, the only difference concerning the influence of ghosts and spirits is that, while among Newars these underworld beings are a part of their social organisation, finding a place in their ceremonies, it is not so in the latter's case. The belief in spirits and ghosts have led to the widely prevalent practice of using amulets and charms, which in the case of infants and children become indispensable. Application of collyrium in the eyes and forehead is one of the popular ways of combating the evil spirits.

The Newars have a strong belief in black art also. They live in mortal fear of persons who are reported to be well versed in black magic. It is always the women who are considered to be adept at this art. *Boxi* is the usual term applied to designate a woman practising the black magic. The male counterpart of *Boxi* is *Boxa*, who is rather rare in the Valley. Cases of hysteria are generally attributed to the work of a *Boxi*.

Kali is the chief deity which is believed to preside

over the black art. In Kathmandu, Kali at Mhaipée is said to be notorious for such a function. It is the belief that a woman who initiates herself into the life of a *Boxi* has to offer as sacrifice either her husband or the eldest son. Women accused of being *Boxis* are reported to be generally found with their eldest sons or husbands dead. In most cases, it is the husband who is sacrificed, it is said.

When a *Boxi* possesses a man, she is believed to enter his person and eat all the food which he has had. The *Boxi* can speak through the person in her possession and enumerate her grievances which led her to possess him. Through slow torture, she kills the person, unless some priest-magician or *Jhakari* is employed in time to counteract her influence. An instance of death caused by a *Boxi* was reported to me from Kathmandu town. It was said that the daughter-in-law of Khardar Gubhaju of Asan tole died through sorcery of a Jyapoo *Boxi*.

The *Boxi* works in two ways; she directly possesses a person or makes him eat a potion, which has the power to trouble or kill him. It is said that a young man, educated upto the M.Sc. degree, who was given a fried egg to eat by a *Boxi*, died after a year; and at the time of his death the victim vomited the same fried egg.

Besides taking the life of a person, a *Boxi* can harm her victim in many other ways. She can cause pain over the person's body by sucking out blood while he is asleep. Nobody can see her when she is in action. It is believed that she bites the muscular portion of a person's body and leaves a black mark at the spot where she had placed her teeth. It is also believed that when she is at work the victim falls into sound sleep. If, on discovering the first biting of a *Boxi*, some dirty substance is applied over the black mark, a similar dirty substance is, it is believed, sure to be found in the mouth of the *Boxi* concerned.

A *Boxi* can be recognised in a number of ways. She cannot look straight into another person's eyes, so runs the belief. Women who unfailingly go to the temple of Kali on the tenth of the dark half of every month are suspected of being *Boxis*. The occasion of the festival of *Gathe Mangal* is believed to be the chief day for their nefarious activities. It is also believed that at midnights, *Boxis* go to the cremation grounds to invoke their spirit-agents and rehearse their black art. During that time they are believed to remain naked and dance with their hair scattered over their shoulders. *Boxis* are, however, not known to be associated with each other.

The problem of controlling a *Boxi* is left to the Gubhaju priest who is supposed to be well versed in counteracting her evil doings. He employs many ways to punish her. Sometimes he causes her through the afflicted person, to reveal her identity and state the reason for evil doings. As a mild course, he merely asks her to free the man and promise that she would never again possess him. But she would not usually reveal her identity. In some cases, the Gubhaju magician-priest takes stern measures, such as branding her with a red-hot iron. This is done by burning some spot on the body of the afflicted person. That burn is supposed to be transferred to the body of the *Boxi* and people believe that the *Boxi* in question would be found with an identical burn. Sometimes chilly powder is burnt and it is believed that its smoke would suffocate the *Boxi* who would come running to the place. In some cases, the Gubhaju, by uttering incantations, causes blood to be vomited by his client and this would result in actual blood being vomited by the *Boxi* at her place, so the belief runs.

The method of a *Jhakari* is somewhat similar to a Gubhaju priest's, in dealing with a *Boxi*, except that the *Jhakari* gets himself possessed with his spirit-agent and lives under a trance while trying to negotiate with the



*Boxi*; whereas the efficacy of a Gubhaju's power lies solely in his tantric formula without getting himself involved.

It would be seen from the above discussion that the Newars' belief in ghosts, spirits and black-magic is still the predominant factor in the control of their life, and that the lower pantheon of the Newars is only a degree above ghosts and spirits. The other Nepalese share in a large measure the belief in black art, but so far as its practice in the Valley is concerned, it is largely confined to the Newars. Even among them economic status appears to be a factor. Its practice is generally attributed to the women of low economic status, especially the Jyapoos.

From the description of the different types of deities, it is evident that the predominant trait in Newar religion is animism. Religion as a spiritual experience is perhaps of the least importance. Almost all the deities are approached for some kind of material benefits. These include cure of diseases, attainment of skill in the arts and architecture, prosperity and material well-being. The desire to achieve ultimate salvation in life never figures prominently in their religious life. The majority of gods and goddesses are worshipped rather for avoiding their displeasure than for invoking their blessings. Therefore, we may say that they are rather propitiated than worshipped. The deities most intimately concerned with the domestic and practical life of the Newars include Ganesh, Bhairava, Kumari, Ajima or Kali, Dewali, Mahadeo, Narain, Machhendra Nath, Saraswati, Manjusri and the various forms of Mais (mothers). Of these, except Mahadeo, Narain and Buddha, almost all are served by non-Brahmin priests, most of them from the depressed castes. From the point of view of offerings made to them, we find that animal sacrifices, chiefly buffalo, and the use of liquor are essential items. Even Ganesh and Saraswati are

offered animal sacrifices, a practice which is anathema to the Hindus in India. We also find duplication of gods for the same function. For example, for wealth, Naga, Laxmi, Basundhara and Bhimsen are worshipped. This can only be attributed to the assimilation of different ethnic groups with their respective religious cults into the larger religious system.

The Newar pantheon also shows conflict, which however results in mutual compromise, toleration, co-existence and peace. The three equations made between Siva and Buddha, Buddha and Narain, and Narain and Siva are a reflection of the Newars' own attitude towards co-operation and mutual toleration. This feeling permeates their entire social organisation. In fine, what the Newars do their divinities do, what the Newars think, their divinities think, and what the Newars need their divinities need too.

The Newar pantheon has been organised very much like their own social organisation. Each patrilineal group, caste, locality and town has its own deity and finally they are all superseded either by Mahadeo or Swayambhu. Religion has been organised to knit the different parts of the social groupings into a compact whole. The absence of hostility between the two religious groups, the Buddhists and Hindus, is mainly due to the common body of deities believed in and practised. Now, if we pass on to the description of Newar feasts and festivals, we might better understand how religion provides for the strong we-group sentiments among them.

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### 13. FESTIVALS — COMMUNITY EVENTS

THE Newar festivals are numerous. The Newar religious complex is made unique by festivals which exclusively lie in the province of socio-religious life, perpetuating and reinforcing group solidarity at the different levels of caste, patrilineal group and the family. These festivals provide occasions, as in the case of ceremonies, for the satisfaction of the food appetite of the Newars. A good part of the Newar life is spent in the celebration of festivals and feasts. These events speak of the excessive mirth and gaiety of Newar life. What importance these festivals have for the Newars can be amply understood from an adage in Nepali which runs thus : *Parbate bigroyo moujle, Newar bigroyo bhoj-le*. This means, in essence: the Parbate (Nepali-speaker) is ruined by his sex appetite and the Newar by his food appetite. Every festival involves a lavish consumption of food items such as flattened rice, buffalo meat, liquor and home-made rice-beer.

Festivals fall into two broad categories: in the first, participation is inter-caste, based on locality or settlement solidarity. The main festivals of the Valley come under this. The other category consists of Hindu calendar festivals as are confined either to the members of the households or kin group.

The first group of festivals include mainly Bhairava or

Bhairavi jatras, Gathe Mangal (also called Ghanta Karan Jatra), Gai Jatra (cow festival), Vanra Jatra, Indra Jatra, Kumari Jatra, Machhendra Jatra, Narain Jatra, Ganesh Jatra, Bhimsen Jatra and Krishna Jatra.

In keeping with the predominant role played by Bhairava and Bhairavi in the Newar social life, there are numerous festivals in their honour. The offering of animal sacrifice, liquor and rice-beer and taking the deity in a procession form the main features of these festivals. Of such festivals, where the leading importance is accorded to Bhairava or sometimes to his consort Bhairavi, the first one in order is Bisket Jatra, held in the town of Bhatgaon. This festival which reminds us of the European Maypole festival of the early times, commences on the last day of *Chaitra* (March-April) and lasts for four days. The scriptural term used for designating the festival is *Viswa Dwajotsthanam* and with its commencement coincides the New Year's day of the Vikram era.

The festival of Bisket Jatra consists of two parts. The first part relates to the erection of a huge pole, *linga*, on the first day and its pulling down the next day, the first day of *Baisakh*. The second part consists of drawing the cars of Bhairava and Bhairavi in the different parts of the town. The *linga* is made out of a *Sal* tree cut down for this purpose by the Manandhars. The selection of this tree involves a special ritual. The Manandhars set a goat free into the forest, and the tree against which the goat rubs its back is selected for the *linga*. The goat is sacrificed to the tree before it is cut down. They hew the tree into a pole of about forty to fifty feet. The spot where the pole is set up is called *Lya Sikhya* and is located in front of the temple of Indriyani.

Besides symbolising the celebration of the New Year's day of the Vikram era, this festival signifies a kind of propitiation principally designed for the protection of Bhaktapur town. It is, however, only of local importance and

people from the other two towns in the Valley do not participate in it in large numbers. Distance also acts as one of the factors responsible for the thin attendance at this festival, as Bhaktapur is very far away from Kathmandu.

The second great festival in honour of Bhairava and Bhairavi is observed not in the Valley of Kathmandu but in the town of Naokot toward the north. It is called *Devi Rath Yatra*, after goddess Devi Bhairavi. In 1959 it had taken place on the 15th of the bright-half of *Chaitra*. Though I was not able to observe this festival, my enquiries confirmed that the description given by Dr. Oaldfield<sup>1</sup> is applicable to it even at present. According to Dr. Oaldfield the idol of Bhairavi Devi is brought from her temple at Naokot to Devi ghat where a temple representing her in an aboriginal form stands. Animal sacrifice is profusely offered to her for five days. At this festival the Vanras officiate as priests. Strangely enough, it is on their orders that the animals are killed by the Kasai. Two Jyapoo Newars who impersonate Bhairavi and Bhairava drink the blood of the sacrificed animal. After the festival, the idol of the goddess is restored to the temple in the town.

The wrath of this goddess is so much dreaded by the local people that not only the Newars, who are ritually associated with her come to participate in this festival, but also the other inhabitants, irrespective of their cultural configurations. As already described elsewhere this festival is designed to quench the blood-thirst of goddess Bhairavi who would otherwise, it is believed, let loose the dreaded *awl* (a kind of fever) in the form of an epidemic.

The third popular festival held in honour of Bhairava and his consort Bhairavi is in the town of Kathmandu. Oaldfield describes it as *Neta-devi Rath Jatra*.<sup>2</sup> But now a days it is called either *Neta-Ajima Jatra* or *Nardevi*

*Jatra. Neta* is the name of the locality and the goddess in whose honour the festival is held takes her name after it. *Neta-Ajima* means the grand-mother of Neta locality. She is given the appellation of *Nardevi*, because in the old days she used to be offered human sacrifice, it is stated. People still say that she needs human flesh as an offering to her. Since human sacrifice is stopped, the priest is said to preserve dried human flesh, a little of which is used on each occasion.

This festival takes place annually on the fourteenth of the dark-half of *Chaitra (Paha(n)-chare)*; and also once in every twelve years. It lasts for four days. Many of the aboriginal aspects of this festival, described by Oaldfield, have disappeared now. Just as in the festival of *Neta-Devi* at Naokot, in this festival too, the drinking of animal blood by the Dhamis (not Dharmis as stated by Oaldfield) is one of the important features. These Dhamis appear in masks representing twelve different divinities, chief among whom are: Ajima, Kumari, Bhairava, Varahi and Ganesh. On the first night of the festival, these mask-wearers dance before *Neta Ajima's* temple. First they dance individually and subsequently in groups. The first group-dance is called *Nima-Macha* in which Ajima and Kumari participate. It is followed by the *Pemha Macha* dance in which Bhairava and Varahi also participate.

After the dances, the ritual of animal sacrifice begins. The chief Dhamis who are offered animal sacrifice are Ajima, Kumari, Varahi and Bhairava. It is strange to note here that Ganesh who is offered animal sacrifice during all other domestic ceremonies of the Newars is excluded this time. The animal sacrificed is a buffalo. A small wound is inflicted on the buffalo's neck to draw out a stream of blood. The four Dhamis drink the blood one by one and are believed to be possessed by the spirits of their respective gods. Later the Dhamis vomit

the blood, which is collected, since it is regarded as the *prasad* of the gods.

The *Paha(n) Chare* is also noted for a number of other Bhairava or Bhairavi festivals confined to the different localities in Kathmandu town. No less important than the earlier one is the joint festival of Swa-Bhagwati and Bhadra Kali. At midnight Swa Bhagwati is taken out in a procession to the temple of Bhadrakali and made to circumambulate the latter's temple, after which the representatives on the two sides exchange burning torches. Besides the Jyapoo and Gathu castes, the Manandhars participate ceremonially by providing their caste-music on the occasion.

*Paha(n) Chare* is also the day when all Newar families offer sacrifices to goddesses Kankeshwari and Bhadra Kali, besides celebrating the occasion with a feast. This festival, however, is not celebrated by Newars of other regions, since each region has its own festival in honour of its own Bhagwatis or Bhairavas.

Another festival of importance, and of considerable popularity, in the town of Kathmandu in honour of Bhairava is that of Pachali Bhairava. It is observed during the fourth and the sixth of the bright-half of *Ashwin* (September-October). This deity is mostly associated with the Manandhar and Jyapoo castes which have certain hereditary roles to perform. The other Newar castes, barring the Achaju and Joshi, do not have any particular function, though they worship Pachali Bhairava and offer animal sacrifice.

The festival of Pachali Bhairava begins with the erection of a huge *linga* in front of his temple on the fourth of the bright *Aswin*. But the actual festival starts on the fifth, with the ritual of *Ka(n)-Joshi-Bwake-gu*, in which a copper vessel, *Kasi*, large enough to accommodate four persons, is worshipped by an Achaju priest. In the former days there was a strange custom of selecting a



Joshi who was one-eyed. The Joshi was carried in the copper vessel to a place known as *Bhutisa*, near the Gorakhnath temple, in the heart of the city. *Bhutisa* means the dwelling place of ghosts and spirits. From *Bhutisa*, the one-eyed Joshi was carried to the temple of Pachali Bhairava at the southern end of Kathmandu town.

The old practice of carrying the Joshi in the copper vessel has long since been replaced by a modified one. Now a days only the copper-pot is worshipped during which streams of water are kept flowing into it from four clay vessels called *Ampah*. Two persons of the Bhamba class, wearing vermilion marks on their foreheads, lift up the copper vessel and carry it hurriedly to the *Bhutisa*. Soon after reaching the place, they hurry back through the fixed route to the temple of Pachali Bhairava. Meanwhile a figure of Pachali Bhairava, painted by a painter-caste man, *Chitrakar*, is kept at a certain place outside the temple. It is not taken inside until the *Ka-Joshi-Bwake-gu* procession arrives. Here a brief description of the figure of Pachali Bhairava and the practice of bringing it to the temple is necessary.

A couple of days before the festival is due, a *Chitrakar* is entrusted with the painting of the figure of Bhairava. The figure is painted on the outer surface of a huge earthen jar as is the usual way of representing a Bhairava. On the first day of the festival, the figure is brought to the temple under the pretense of its being stolen. As mentioned earlier, it is kept outside the temple awaiting the arrival of the *Ka(n)-Joshi Bwake-gu* procession. The procession arrives at the temple headed by the Kasai musicians. The members of the procession shout: *Haila?* It means: "shall we bring?". It is responded by the other party by saying "yes". Then the copper vessel is overturned on the *betal*, the symbol signifying the resting-

place of Bhairava. This is followed by the installation of the figure of Bhairava inside the temple.

On the first day of the festival, a goat is sacrificed at the *betal* but this is not in honour of Pachali Bhairava. It is the belief that Pachali Bhairava does not accept animal sacrifice, eggs and intoxicating drinks, which are so important for the other Bhairavas and Bhagwatis in the Valley. The usual explanation given for the sacrifice of the goat at the *betal* is that it is not Pachali Bhairava but his *gana* (attendant) who eats the goat. Thus the *betal* is interpreted as the resting place of both Bhairava and his *gana*. The sacrificed goat is consumed by the sacred fire.

The second part of the festival comprises the carrying of Pachali Bhairava in a procession, where two persons impersonate his consorts, *Patra Khola Ajima* and *Nai-Ajima*. The former takes her name after the type of pot, called *Patra Khola*, which she carries along with her. None other than the *Bhinchā* (sister's son) of the *Thakali* of the Pachali Bhairava guthi can assume such a role. The person becoming *Patra-Khola* is required to undergo complete fast for the day. If there is a breach in this observance, the spirit of the *Ajima*, it is believed, will not possess him. As the belief goes, when the person impersonating the *Ajima* takes the *Patra-Khola* in his hand, he is possessed by the spirit of the *Ajima*, and no longer is he a human being.

The junior consort of Pachali Bhairava, *Nai-Ajima*, is represented by a person of the Kasai caste. That is why the person is called *Nai Ajima*, the term *Nai* meaning a Kasai. When everything is ready, the figure of Bhairava is lifted up by persons of the Jyapoo caste, while the *Patra Khola*, which she carries along with her. None cession starts. It is here that some of the non-Newars have some ritual functions. The procession is headed by

an infantry of the royal priest who belongs to the Gorkha ethnic group. The king is also represented by his sword. The procession makes its way towards the Hanuman Dhoka, the ancient palace of the Newar Kings. All along the route there are numerous figures of Bhairava kept on view by families which are members of the Pachali Bhairava Guthi. When the procession touches these places, the ritual of giving *samai* takes place. On the way the procession halts at the *Bhutisa* for the *Hathu-Haye-gu* ritual, which consists of letting a stream of rice-beer flow out from the mouths of the two prominent Bhairavas put up at the place. The outflow of rice-beer is caused by opening the valves in the tubes fitted into the Bhairavas' mouth. At this moment people run to have a little of the rice-beer which is believed to give divine protection to a person.

On reaching Hanuman Dhoka, worship is offered to Pachali Bhairava on behalf of the State. *Patra-Khola* is offered the sacrifice of a buffalo. This very often leads to a quarrel between the Jyapoo and the Kasai for a share of the carcass, which symbolises a conflict between *Ajima* and *Nai Ajima*. Ultimately the Jyapoos get the carcass, with its head. *Patra-Khola's* companions utilize the occasion of the conflict for taking revenge upon their enemies. If they happen to come across any of their enemies, they can strike him and inflict injuries without being brought to book by the law.

Throughout the festival, the Jyapoos and the Kasais indulge in great festivities involving profuse consumption of liquor. The festival ends with the bringing of the figure of Pachali Bhairava back to the house of the Jyapoo on whom falls the obligation to worship the deity till the next festival. Before conducting the figure inside the house, the usual ceremonies of *Du-chhaye-gu* and *Lasa-Kusa* are performed.

Festivals held in honour of Bhairava and Bhairavi are

too many to be enumerated here. In all these cases the common features are animal sacrifice and the carrying of the deity in a procession through the different parts of the settlement. While in the towns these festivities are mostly of a sectional character, in the rural areas they lead to a greater unity and compactness of the village community. A typical example of this is provided by the festival of Bisen Devi in Panga. This deity is very popular among the lower caste Newars of Panga and the adjoining areas. The nature of its aboriginal character has been described elsewhere. It is also recognised in Kirtipur where the higher gods like Nava-Durga, Talleju and Chilanchi Buddha are found. In Kirtipur, although the cult of Bagh-Bhairava is dominant, Bisen Devi is the presiding deity of Panga and its adjoining villages.

The festival of Bisen Devi takes place on the eighth of the bright-half of *Marga* (Nov.-Dec.). In fact it is composed of two different festivals in honour of two different goddesses—Bisen Devi and Bal Kumari. Four days before the commencement of the festival, the *Guthiars* (the chiefs of the different patrilineal groups) go to the temple to invite the goddess for the festival. This involves worship and a cock-sacrifice to each of the two deities. The sacrificed cocks are claimed by the Kusle priest. Then a communal feast is held at the *guthi* of each of the *Dewali* groups. A day before the festival, the four *Thakalis* of the village go to the temple of Bisen Devi with a buffalo and the worshipping material supplied to them by the Kusle priest. They worship the goddess at night and sacrifice the buffalo. The buffalo's head is not severed but only a cut is made on the neck so as to let the blood gush out. Each of the five or six Kasais attending to the sacrifice take a palmful of blood and sprinkle over the twelve stone deities inside the temple. This is known as the *Nitya Puja*. These stones represent—apart from Bisen Devi—Ganesh, Bhairava, Bal Kumari and others. It is,

however, strange that goddess Durga who is included among them is not offered this sacrifice.

The animal, after sacrifice, is skinned; and its head is distributed among the local Jyapoos. With regard to the flesh, the Kasais receive a portion of the meat first and the rest is divided equally among the four *guthiars*. Each *guthiar* holds a six-day feast for the heads of families belonging to his *Dewali*.

On the day of the buffalo-sacrifice, the idol of Bisen Devi is brought out of the temple which stands in the centre of the village. There the goddess is kept in the central square for the night. Next morning all the inhabitants worship her. She is then carried in a procession to the temple to the north-eastern boundary of the village. Similarly, goddess Bal Kumari is taken to the southern extremity of the village where she has a temple of her own. Each of the idols of the two goddesses brought from the village temple is kept side by side with the heaps of stones representing her in aboriginal forms. A curious explanation is offered regarding the two forms of the deity, one represented in metal and the other in stone, kept in the village temple. According to the inhabitants of Panga, goddesses Bisen Devi and Bal Kumari, worshipped in the village temple, are the respective sisters of Bisen Devi and Bal Kumari in the border temples. Thus the visit of these goddesses to the border temples is explained as the "meeting of two sisters." They also believe that the temples on the border of the village are the respective *maitees* (natal home from the point of view of a married woman) of these goddesses.

The Achaju priests worship these deities and on this occasion rams are sacrificed by the Kusle. This is the first occasion when a priest of a higher caste like the Achaju replaces the low-caste Kusle. When the worship is over, a feast takes place in the precincts of both the temples. The important point to note about these feasts

is that the *guthiar* of the Kasai caste is given the honour of occupying the first place, a privilege which in a communal feast goes to the *Thakali* of one's own patrilineal group. After the feast is over, both Bisen Devi and Bal Kumari are conducted to the public rest house, *Paati*, at the northern entrance of the village. At this juncture the *sabhapati* (president) of the Village Welfare Committee of Panga has to worship them before they are carried into the village. Formerly, this function was due from the regional administrative official called *Dware*. A ram is sacrificed on this occasion.

When the welcome-worship by the *sabhapati* is over, the two goddesses are taken through the different parts of the settlement where each time worship and sacrifices are offered to them. Thus the *Jatra* ends with the goddesses being finally restored to their respective shrines at the central square of the village. Next day a similar festival is held in Kirtipur in honour of Bisen Devi but there she is accompanied not by Bal Kumari but by Ganesh.

Of the other most typical festivals among the Newars, one is the *Gai Jatra* which is not met with in any other community. This is known in Newari as *Sa-ya-wane-gu*. *Sa* means cow; *ya* represents *jatra* and *wane-gu* means "to go." It takes place on the first of the dark-half of *Bhadra* (Aug.-Sept.). The usual belief connected with it is that from the *Sithi Nakha* day (the 10th of the bright-half of *Jaistha*), the day when the worship of *Dewali* comes to an end, the gates of the kingdom of Yama are closed and, therefore, those who die after that date are unable to get admission to heaven. The festival of cow is, therefore, designed to help the dead souls to enter Yama's kingdom or heaven. As the belief runs, on the cow-festival day, the cow is able to thrust open one of the doors of Yama's abode with its horns, while the other

door is believed to be opened later on the *Vanra Jatra* day (the 13th of the dark-half of *Bhadra*).

On the day of this festival, families in which a death had occurred after the last *Sithi Nakha* day send out two boys in the guise of a pair of cows. Usually small children are picked up for this purpose. They wear paper caps, on which are depicted cow's horns, and go round the streets accompanied by different types of music provided by the various Newar castes.

Those who impersonate the cows are first worshipped in the house itself. Then they go out to join other cow-mask wearers in the streets. Cow-mask wearers are called *Sa-ya-wa-pi*. They walk with unfurled colourful umbrellas, specially made for the occasion. There are also other types of mask-wearers who are intended to provide fun. These cow-mask wearers are followed by their relatives who wear white scarfs round their necks. As the procession moves forward through the prescribed route it begins to swell with the addition of more and more of such masqueraders on the way.

The procession halts at places to receive fruits on behalf of those families wherein somebody has died. The fruit offerings invariably include sugar-cane pieces and oranges.

After returning from the rounds, the masks are taken off and hung at the main temples of each locality.

The festival of cow is not observed by the Buddha-margi castes in the same way as the Hindu Newars do. In Kathmandu town, the cow-mask wearers mainly comprise the Deo-Bhaju Brahmin, Shreshtha, Chheepah, Nau, Kow, Kasai, Kusle and Du(n)yee-ya-(n), who are the worshippers of Siva. Therefore, it may be considered to be a special feature of the Hindu Newars only. The Buddhist Newar groups of Vanra, Udas and Manandhars have no tradition of cow-procession. Their part of

the festival consists merely of going round the city, playing on their respective musical instruments.

The festival of cow is also marked by some regional variation. Compared with its celebration in the towns, it is more traditionally observed by the people of rural areas. Unlike in Kathmandu town, at Panga this festival is organised on a community level involving wholesale participation of the village. And one long procession is taken out. For this, all the cow masqueraders meet at an appointed place from where the procession starts. Every family, which sends out mask-wearers makes an additional provision for subsidiary types of mask-wearers. Mask-wearers of each family are followed by another mask-wearer who holds the tails of the former, and he in turn is followed by yet another mask-man who carries a plough\*.

Having assembled at the place, the procession is arranged in a definite order of precedence. The maskmen and their party are followed by a fish-mask wearer who drags on his left and right two brooms which hang from his waist. Next to him is a mask-man (with any kind of mask), who drags about a copper utensil on one side and a tiny cot on the other. He is followed by another masquerader, dragging along with him a wooden-stand called *Dui-Khutte*\*\* . He is followed by a mask-man who drags along with him five worn-out clay-vessels, which are generally used for storing oil. The mask of this person is made of mushrooms.

Then comes in order the *Dhaka-Ghisa* to take his place. He wears any kind of mask and drags a big basket used for keeping hen. The next place is occupied by a mask-man who does not belong to Panga but to the nearby

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\* It is quite strange to find the plough forming a ritual object when its use is tabooed among the Newars.

\*\* A wooden stand on which *Dheki* (mortar for pounding rice) rests.



town of Kirtipur. He is required to pay, according to custom, eight annas and a pice for representing his community in the procession. He is in turn followed by masqueraders, each of whom gird their loins with nine saris, nine blouses and nine handkerchiefs. Then separate groups of traditional musicians, hailing, respectively, from the Jyapoo, Kasai and Kusle castes arrange themselves in that order. With such paraphernalia, the procession starts with loud music which lends vigour to the entire function.

The procession first goes to the village temple of Ganesh; from there to the Lachhi-tole to pay respect to Buddha and Narain; and thereafter to different streets and lanes. After going round Panga settlement, it proceeds to the adjoining villages of Naigam and Chhagam, both of which form a part of the Panga community. On its return to Panga, the procession stops at the village tank, where people indulge in merriments and dance, in which all mask-wearers participate. When they return home, the mask-wearers are worshipped at the entrance of the house. The usual feast is held thereafter.

In the evening again, they assemble at the central square to witness the *lakhe* dance. The Kusle priest sacrifices a hen to Ganesh by wringing its neck. Then he jumps into the tank and the sacrificed hen is taken away by him. Afterwards about two or three hundred stacks of maize-cobs are thrown into the tank which are immediately picked up by persons who would be swimming in the tank to get hold of them. It is followed by the distribution of a piece of buffalo skin to each group of the musicians. In addition, a piece of the sacrificed buffalo's leg is given to the heads of the eight groups of musicians. As soon as they receive the pieces of the skin and legs, they jump into the tank. The *lakhe* dancer is given the buffalo's head; but he does not leap into the tank. Instead, he circumambulates it. In the former days

the buffalo's head used to be a source of conflict between the two *lakhe* dancers; for each would claim the right side of the head. In the year (1957) to which the above description alludes, there was, however, only one *lakhe* dancer.

Even outside the Valley, the cow-festival is popular among the Newars. But it varies somewhat in detail. For example, in Cherikot, the festival is marked by taking out in procession the effigies of the dead relatives while in Dhankutta the cow-mask wearers are replaced by real cows.

The festival of cow, thus it is seen, is not designed for material gains as in the case of Bhairava and Bhairavi festivals. Rather, it is aimed at fulfilling one's obligation towards the dead relatives. In the former days, as Oaldfield records, the cow festival was associated with the festival of tiger-dancers, which had by his time become a repetition of *Gai Jatra*.<sup>3</sup>

Another important festival typical of the Newars is *Vanra Jatra*. It is observed, it is said, to commemorate the day when prince Siddhartha took to ascetic life. It is also the day, it is explained, for keeping alive the memory of the Vanra priests who were monks in the ancient days. This festival is held twice a year, on the eighth of the bright-half of *Sravan* and on the thirteenth of the dark-half of *Bhadra*. However, it could be held any time, if one wants to, and is prepared to bear the cost.

The celebration starts early morning with the Buddhist Newars visiting the temples of Swayambhu and Machhendranath. Kathmandu town becomes far busier on this day than any other town in the Valley, because of the temple of Swayambhu. People from all corners of the Valley flock in to pay their homage at the temples of the Buddhist divinities. The main event is the offering of alms to the Vanras and feasting them. This takes place

in two ways. First the Vanras go from shop to shop, or door to door and beg for alms. The Buddhist sections of the Newars offer them a mixture of rice and paddy in a copper bowl. The Vanra in return touches the forehead of the alms-giver with the sacred book which he carries. The book is believed to offer the alms-giver the protection of the Buddha.

The individual offering of alms is followed by a collective offering. In every important locality, a special arrangement is made to feed the Vanras. There the Vanras are worshipped, fed and offered five times the mixture of rice and paddy. In such events women play a prominent role. The house-tops and windows are packed with devotees witnessing this sacred act of honouring the Buddhist priests. The feasting ceremony continues till the approach of the night. It comes to an end after the arrival of the *Phu-Bhare*, a Vanra priest who is so named owing to his special duty of rounding off the Vanra Jatra. He announces his arrival by the jingling of the sacred bell he carries with him. After his visit, no Vanra is entitled to receive alms.

The pomp which attended this festival in the former days is now no more. Although it is a popular Newar festival, it is entirely an affair of the Buddhist Newars. It is mainly the Udas who play the role of householders in relation to the Vanras on this occasion. The honouring of the Vanras as monks by the Udas points out the latter's position as the householder class; there is also no section among the Vanras themselves or other Buddhist castes, which is so much ritually important in relation to the Vanra Jatra.

Of all the festivals of the Newars, two are of national importance, viz., Indra Jatra and Machhendra Jatra. Indra Jatra starts on the twelfth of the bright-half of Bhadra and lasts for eight days. This festival which is held in honour of Indra, the Vedic god, is typical of the Newars and is, perhaps, nowhere to be found in India. Though

it is observed in all the towns—Bhatgaon, Patan and Kathmandu—the most grand and the most popular is the one which is held in the last named town. In Bhatgaon and Patan, it assumes a local character whereas in Kathmandu town it is a national festival involving participation of Newars from all corners of the Valley.

There are a number of legends woven round this festival. One of these tells that Indra was once caught by the inhabitants of the Valley as he was stealing *Ashoka* flowers. As a punishment, he was buried alive at Maru-Hitti. Dagini, mother of Indra, then came in search of her son and requested the king of Kathmandu to release him. When the king recognised Indra, he felt sorry and Indra was given a great royal reception. He was carried in a procession round the city.

Another legend says that when Indra was leaving the Valley, the local inhabitants importuned him to take the souls of their dead relatives to heaven. Thus, like the cow festival, it is inter-woven with the cult of the dead.

Indra Jatra is however not one festival, but appears to consist of two different festivals—one in honour of Indra and the other in honour of Bhairava and Kumari, which are inter-mixed. Indra Jatra is inaugurated with the erection of a big *linga* on the foreground of Hanuman Dhoka, the palace of the former Newar Kings. It may be recalled that in Bhatgaon, the creation of a *linga* is connected with the festival of Bhairava. Earlier we have also seen the erection of a similar *linga* in connection with the festival of Pachali Bhairava. The *linga* is, therefore, typically a symbol connected with Bhairava and Bhairavi. But how it came to be associated with the festival of Indra is hard to explain. Though the erection of *linga* is known as *Indra Dhvajotsthanam*, its association with the festival of Bhairava as the main part of the festival is quite strange.

As in Bhatgaon, so in Kathmandu, the erection of *linga*

is the function of the Manandhar caste. Every year on the day preceding the festival, the Manandhars of Kathmandu go to the forest near Bhatgaon to select a *Sal*-tree (*shorea robusta*) for the next year's festival. The tree is chosen in the same manner as described in connection with the Bisket Jatra. The tree is, however, cut down only a month before the festival. Before it is felled, a goat is sacrificed to it. The tree is first brought to the northern extremity of Kathmandu town on *Kaya-Ashtami* day (the eighth of the bright-half of *Bhadra*), from where it is removed to Hanuman Dhoka, where it is erected. The *linga* is adorned with a bunch of flowers, a flag and a *bhokate* (shaddock). The arrival of the royal priests' detachment and the King's sword representing the Sovereign is awaited. When all the preliminaries are over and when the auspicious hour is struck, the royal priests' troop presents the guard of honour while the 'Devi' dancers perform the war-dance. Amidst the ecstasy aroused by the solemnity of the hour, the Manandhars start raising up the *linga*, while thousands watch it with utmost reverence. When the *linga* is finally planted, a small cage containing an idol of Indra is placed at its base. This is to symbolise that Indra has undergone imprisonment.

With the erection of the *linga* start the revelry and also the display of Bhairava's figures at every important spot in the city. All the idols of Bhairavas and Bhairavis or Bhagwatis are taken out of the temples and put on view. In front of Bhairava's figure at every square of the locality, the figure of Indra, with outstretched arms, is displayed on a high *machan*. The idol of Indra is usually wound with threads signifying that he is in chains. The idols of Indra, says Oaldfield, "are invoked as especially sacred to the memory of the deceased ancestors".<sup>4</sup> Besides worship, the famous white Bhairava at the Hanuman Dhoka is uncovered to admit a full view of it on this

occasion. It is only during the Indra Jatra that it is kept open to the public. During the rest of the year it is kept concealed behind a wooden latticed frame. The Bhairava at Hanuman Dhoka is worshipped by the Gubhajas of Mu-Bahal, who enjoy a hereditary right in this regard.

The same evening the ritual of honouring the dead, *upako hu wanegu*, takes place in Kathmandu. This is observed by families who would be in annual mournings. Female representatives of such households go round the city, placing small earthen dishes, containing burning wicks, on the road. The route along which the procession moves is fixed and numerous Bhairava-masks could be found all along. While placing the earthen lamps, the masks are also worshipped with the offering of rice and coins.

Indra Jatra is also the occasion when several god-and-demon-dances are performed. All these dances symbolise the fight between gods and demons, ultimately resulting in the triumph of virtue over evil. These dances take on the caste pattern and of these the Devi dance, which is a speciality of the Jyapoo caste, is notable. Another one, the Mahakali dance, is from the town of Patan and the Lakhe and Sava Bhaku dances are from Kathmandu. These are performed every day and, while performing, the dancers are believed to be under a trance. The Sava Bhaku dance is performed by three mask-wearers: one representing Akash Bhairava and the other two his *ganas* (attendants), referred to as Bhakus. The man impersonating Akash Bhairava holds a sword in his right hand while the Bhakus are bare-handed. They move about the streets to the accompaniment of music, the Bhakus walking ahead of Akash Bhairava. During their movement black objects and sarees hanging from the balconies are avoided; the sight of these are believed to enrage the Bhakus. Therefore, residents along the route take the utmost care to remove such things when the

procession is on the move. The moment such things catch their eyes, the Sava-Bhakus will attack the person concerned. If they cause any injury no legal action can be taken. If a woman's garment hanging by the roadside is caught sight of, the Sava Bhaku will climb the wall of the house to punish the inmates. Only when a goat or a chicken is offered to them, would they let go the person concerned. When a chicken is offered, its neck is wrung and the blood is drunk by them. If they find any animal or poultry on the way the Sava Bhakus grow blood-thirsty.

The Sava-Bhaku dance has now been much shorn of its original features.. Till recently, during the eight days of Indra Jatra a dreadful spectacle of a fight between Sava-Bhakus and a buffalo used\* to be the main attraction. Every day a he-buffalo was provided for the fight. The court-yard of the former Newar Raja served as the arena for this purpose. The buffalo would be made intoxicated with liquor and led into the arena along with the Sava-Bhakus. And while one of the fighters would provoke the animal the others stand by with a *khukuri* to stab it when it charged against them. The buffalo, when wounded, would continue to charge with redoubled fury. Normally the fight would end in killing the animal, after which the Sava-Bhakus would drink its blood. The blood-drunken "matadors" are regarded as being possessed by the spirit of Akash Bhairava. The killing of the buffalo symbolises the killing of the demon. This dance is the hereditary function of the Du(n)yeeya(n) caste.

Another important dance connected with Indra Jatra is *Lakhe*. We have already stated earlier that *Lakhe*, a *rakshasa* (demon), is the family deity of the Ranjitkar Newars. It is the principal *Lakhe* whose propitiation and dance come within their exclusive hereditary right. It

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\* It is reported that this fight has now been revived at the instance of King Mahendra.

should not, therefore, be confused with the numerous other *Lakhes* called *Gula Lakhe* put up during the month of Sravan by many of the lower castes, chiefly the Jyapoo. It is said that *Gula Lakhe* is not expected to visit the dominion of the main *Lakhe*. Neither should the music accompanying *Gula Lakhe* be heard within the jurisdiction of the main *Lakhe*.

This taboo is rooted in the firm belief that if *Gula Lakhe* contravenes this rule he is sure to meet his end. Similarly the main *Lakhe* should not see *Dagi* or *Dagini* who is regarded as either a demon or Indra's mother.

On the day of Kumari Jatra a procession of women is taken out in honour of *Dagi*, another ritual to commemorate the dead ones. It is mostly confined to the Udas caste. The procession is conducted through the routes fixed for the Kumari Jatra. The person wearing a mask is believed to be fully under the influence of *Dagi's* spirit. In the procession he (as *Dagi* : she) behaves as if he were uncontrollable and, therefore, held firmly by two persons. The procession is headed by a person who holds the *Dhunjya-Munjya*. It terminates at the Ganesh temple of Kashta-Mandap. On reaching there, the *Dagi* runs away to his house which is quite near. But the women participating in the *Dagi* procession wait there till another ritual called *Bahu-Mata* takes place, in which the *Manandhars* participate. This ritual consists of taking out in procession a long rectangular structure of bamboo sticks, about fifteen to twenty feet in length with a number of earthen lamps on it. The procession wends through the traditional route fixed for the cow festival and is finally brought to an end at the place where the women would be waiting for it just after the *Dagi* procession. Each woman generally represents a household where a death had occurred during the year. All of them, thereafter, proceed towards the *Yanki Daha*, a tank situated on the western extremity of Kathmandu town. There they have their bath and re-



turn home. Both the rituals of Dagi and Bahumata are thus connected with the belief that on these particular occasions Indra accompanies them to *Yanki Daha*. It is also the general belief that these symbolise the appeal by the inhabitants of Kathmandu to Indra to take the souls of their deceased relatives to heaven when he was leaving the Valley through its western exit. Indra Jatra comes to an end with the pulling down of the *Linga* on the eighth day.

The more traditional town of Bhatgaon has its own additional features of Indra Jatra celebration. Some of the traditions observed there during Indra Jatra symbolise the conflict between Indra and the local inhabitants. During the last three days of Indra Jatra (that is, between the second and the third dark-half of *Bhadra*), a mask-wearer representing a demon and accompanied by two of his assistants goes round the streets. He is called *Mhopatra* and each of his two assistants, *Dicha*. *Mhopatra* goes to the places where the idols of Indra are on display. He circumambulates Indra's idol three times and hits it with a *khukri*. On the fifth of the dark-half of the same month, a man impersonating *Pula Kisi*, for which he wears an elephant mask, goes round the town. It is commonly believed that this *Kisi* (elephant) is the riding animal of Indra and has come in search of its master. Care is taken to see that *Mhopatra* does not meet *Pula-Kisi*. In the event of their facing each other, there ensues a fight between the two, involving their respective supporters. *Mhopatra* is represented as the enemy of Indra and *Pula Kisi* as Indra's faithful servant.

A similar conflict, though much concealed, is revealed through a very nearly similar custom held in Kathmandu on the last day of Indra Jatra. On this day a wooden puppet is taken out from Hanuman Dhoka. The puppet is called *Jhyalincha*. It is struck against the two *Jhyalinchas* belonging to Indra's two idols at Indra Chowk

and Maru tole, respectively. The festival of Indra Jatra thus suggests perhaps the memory of a conflict between the two tribes—the followers of Indra and their opponents. This festival is perhaps an Indo-Aryan feature which survives in Nepal, but is totally forgotten in India.

While the festival of Indra is going on, another important festival, Kumari Jatra, intervenes. And now-a-days it has become the chief attraction of Indra Jatra. Nobody knows whether this festival is merely coincidental with Indra Jatra or it is the original Jatra of the primitive Newars, which came to be synchronised with Indra Jatra.

Kumari Jatra lasts for two days. It begins on the full moon of Bhadrapad, that is to say, on the fourth day of the inauguration of Indra Jatra. Its origin is attributed to King Jai Prakash Malla, a Newar King who ruled over the Kathmandu principality during 1740-50 A.D. As the legends assert, the inauguration of Kumari Jatra was the result of disrespect shown by Jai Prakash Malla to a Vanra girl who once declared herself to be possessed by the spirit of goddess Talleju. The king did not believe it and regarded her as an impostor. He had her and her family expelled from the city. Their property was confiscated. It is said that the same night Jai Prakash Malla's consort became possessed by the spirit of the deity. This frightened the king and he apologised for his misconduct. He publicly announced the Vanra girl as a divinity and offered worship to her. In addition, he instituted an annual festival in her honour. Since then, the office of Kumari is filled up by selection from among the Vanra girls.

There is another story current in the Valley, which provides a slightly different explanation to the origin of Kumari Jatra. It states that King Jai Prakash Malla used to play dice with goddess Talleju who appeared to him in human form. One day the king was captivated by the beauty of the goddess. He seized the goddess, for-

getting her divine status. The goddess ran away and hid herself. She was so enraged that she never appeared again in human form to play dice with him. But she appeared before the king in his dream and revealed to him that soon the Gorkha prince would displace the Mallas from power. She further asked the erring king to institute a Jatra in her honour as an atonement for his sin.

The Jatra, however, might have been already existing in the Valley and Jai Prakash Malla might have only given it State patronage. For, the cult of the mother is so much in vogue among the Newars, as could be seen from the nature of their divinities, ceremonies and rituals, that it cannot be said that Kumari festival could have been introduced only as recently as the 18th century.

The main feature of this festival is the drawing of the car of Kumari through the different parts of Kathmandu town. This festival is not observed in the other towns of the Valley but all the inhabitants come to Kathmandu to participate in it. The King's association with this festival and his ritual connection with goddess Kumari has given it a national character. On the other hand, it remains exclusively a Newar festival. Except for the fact that the non-Newars look upon goddess Kumari as a form of Bhagwati and pay her their due reverence at the festival, they are not ritually connected with this festival.

The drawing of the car starts from Kumari Chowk, a place, obviously named after Kumari. Before Kumari is seated on the *rath*, there are some preliminary ceremonies that are performed. The long wooden yoke of the car is worshipped, during which a Vanra priest officiates, assisted by an Achaju and a Karmacharya. The yoke contains a figure of Bhairava to which, a duck and a ram are sacrificed. This sacrifice is necessary because Bhairava is regarded as the chief agent of physical power which causes the movement of the car. The need to wor-

ship Bhairava's figure on the yoke of the car is designed, in addition, to avoid any untoward calamity during the car-drawing ceremony. As the popular belief runs, if Bhairava is not offered sacrifices to satisfy his blood-thirst, he is sure to take the life of someone by causing the wheels of the car to pass over him.

Bhairava is not only the mover of the car but also the body-guard of Kumari. In this duty, he is assisted by Ganesh, and both of them are represented in their human forms seated in their respective cars. Like their mistress, goddess Kumari, they too are drawn from the Vanra families and hold their offices for a specific period. Kumari, along with her two body-guards—Ganesh and Bhairava—is a unique feature of the Newars' human worship.

When the preliminaries are over and the king arrives, Kumari is conducted into the car along with Ganesh and Bhairava. The moment they are brought out of the residence, there is a commotion and the huge crowd surges forward to have a glimpse of the human goddess and pay their homage to her. Gun-shots are fired in her honour by the royal priest's detachment. The King salutes the goddess; then the procession starts. The majority of those who draw the cars are from the Jyapoo caste. It is regarded as a sacred privilege to participate in the drawing of the car.

Although on normal occasions the non-Newar Hindus do not go to worship Kumari as the Newars do, on this particular occasion all of them offer her flowers and coins, looking upon her as a form of Bhagwati or Durga.

The car is drawn on the first day through the southern part of the city and on the second day through its northern part. All along the way, Kumari receives ample veneration and offerings of flowers and coins. The same day the cars are drawn back to the Kumari Chowk and their wheels are made to rest in the same small ditches where they stood before. It takes quite a good deal of time to

put the cars exactly into their former position. When done, a gun salute is presented to Kumari. Afterwards she retires to her residence. The car procession is resumed on the third dark-half of *Ashwin*, that is, on the fifth day. This time the *rath* is drawn through the central part of the town. It is called *Nani-cha-ya*, the festival for the half-queen.\*

On its way back to Kumari Chowk on the last day, the car halts at Indra Chowk where a huge mask-head of Akash Bhairava, depicted on the surface of a big copper jar, stands prominently. As soon as Kumari's car halts, rice-beer is made to gush out through a long copper tube fitted in Bhairava's mouth. It is a moment of emotional paroxysm. This ritual is called *Hathu-Haye-gu*.

As soon as Kumari's car stands in front of Akash Bhairava, musical bands go into action and the ritual of *Hathu-Haye-gu* starts. A little of rice beer is collected from Bhairava's mouth in a tumbler and given to Kumari to drink. Afterwards, there is a big scramble among spectators to have a little of the rice-beer. In the melee, they trample upon each other, for such is the sacredness attributed to this drink. There is also a rush for the search of a small fish which comes out through the pipe. One who finds the fish is regarded to be a lucky person. A tiny fish, of course, is put beforehand into the copper jar.

The winding up of Kumari Jatra and Indra Jatra takes place at night. In the evening, around 8 p.m., as is fixed by the astrologer, the king has to perform a ceremony before goddess Kumari. He salutes her with the presentation of a rupee coin as is the custom in Nepal to respect the Sovereign. Then Kumari puts a *teeka*-mark

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\* Half-wife is designated as Nani among the royal members. It is said that the second car-drawing ceremony was introduced in order to enable King Jai Prakash Malla's concubine to see the Jatra.

on the forehead of the king which is symbolic of bestowing upon him the divine sanction to rule over the Valley as stated elsewhere.\*

After the conclusion of the above ritual the ceremony of felling the *linga* starts. Again the usual worship and sacrifices are performed by the Vanra priests. The royal priest's soldiers present the guard of honour. Thereafter the *linga* is pulled down by balancing it against thick ropes and bamboo poles. The moment it is made to rest flat on the ground, the onlookers rush towards it. They touch the *linga* with their heads as a mark of devotion. Then the pole is carried in a procession to the banks of the Vishnumati and kept there. This procession is in spirit like a funeral procession.

The festival of Machhendra, like Indra Jatra, is, as we noted earlier, a great national festival of the Newars. It is held in the town of Patan and attracts about a quarter of a million people, who include the non-Newars as well. The festival lasts for about two months and provides an occasion for feasts and merriments mainly for the Newars of Patan region. The popularity of the festival among the Jyapoo Newars is well in keeping with its importance associated with the agricultural life of the inhabitants of the Valley. It is, however, purely a Buddhist festival, though as a festival in honour of the god of rain, there is country-wide interest in it.

Machhendra festival is divided into three parts—the bathing of the deity and initiation into Das Karma, the Rath Jatra, and finally the display of Machhendra's shirt on the last day. The bathing ceremony takes place under a tree named after Narendra Deo at Patan on the first of the dark-half of Vaishakh (April-May). Here is where King Narendra Deo and his companions, as tradition

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\* It is interesting to note that the State treasury is called Kumari chowk.

asserts, had halted on their return from mount Kopotak with god Machhendra.

After the idol of Machhendra is painted and dressed up, it is carried to the temple. In all these stages, the principal castes ritually connected with it are the Nikhu, Jyapoo and Vanra. The Nikhus have to attend to the bathing of the idol. On the eighth of the same month, the Nikhus hand over the deity to the Vanra priests. On the twelfth and thirteenth of the dark-half of the same month, the deity is initiated into the different social ceremonies of the Newars as relevant in the case of a Brahmin and a Kshatriya. In addition to ten such initiation ceremonies connected with a male, female ceremonies like *Yihee* and *Barha* are also observed. Oaldfield and Levi have not mentioned the female part of the initiations. The practice of subjecting the deity to the various social ceremonies connected with a Newar individual is not confined to Machhendra Nath alone; many other deities are similarly initiated.

The second part consists of drawing two chariots (*rath*) — big and small — through different streets of Patan. The chariots are constructed at two different places, the big one at the western outskirts of the town, near the *Chaitya* whose construction is said to have been accomplished by Ashoka; and the smaller one at Patan itself in the courtyard of the temple of Machhendra Nath.

The giant cars even now conform to the description given by Dr. Oaldfield about eighty years ago.<sup>5</sup> But we may add a few features not mentioned by Oaldfield. On the upper part of the column of the cars are depicted the emblems of the moon and the sun.

About the idols that are placed in these cars, Oaldfield had stated that they were of Machhendra Nath.<sup>6</sup> But my enquiries show that the two deities are totally different. The idols of Machhendra Nath are seated in the big car,

while the smaller car contains an idol of a deity popularly known as Chakuwa deya who is believed to be either the son or daughter of Machhendra. The sex of Chakuwa deya is as confusing as of Machhendra himself. As stated earlier Machhendra is regarded both as a male and a female god.

The name Chakuwa deya is derived from the word *chaku* (molasses) and *wa* (rice) which are offered to him when Machhendra is carried to the Bungamati. Chakuwa deya is sometimes identified as Kurunamaya, a term used to designate Machhendra or Bunga deya himself. This perhaps shows that two different deities, having similar functions, have been brought together by postulating a kinship between them.

The idol of Machhendra is placed in the car on the first of the bright-half of Baisakh and drawn to Phool Chowk. On the same day the car of Chakuwa deya is also brought to the same place. This is explained as Chakuwa deya 'going to receive Machhendra Nath'. On the fourth day the actual festival of car-drawing starts. In this connection it may be mentioned that the date of starting the car-drawing does not tally with what Oaldfield had stated. In his time, the festival started on the seventh of Baisakh. When I attended the festival in 1957, it started on the fourth of the bright-half of Baisakh (on the day of *Parewa*).

The cars move slowly as a faster movement is not possible due to their huge structure. Hundreds of Newars, mostly Jyapoos, participate in it. The car-drawing is believed to be so sacred a duty that many people who are not needed for the purpose at least touch the ropes as symbolic of having drawn the car. This is believed to bring luck to the person. There is no time limit for the car-drawing. The procession wends through different parts of Patan and halts at each place for a few days till the next auspicious hour strikes. During these stop-overs,



animal sacrifice is offered to the figures of Bhairava seated in the cars. The local people hold feasts and engage themselves in merriment; they sacrifice buffaloes, too.

By the time the car-procession arrives at Jawla-Khel parade-ground, it would be nearly a month. There is a belief with regard to the time involved in the drawing of the cars. If it soon comes to an end, it is regarded as a bad omen; and if takes a longer time to reach Jawla Khel, it is supposed to bring good luck. During this study, when the festival took place, it ended nearly after a month.

Of the various halts the procession makes, a very significant one is at Lau-Khel. Here the ceremony of dropping a coconut from the mast of Machhendra's car takes place. A Vanra priest climbs up to the top of the column and drops the coconut. This ceremony is watched by a huge crowd. Persons desirous of having a son try to catch the coconut since it is believed to fulfil the desire.

During the drawing of the car, Machhendra Jatra does not attract many persons from the other regions in the Valley. It is a great occasion only as far as Patan region is concerned. The festival, however, assumes inter-regional importance on the last day when the ritual of *Bhoto-Jatra* takes place. It is the day when the shirt of Machhendra is displayed, and is, therefore, called *Bhoto Jatra*.<sup>\*</sup> To participate in it, people from far off regions throng in. All roads on this day lead to Jawla-Khel. Especially the Jyapoo and the Shrestha peasants begin to pour in. Perhaps only the invalids remain at home on this day. Families or Dewali groups hold communal feasts. Even the non-Newars hold feasts but in their case the feast is not a ritual act but an occasion for pure mirth-making.

Everyone is on the qui vive to see the shirt of the deity to be fluttered by the Vanra priest. Meanwhile, there is

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\* Bhoto is a children's garment.

a continuous flow of Newar devotees circumambulating the car of Machhendra and offering fruits, flowers and coins to the god.

Here we should note the inter-community significance of this festival. The non-Newar Hindus who rarely go to worship Machhendra on normal occasions pay their due respect to the deity on this day and offer worship in the same manner as the Newars do. The presence of the King of Nepal and also goddess Kumari from Kathmandu town connects this festival ritually with communities from all regions. Those who come to worship Machhendra first worship the human goddess Kumari and present her with coins. This is also one of the occasions when the inhabitants of the Valley have a glimpse of the King who is regarded not only as the symbol of political unity but also an incarnation of Vishnu. Although his visit to the Bhoto Jatra is apparently to represent the highest political authority of the country, the inhabitants look upon him with religious devotion. Bhoto Jatra is, therefore, an occasion for the meeting of three great personalities of Nepal—Machhendra, Kumari and the King. Each is regarded as a Sovereign of the Valley, looked from different angles. The festival, therefore, provides an occasion for the solidarity of the Newars and the Gorkhas. While Indra Jatra recalls the grim memory of the victory of the Gorkhas over the Newars, Machhendra Jatra brings together the two groups. The rains are a common need for all; and Machhendra Nath, being from times immemorial the chief rain-god and the object of extreme piety among Newars, could never be ignored by the non-Newars. Machhendra Jatra, therefore, becomes the national festival of the Valley, although spiritually and ritually only the Newars are associated with it.

Bhoto or the shirt is displayed when the auspicious hour is struck. It creates a tense moment of emotional excitement, all eyes centering on the car of Machhendra. The

Vanra priest takes the Bhoto in his hands and displays it before the milling crowd. A guard of honour is presented to Machhendra and guns are fired in salutation.

The display of Bhoto is interpreted in many ways. One of the beliefs, which Dr. Wright<sup>7</sup> has recorded, is that the main objective involved in it is to impress the people that Machhendra carries away nothing from them and that though in poverty he is contented. My own enquiry however reveals a different explanation. Bhoto is believed to belong to a serpent-god, *Naga*, who had entrusted it to the safe custody of Machhendra. Its display at the time of the festival is meant to reassure the people that it is being safely preserved. Thus, inspite of the contradiction involved in these two different explanations, both of them go to reveal the character of the Newars—their contented life.

After the display of Bhoto, another ceremony takes place for which the vast gathering, especially the peasant section of it, would be anxiously waiting. It is the dropping of a copper disc from the mast of Machhendra's car. The disc is dropped down by a Vanra priest. If the disc falls on the ground with its face upwards, it is interpreted as prognosticating a year of prosperity and good harvest. Just like the disc covers the ground under it, so is Machhendra believed to protect the people. But if it rests on the ground with its mouth upturned, it is taken to signify ill-luck for the people of the Valley in the coming year with the failure of crops and poverty all around.

With the dropping of the copper disc, the Jatra comes to an end. The Vanra priests proceed with the task of carrying the idol of Machhendra Nath to the temple at Bungamati, where the deity would remain for the next six months. The deity is transferred to a wooden carrier, *Khat*, and carried by the Vanras in a procession to the Bungamati. But before that, a ritual is performed implying that Machhendra bids good-bye to Chakuwa deya;

the latter is offered sweets made of jaggery and rice on behalf of Machhendra. This offering symbolises the act of a mother who, while going out, tries to pacify her crying child who is being left behind. After this, Chakuwadeya is carried to Patan in his car, while the idol of Machhendra is carried to the Bungamati amid prayer-songs and traditional music provided by the Jyapoos of Patan. On reaching the river, the deity is conducted into the temple through the Lasa-Kusa ceremony.

Besides the annual festival, Machhendra Nath has a special festival once in every twelfth year. The details are similar to those involved in the annual festival. But this time the drawing of the car does not start in Patan. Instead, it starts from the Bungamati temple. It is a very difficult job to draw such a huge structure for such a long distance through the hilly route. The tradition-ridden Newars are, however, the slaves of their beliefs and every detail must be adhered to as had been followed in the past.

Another festival which is held in honour of Machhendra is in Kathmandu. But it is in no way comparable with the grandeur and popularity of its Patan counterpart. Moreover, though similar in name, it is not the festival of Bunga deya. To distinguish it from Machhendra's festival at Patan, it is called the festival of *seto* Machhendra (white Machhendra).

However, just as Bunga deya or red Machhendra is identified as Padmapani, so is white Machhendra as Samant Bhadra, both being Buddhist saints with the status of the Buddha. But the two Machhendras are curiously enough regarded by the illiterate Newar as two sisters, though in Nepalese Buddhist scriptures, they are viewed as two different male personages.

The festival of white Machhendra takes place earlier on the eighth of the bright-half of Chaitra (March-April) and lasts for four days during which the idol of white

Machhendra is drawn in a car through the different parts of Kathmandu town. The car is similar in structure to the car of red Machhendra, but not in ornamentation and size. The participation in this festival is wholly confined to the Vanra priests and, therefore, it is a sectional festival.

What particular social function this deity performs, in whose honour the festival is held, is not clear. It is certainly not the god of harvest and of rain as red Machhendra is. The very term Bunga deya applied to red Machhendra shows that he is the pivot of the economic life of the Newars. For in fact the Newars respond to red Machhendra more emotionally in his designation as Bunga deya.

Apart from the principal festivals described above, there are a number of festivals held annually in honour of Narain or Vishnu. Temples consecrated to this deity are found everywhere, and some kind of festival is held at each temple. The dates of the festivals of Narain, are different and vary according to the dates of the introduction of the deities. Among the numerous festivals, the important ones are those of Bula Nilkantha, Balaji and Changu Narain. The first two deities are similar in form while Changu Narain is far smaller in size.

Besides the Newars, all the other Hindus participate in these festivals, which do not involve the car-drawing ceremony. People worship these deities at their temples and observe fasts in honour of them. Besides the chief-festivals of Narain, every locality or village has its own annual function associated with the worship of Narain. But these are all sectional festivals confined to some particular caste with which they are associated.

Another typical Newar festival is the Bhimsen Jatra celebrated in honour of god Bhimsen. This festival is not so much of national importance in the Valley of Kathmandu as are Bhairava Jatra, Indra Jatra and Machhendra Jatra. Yet it is a festival held in honour of a most popular deity which does not at all figure in the beliefs and

practices of the non-Newar Hindus. Each of the three principal towns in the Valley observes its own Bhimsen Jatra. But these festivals are held on different dates. The festival provides an occasion for mirth and merriment for the Newar trading communities. Ritually it is chiefly associated with the Thaco-ju-ju sub-caste of the Chhatharia Newars. But Bhimsen Jatra has the honour of being the chief annual event in Dolakha and Cherikot, both situated in the east of the Valley. It is reported that all the other gods there, including Siva, are subordinated to Bhimsen. He is the protector and presiding deity of the region. The usual mode of observing the festival in these places is to carry the deity in a procession to the different parts of the settlement. Bhimsen Jatra there is an exclusive event for the Newars.

From the view-point of area coverage, the festival of Bhimsen is much more widely observed than that of Machhendra, which though is large and significant, is confined to the Valley of Kathmandu. All over Nepal wherever Newars are found in good numbers the festival of Bhimsen is one of the chief events along with Gai Jatra, Gathe Mangal (described below) and Bhairava and Bhairavi Jatras. Besides Cherikot and Dolakha, the festival is popular in Banepa, Gorkha, Palpa and Dhuli Khel, all outside the Valley. The reason for its wider popularity can be attributed to the fact that the Newars who inhabit the regions outside the Valley are mostly the Shresthas, whose principal occupation is trade.

The festival of Gathe Mangal is a widely celebrated one among the Newars. It takes place on the fourteenth of the dark-half of Sravan (July-Aug.) It is a kind of calendar festival but we have included it among the main festivals owing to its popularity and importance from the point of view of collective participation. It marks the death of a demon called Ghanta-Karan and, once in every eight days thereafter untill the day of Dashera, a demon is believed

to die. The principal motive involved in its celebration is the expulsion of evils and protection of the community from the wrath of the evil spirits. This celebration also marks the completion of rice plantation. But it is curious that, while the principal cereal food of the Newars is rice, the completion of whose planting is marked by this day, it is not paddy-straws but wheat straws which form an item of ritual connected with this festival.

The collective celebration of the death of Ghanta Karan is observed by burning its effigy in every locality. In Kathmandu, where I had the occasion to witness this festival, an effigy is burnt in every *tole* where two streets intersect. On the preceding night the material for making the effigy is brought from the nearby forest. It is a taboo to see it being brought. Therefore, no window is left open. Early morning a person of the Pore caste goes round the city in the garb of Ghanta Karan. He demands coins from whoever he meets. If he is refused, he pronounces a curse upon that person. It is believed that his curse is sure to be efficacious and, therefore, the Newars are not inclined to displease him.

In the evening, as noted above, at the crossroads of every locality, a tall effigy of Gathe Mangal is erected. Its face is pictured on a white paper pasted over it. The Pore, who plays the role of Ghanta Karan, goes round the effigy three times. Finally he sits between the legs of the effigy which is set on fire. The effigy is immediately pulled down. The Pore is made to sit on it. All the people of the locality, excluding females, join hands to drag it to the bank of the river. This is now an occasion for a fight between the residents of two localities. The fight is rooted in the belief that the effigy of Ghanta Karan or Gathe Mangal of a particular locality is a female, while that of another is a male. An attempt is made to place the male effigy over the female effigy of the locality through which it is dragged. People of the locality which is believed to have a female

Gathe Mangal await till the supposedly male effigy is dragged to their place. But they keep themselves well prepared for the fight. The moment the male effigy arrives, they not only prevent it from being put over the female effigy of their locality but also do not allow it to be dragged away before their own Ghanta Karan is taken away. In this melee, members of both the parties come to blows, often resulting in fatal injuries to some. The brawl continues for a couple of minutes and whichever party is able to drag its Ghanta Karan first, is believed to have won the fight. Now it is a question of group prestige —prestige involving one's own locality or tole. Such fights in Kathmandu town are common enough between the residents of Nardevi and Nhiyukha.

The celebration of Ghanta Karan's death assumes grand proportions in Kirtipur, since it is associated with the descendants of the ancient cowherds. On the Gathe Mangal day, a Gwala has to worship at a tank which is situated at the site of the ancient cow stable. After the worship, he distributes *prasad* among the people, and goes to every street where his arrival is awaited. The moment he arrives, the Ghanta Karan is dragged away.

The domestic part of the Ghanta Karan festival is observed in the following manner in every household: Three stacks of wheat-straws are tied together with a kind of grass known in Newari as *Chyal-batta*, *Nhaka* (nettle) and *chwaka* (a kind of thorny plant) to represent the evil. Besides these, it includes *basi-kachha* (leaves of peach), *dhali kacha* (twigs of pomegranate) and *pasi kacha* (twigs of pear). An effigy of evil made of these is then divided into two. One half is then burnt; and every room is fumigated with it. Then a small area of plaster is scraped off from the corner of the wall and collected in an earthen pot. A mixture of cow dung and mud is daubed on the spot from where the white plaster has been removed. The burning torch representing the effigy of the evil spirit, along



with the earthen pot, is thrown into the *Chhwasa*. In this manner every household exorcises the evil spirit from it.

After disposing of the effigy, the person concerned does not enter the house but stands outside. The second half of the effigy is now burnt and he warms himself by its fire and exposes his hands to the smoke. He has then to wash his hands and feet; only then can he enter the house. Inside the house, he is given to eat five pieces of *chhoyala*. Afterwards, a domestic feast is held in which all the members of the family participate.

### ...REFERENCES

- 1 Oaldfield, H. A.—Sketches from Nipal, Vol. II, p. 295.
- 2 Ibid, p. 295.
- 3 Ibid, p. 38.
- 4 Ibid, p. 314.
- 5 Ibid, pp. 330-331.
- 6 Ibid, p. 331.
- 7 Wright, D.—History of Nepal, Cambridge, 1877.

## 14. FESTIVALS — DOMESTIC EVENTS

IN the foregoing pages we saw the festivals of the Newars which are in the nature of collective events involving inter-caste and inter-regional socio-religious participation. Apart from these festivals we have a great many others which provide the reinforcements to solidarity among the *Dewali* group members and members of the joint households. In other words, these festivals go to provide the basis of the kinship bonds among the Newars. All the Hindu festivals and feasts come under this category. In addition, there are a few events which are exclusive to the Newars.

Let us start with the New Year's day of the Newar era, the first day of the bright half of *Kartik*. On this day there are two different observances. First is the Govardhan puja as among other Hindus and the second is the worship of the self, called *Mha Puja*, aimed at achieving a long and prosperous life, while symbolising, at the same time, great respect towards the individual self. But more important than this, its significance lies in perpetuating the kinship bonds among the members of the family, joint or nuclear.

*Mha* etymologically means the self. *Mha Puja* is, therefore, the worship of the self. It is confined entirely to the members of one's own family. In the evening on this day, all of them sit in a row in the order of age seniority. Be-

fore each of them, there is a geometric symbol (*mandap*) to represent Yamaraj, the god of death. Inside each *mandap*, a long cotton wick of the length of a person's height is kept burning. This long wick, which is worshipped, is meant to represent the life of the person concerned. Even a member of the family who has died in the recent past is assigned a place which he would have occupied had he been alive. A long wick would be burnt in his name also. The *Thakali Naki* (this time, the chief married lady of the family) worships the participating members one by one and performs the ritual of *Pathi-lui-gu*, starting with the eldest male member of the household to the youngest. In the same order she puts *teeka*-marks on the forehead of each of them and gives a garland of hand-made cotton thread to everyone. Then she sweeps the floor with a broom, effacing the geometric symbols. Then *Sagan* is offered to all; and they have to eat it on the spot. This ceremony is followed by a domestic feast in which all members of the household participate.

Brother-worship known as *Kija Puja* is observed on the second of the bright half of *Kartik*. In Nepal it is one of the most important domestic festivals. On this day sisters worship brothers. Although *Kija* means only younger brother, the prevailing custom includes the worship of elder brother also. A boy and a girl who are not related can also enter into brother-sister relationship after undergoing the necessary ceremony on this day. The Gorkhas, too, have this custom. Among them it is known as *Bhai-teeka*. But as between these two communities the details of this ceremony are significantly different. The Newar worship is exactly like *Mha-Puja* except that the *Thakali Naki* who performs the ceremony is replaced by a sister. Among the Gorkhas, on the other hand, in the *Bhai-teeka* ceremony, the sister applies *teeka* to the forehead of the brother; and the latter reciprocates. This is, however, not to be met with among the Newars. *Teeka* can be applied to a Newar

woman's forehead either by herself or by the *Thakali Naki* or by the former's husband. In almost all the ceremonies, where this service is not expected from the latter two, she has to put *teeku* herself.

There are also some other variations involved in the respective observances of brother worship among the two communities. Among the Gorkhas the sister is required to put *til*-oil on the hair of her brother, a couple of days before *Bhai teeka*. During the function itself, she has to pour a stream of water around her brother from a water jug, *Kalash*, stuffed with mango leaves. She has then to break a walnut on the threshold of the room where the function is being held. These things are however not met with among the Newars.

The worship of brother is expressive of the sister's wish for the longevity and prosperity of her brother. But it makes one quite perplexed to discover that among the Newars, in this worship, the elder brother is regarded as Yamaraj, the god of death and the younger one as Chitragupta, Yama's assistant. If the brothers themselves were to be treated as Yamaraj and Chitragupta, it is strange that it should be necessary to wish for their long life.

The next important day observed by the Newars is *Mukha Ashtami* which falls on the eighth of the bright-half of the same month. It is regarded as an auspicious day for two reasons: firstly, it is the chief eighth day among the 24 bright eighth days of the year; secondly, it marks the celebration of the day when Pashupati-Linga was saved by the Buddha from destruction at the hands of the demon, Virupaksha. When Virupaksha wanted to break Pashupati Linga, the Buddha, it is said, put his tiara over it. As a result the demon mistook the phallus of Pashupati for the Buddha himself. He, therefore, began to pray to it, instead of attempting to destroy it. It is because of this that every year on this day a tiara containing five faces of the Buddha is placed on the phallus of Pashupati. Usually the

Buddhist Newars, mostly the Vanras and the Gubhajus, observe a fast on this day in honour of Tri-Ratna, the Buddhist deities.

The ninth day of the bright-half of the month is observed by the Newars as the day when the *Satya-Yuga* began. The current belief attached to it is that any project inaugurated on this day is sure to be a success. Good acts performed this day enable a man to go to heaven; and, if a sin is committed, it multiplies and the person goes to hell. This day is also marked by a pilgrimage to the temple of Changu Narain at Sankhu. Kushmand-Navami is another name given to this day. It derives the name from the practice of donating and worshipping *Bhui-Phasi* (curirbita pepo), which has great religious significance for the Hindus of Nepal.

There are three more important days in *Kartik*, which are sacred to the Newars. These are *Hari-bodhani Ekadashi* (eleventh day of the bright-half), the twelfth day and the full moon day. On the first mentioned day, a fast is observed and on the next day the Bula-Nilkantha (Narain) temple is visited. The full-moon day is particularly sacred to the Buddhist Newars. All of them go to visit the temple of Swayambhu Nath and go round its hill. It involves the act of scattering about the hill small pieces of *Saki* (bulb of Arum colacasia), *hi* (sweet potato), *Lai* (Radish) and *panch-bihi* (five kinds of grass) in honour of the deceased. Apart from these, the month of *Kartik* is also important for raising the *Akash Batti* (sky lamp) with which we shall deal towards the end of the present chapter, since according to the Newar calender it takes place at the end of the year.

During the dark half of *Marga* (Nov.-Dec.) the important religious event observed is the *Bala-Charhe* dedicated to the propitiation of mother goddess and to the souls of the dead. It takes place on the fourteenth of the month's dark-half. This day is especially dedicated to Ind-

riani in Kathmandu to whom *Sarpahuti* is offered. It consists of sacrificing a pair each of snakes, doves, and sparrows; a buffalo and a goat. A day earlier, the Manandhars sacrifice a pig to this goddess. The scattering of *sat-beej* (seven kinds of seeds) round the hill of Pashupati in memory of the dead is performed by the Hindu Newars on this day. Although a person aspiring for the salvation of his soul can also take up this pilgrimage, it is especially connected with the cult of the dead and is more popularly followed by those Hindu Newars in whose house a death has occurred during the year. It is just a counter-part of the Buddhist Newars' custom of going round the Swayambhu hill on the full-moon day of the previous month.

The next important Newar festival is the *Yomarhi Punhi*, which falls on the full moon day of *Marga*. This festival is celebrated by eating a special kind of cake called *Yo-Marhi*. It marks the celebration of the new harvest and is rooted in the desire for increasing wealth. In mythology, it is said that once upon a time Kuber, the god of wealth, wanted to put to test a merchant from Panchal desh.\* Kuber, therefore, disguised himself as a beggar and begged at the door of the merchant. He was received by the merchant with utmost hospitality and given to eat *Yo-marhi* made out of rice-flour, *til* and jaggery. God Kuber was so pleased by the hospitality that he revealed his true identity and gave *Taha-si* (common citron) to his host. Since then this observance is believed to have been followed by the Newars.

The current practice in celebrating *Yo-Marhi-Punhi* among the peasant Newars is to prepare *Yo-Marhi* for themselves and for distribution among neighbours, as soon as the new harvest is stored. *Yo-marhis* are placed amidst heaps of fresh paddy grains for four days. During the interval, they never open the granery. Women are

\* This place is identified with the village of Panaauti, situated in the region of Bhatgaon in the Valley.

tabooed from either touching the paddy or seeing the *Yomarhi*. It is generally believed that during the four days the quantity of grain would multiply itself. Among non-peasant Newars, *Yomarhi* is, in recent times, placed in cash boxes. It is also regarded very commendable to go about on this day asking for *Yo-marhis* from others and eating them. *Yo-marhi* is also an essential ceremonial item in *Yihee*, *Burha junko*, and birthday ceremonies. Thus it has a great socio-religious value in the life of the Newars.

The observance of *Khila-ga-ya Dashami* falls on the ninth of the dark-half of Marga and is purely a Buddhist function. Worships and fast on this day are designed to help get one's desires fulfilled.

*Ukhucharhe* is another important calendar festival of the Newars, which is observed on fourteenth of the dark-half of *Paush* (Dec.-Jan.). It is the day when the Newars pray for the peace and protection of the family. The common way to observe it is to bake sugar-canes and explode them by striking against the ground. The sound produced thus is believed to drive out the evil spirits. During the same month, there are two more important religious days i.e. on the eighth and the fifteenth. The first is the day when the festival of Seto Machhendra begins in Kathmandu. This we have dealt with earlier. The full-moon day of this month is especially sacred to the Buddhist Newars who pay the usual visit to the Swayambhu temple, while the Hindu Newars go to worship at the temple of Changu Narain.

The first important festival in the month of *Magha* (Jan.-Feb.) is the *Ghya-Chaku-Sanhu* which is known as *Makar Sankranti* among the other Hindus. It falls on the first day of the month according to the Vikram era. On this day the Newars take bath early in the morning. Every Newar mother on this day anoints the hair of her children with mustard oil, boiled with *urid* pulse. Thereafter, every

member of the family is offered by the chief lady of the household a piece of solidified ghee, jaggery and a sweet-ball of *til*. Following it is a family feast. This observance is believed to bring in health and longevity. This festival is observed also by the Gorkhas in a similar manner. *Shri Panchami* is the next festival which falls on the fifth day of the bright-half of the same month. It is observed in honour of goddess Saraswati and shared equally by the Newars and other Hindus. But as between the Hindu and Buddhist Newars there is some difference in its observance. The Buddhist section replaces the Hindu goddess Saraswati with Manjusri, a male god, as stated elsewhere, whom they regard as the god of learning. This worship is believed to bestow knowledge and riches. Children are initiated into schooling on this day which is common to all the inhabitants of the Valley.

*Shila Charhe* is observed on the fourteenth of the dark-half of *Falgun* (Feb.-Mar.) and is especially sacred to Lord Pashupati. A great fair is held in honour of Pashupati, which attracts tens of thousands of pilgrims from India. On this day, Newar children go from door to door asking for firewood and some cash. They keep awake at the following night by making a campfire in every *tole* in honour of Siva. Besides, on this day a mixture of fried pulses, Mecca, wheat and Soya-bean is eaten by every Newar. This is also the day when the Manandhars worship their oil-mills. There are no other important events during the dark-half of this month.

Holi is a very popular festival not only among the Newars but also among the inhabitants of the Valley. It is observed for seven days especially by the Newars beginning with the eighth of the bright-half of *Falgun*. After the burning of *Chir* in the early hours of the full-moon day, this festival comes to an end. Although Holi is a very popular festival, the burning of *chir* is comparatively rare. Only one *chir* is erected near the Pashupati ghat. In one of



the Nepalese folk songs Holi is referred to as the festival of the King in the words : *Raja-ko-Hori-Jai Jana lagyo*. Therefore, it appears to be a culture-trait introduced from outside.

The chief festivals held during the month of *Chaitra* are Chakan Deya, Du-Du-chya-chya, Pahan Charhe, Ghore-Jatra, Chaubah Nha, Ram Naumi and Lhuti Punhi. Du-Du-Chya-Chya is held in honour of Mahadeo on the eighth of the month's dark-half. On this day a small idol of Mahadeo is placed in a small chariot and drawn to Kathmandu town in a procession amidst loud music. On the way people keep on shouting, *Du-Du-Chya-Chya-Papa-Gui*. This means that *Pishach Chatur-dashi* (fourteenth of the dark-half of the month) is only eight days ahead. The idol of Mahadeo is later taken back to the temple of Pashupati. It is followed by the observance of Pahan charhe or Pishach Chaturdashi. This day is especially dedicated to the worship of Mahadeo, Pithas and Devis. It is a day of domestic feast for the Newars, involving the feasting of married daughters. In the same night Luku-Mahadeo as described earlier, is worshipped. In its worship a significant feature to note is that even the orthodox Buddhist Newars, such as the Vanras and the Udas, worship Mahadeo in the form of Luku-Mahadeo. It is also the day, as we have seen, when the Neta-Ajima Jatra takes place. Side by side a joint festival is held in honour of Kankeshwari and Bhadrakali. It is a day of merriment because on this day the evil spirits and ghosts are believed to be driven off. Though on the same day another festival, Ghore Jaira (festival of horse), is also held, it does not touch much upon the religious life of the Newars, this being a Parbatia tradition. This festival is celebrated by collecting all the state horses and ponies and holding a race-past in the presence of the king and the state officials. Newars who are employed in the civil service have to participate on the occasion by being present. In addition

the Pahan chare day is dedicated to the worship of the various mother-goddesses in the Valley. The idols of gods and goddesses are carried to the Tundi-Khel parade-ground. At midnight, goddess Kankeshwari is made to circumambulate goddess Bhadra Kali, as stated elsewhere. Burning torches are exchanged on behalf of these two deities. Moreover, this is also the day when animal sacrifice is offered to Kankeshwari and Bhadra Kali on behalf of every Newar family.

The next event in the month is the celebration of *Ram Naumi* or Rama's Ninth. The full-moon day is called *Luti-Punhi*. They go to the hill of Nagarjun to worship a Buddhist deity. There, part of the ritual consists of threading their way through a narrow cave. It is the current belief that only the pious ones would be successful in the attempt. This is called *Jari Lava(n)*.

The next important event is the worship of the *Dewali* deity. It commences on the first of the bright-half of *Vai-shakh* (April-May) and gets over on the Sithi Nakha day. Dewali worship begins with a feast known as *Chhoyala Bhui*. It begins a day earlier in the house of the *Thakali* (the head of the patrilineal group). Only the heads of families participate in this ceremonial feast. If any head of a family is unable to attend the feast, he may be represented by another male member of his family, preferably his younger brother. The management of this feast is not to be carried out by the *Thakali* of the *Dewali Guthi*, but by the head of any family, upon which the responsibility has fallen by rotation. The feast comprises flattened rice, buffalo meat, mutton and all kinds of pulses, ginger and black soyabean. The feast owes its name to a special type of buffalo-meat preparation known as *Chhoyala*. It is prepared by boiling meat first and then mixing it with salt, pepper and spices.

The participants in *Chhoyala-Bhui* take their seats in the strict order of age seniority. The seat at the head

of the row is reserved for Digu Deya, the clan god which is also offered a share of the feast. The next seat is occupied by the head of the clan, Thakali; and next to him are his juniors. The first nine seats, including that of the Digu Deya are ritually important. The order is: Digu Deya, Thakali, Nokuli, Sokuli, Pekuli, Nya-Kuli, and so on. The eight elders of the Guthi are known as *chhutee*, as stated elsewhere. After them, sit the Thakali Naki and Nokuli Naki. On the other end of the row a seat is reserved for the spirit of the house where the feast is being held. Families under joint ownership of property, though they may be living in separate households, are treated as a single unit for the purpose of this ritual feast.

In the feast every participant is served food on a *Sal*-leaf dish. In the middle of the dish is placed flattened rice (*bajee*) and over it, soyabean and ginger. *Chhoyala* meat is then served. These are the main items of the ceremonial feast, in addition to which other preparations may or may not be served.

Before eating, the ritual of *Deo-Chaya*, (offering to the deity) takes place. All participating members offer a little of the share of their food to Digu Deya. Liquor and *tho(n)* (rice beer) are profusely consumed. After *Chhoyala-Bhu*, everyone is prohibited from eating boiled-rice till the day of *Sl-raddha-Khunu* (Shraddha day). The following rituals are observed subsequently in connection with the *Dewali* worship :

- i) Digu-Kheya-Puja Wane-gu
- ii) Ko-la-ga
- iii) Sulhana
- iv) Shraddha-Khunu
- v) Deya-Tiuke-gu- bhari-Wai-gu.

The ceremony of *Digu-Kheya-Puja-Wane-gu* consists of going to the open field for worship and feasting where the *Dewali* deity has its shrine in an aboriginal condition.

It takes place in the day following the *Chhoyala-Bhu* feast. Early morning the members of the families undergo the ritual of purification, *Nisi-yæ-gu*, which also includes *ala-tayæ-gu* to be undergone by the womenfolk. On behalf of each of the families the worshipping material is sent to the house of the Thakali in a copper-pot called *Kala(n)*.

These copper pots are then put in a big brass or copper vessel to be carried to the Digu-Kheya. Among some sections of Newars, there is a tradition that each family should have its own arrangement to bring the *Kala(n)* to the Digu-Kheya.

The members of all the participating families, including small children, assemble in the house of the Thakali. The Digu Deya is then placed in an earthen vessel and worshipped by the Thakali. The Thakali then picks up one of the deities, the chief one (for there may be a number of deities). He then asks the other male members to pick up one each. All the deities are thereafter placed in a brass vessel and bathed. The deities and their ornaments are placed together in a basket and transferred to a *Khat*. In the *Khat* each deity is given an appropriate place. The priest is all the time in attendance.

After such preliminaries the procession starts. The positions of the members in the procession always follow a set pattern. At the head of the procession are the Kusle musicians, then comes a person dragging a goat for sacrifice. The Thakali, holding an earthen fire-pot, follows. Then come the men who carry the Digu Deya. It is said that women generally do not join in the procession, but reach the place of worship earlier. But it is also stated that there is no rule forbidding women from joining in the procession, except in the case of those who are under menstruation.

At the Digu-Kheya, the *Loo(n)* Digu representing the Dewali deity at the site, is washed. Over it a little rice is

placed and subsequently a dried fish called *Java chatu-Pi-Nya*.\* and some flowers. This fish is the most essential item in the Dewali worship. Each of the brass deities, *Lo(n) Digu* is mounted on the respective stone deities, *Loon(n) Digu*, the fish providing the *asana* or seat. The worship is done by the Thakali under the guidance of the priest. In the case of the poor classes or low caste Newars, the participation of a priest may not be essential and the Thakali himself becomes the leader-cum-priest. The worship of Dewali is preceded by worship of the Sun, Guheshwari, Jogini, Bhairava and Ganesh. Ganesh, Bhairava and Jogini are as usual represented, respectively, by the *Sukunda* (ceremonial lamp), *Anti* (a pot containing rice beer) and *Khaye Kuri* (a pot containing liquor). Besides, the ten *Digpalas* (divine sentinels) are also worshipped. After such preliminaries, the worship of the Dewali starts.

In front of each of the Dewali deities, a *Chaitya*-like object made out of pounded flattened rice is placed in a row. This object is known as *goja* in Newari. The *gojas* are offered a garland of hand-made thread and a burning incense stick is planted at the top of each of them. Flowers, fruits and duck's eggs are offered to them. Following it is the offering of worshipping materials brought on behalf of each of the families. The next step in the ceremony is to show the *Jwala Nahaeka* to the *Digu* deities. This is done by the Thakali. Over the *Jwala Nahaeka* a little of cow's milk is dripped from a conch-shell; some flowers are also showered over it as a token of worship. Cow's milk is sprinkled over the Dewali deities and the participating members also. Following it is *Swa(n)-Chhayegu* (offering of flowers). This is divided into two stages—first, only the Thakali offers flowers, and then the other members. The party is

\* This fish should always have its tail bent to the right.

formed into two separate rows—males and females, each taking his or her place according to age seniority.

If the Thakali is unable to participate in the worship, the Nokuli takes his place. In such cases, the details are somewhat different. He cannot offer flowers directly as the Thakali does. He has to offer the flowers with a bamboo staff which is held jointly by the priest and the Nokuli.

Flowers are placed on the bamboo pole and offered to the Dewali with the uttering of incantations by the priest. This is required only in respect of the Digu deity. Other deities can be offered flowers by the Nokuli without the priest or the pole.

The most important part of the worship is the sacrifice of a goat to Digu. In Newari it is known as *Digu Syaye-gu*. The goat is first worshipped. Water is sprinkled over its body, and the moment it shakes its body to get rid of the drops of water from its fur, it is caught held of and not allowed to shake itself for the second time. The goat is lifted and its belly is pressed against the left thigh of a person who kneels down on his left leg. The four limbs of the animal are pulled behind the back of the person and held together by another man. The killer holds the knife in his right hand and with his left hand he twists the neck of the goat, so as to expose its front part to the Digu deities. Then he thrusts the knife and slowly draws it across the neck of the goat till half-way, when he stops and allows the stream of blood to gush forth over the deities. Afterwards the neck is completely severed and placed on the ground with its snout facing the deities. A little rice along with a burning wick is placed on it. The belly of the goat is ripped open just below its hind legs. Its intestines are pulled out, cut off, inflated and put around the deities to serve as a garland.

Among the many sections of the Newars, the Kul

deity, which is also worshipped along with Digu or Dewali deities, is believed not to accept animal sacrifice. Many Newars have Buddha, Shiva, Machhendra or Narain as their Kul deity. In such cases, the vegetarian deities are kept apart in a basket a little away from the Digu deities. They are offered milk while Digu deities are offered the goat.

Just after the sacrifice of the goat, the *Bhau-Macha-Du-kaye-gu* ritual follows. This means introducing the daughters-in-law of the family to the Digu deities. All daughters-in-law who were married after the preceding Dewali worship have to be admitted into the clan group on this day. Unless this is done, none of them would become a full member of her husband's family. The daughters-in-law would be waiting outside, till the goat sacrifice is over. Then they are conducted to the place of worship with the rituals of *Do-Chhya-gu* and *Lusa-Kusa* and are instructed by the priest to offer to the Dewali a handful of rice, one pice and a betel-nut.

After the introduction of the daughters-in-law or *Bhau-Macha*, the joint offering of rice to Digu deities is performed. The daughters-in-law, thus admitted, have then to present the *Nisala* to the deities as well as to the chief elders of the group. *Nisala* is a big earthen pot containing *Bajee* (flattened rice), sweetmeat and two betel-nuts. The vessel is first offered to the deities, then to the priest, to the Thakali, and finally to the other elders of the group, the Thakali Naki and Nokuli Naki. When the presentation of *Nisala* is over, the priest draws a *teeka* mark on the forehead of each of the newly-admitted daughters-in-law. This is the only time when a man other than the husband draws a *teeka* on a Newar woman.

The next stage of the ceremony is *Samaya*, a ceremonial breakfast. Subsequently the main ceremonial feast takes place. The menu is the same as in all the other

ceremonial feasts. Even a new-born babe has to be given a full and equal share. Such shares are taken home by the guests. The ceremonial feast is followed by the *Sika-Bhu* ritual. The cult of *Sika-Bhu* is a unique feature among the Newars. It consists of the distribution of the various parts of the head of the sacrificed goat among the eight senior members of the group. The head is first cooked and its various parts are distributed in the following order:

Priest	—	Snout
Thakali	—	Right eye
Nokuli	—	Left eye
Sokuli	—	Right ear
Pekuli	—	Left ear
Nyakuli	—	Right side of the lower jaw
Khakuli	—	Left side of the lower jaw
Nhekuli	—	Tongue

They eat their respective shares on the spot, with profuse consumption of liquor and *tho(n)*. This ritual-eating is tabooed from being seen by others.

After sunset, the party returns home with the *De-wali* deity in a procession, headed by torch-bearers. At intervals, the party stops to rest and at each halt the deities are worshipped. This is known as *Leesa-Tayegu*, during which the dried fish, mentioned earlier, is distributed. It has to be swallowed, not chewed. The party stops at the *Pikha-Lukhee*, located in front of the house of the Thakali. With the performance of *Du-chhayegu* and *Lasa-Kusa* rituals, the deities are conducted into the house.

On the same night, *Mu-Digu-Puja* is performed, fol-



lowed by a ceremonial repast known as *Kalah-Wayegu*, a ritual performed to ward off the influence of the evil spirits. This ritual is performed during all ceremonial feasts, be it *Samaya* or *Bhoj*.

Next day the worship called *Ko-la-ga* is observed. On this occasion, the *Anti*, the *Khyai-Kuri* and the *Ghau-cha* are also worshipped. A ceremonial feast is held and those who do not partake of it may carry home their shares. The following day another feast is held for which *chewra* (flattened rice) and leaf dishes have to be brought by each member from his or her own home.

Dewali worship comes to an end with the performance of *Sraddha*. Usually held on the fourth day, it is performed in memory of those who had founded the Dewali Guthi. The Dewali is regarded as witness to the *Sraddha*, which takes place invariably in the house of the Thakali. Pindas of barley flour are offered to the souls of the founder-members and they are thrown into the river Vishnumati (in the case of residents of Kathmandu town), along with the sand used in the *Sraddha*. One man carries the pindas, while another carries a share of food, which, if possible, should be offered to a cow. Otherwise, the food is also thrown into the river along with the pindas.

While the person carrying the pindas is on his way to the holy river, a *Kusle* is offered cooked rice and a share of the feast. The number of shares received by the *Kusle* depends upon the number of souls to be propitiated. These rites are known as *Ja-Bwo* (offering of cooked rice) and *Kaula-Bwo* (offering of the feast). Only after the rites of *Ja-Bwo* and *Kaula-Bwo* have been performed would they eat *samaya*. Finally a feast is held in which only the heads of the member-families participate.

Next day, all the heads of the families assemble at the residence of the Thakali. The expenditure involved

is calculated. The amount spent in excess of the income of the Dewali Guthi is shared equally by all the heads of the member-families. If the expenditure is less than the income, the surplus is carried forward to the next year's account. On this occasion, too, a feast is arranged.

By the Sikhi-Nakha day (the sixth of the bright-half of *Jaistha*), all Newars should have completed the Dewali worship.

The period of Dewali coincides with the festivals such as *Bunga-ya*, *Machhendra Jatra*, *Buddha Jayanti* which have been described earlier. An important observance intervening this period is the *Matati-chare*, (Mother's Day), observed on the fourteenth of the dark-half of *Vaishakh*. On this day, the Newars observe the ritual of "seeing the face" of their mothers. The sons feast their mothers. Those who have lost their mothers go to the tank of Matatirtha to perform *Sraddha*.

The *Sikhi Nakha* day has its own importance. It is observed in honour of Kumar (brother of Ganesh) and, therefore, also called Kumar's Sixth. Further it is regarded as the day of Rama's victory over Ravana. On this day, especially the peasant Newars make an emblem of Kumar on the ground in front of the entrance of the house and worship it with black, green and *masur* pulse, mecca-beads and several kinds of Newar sweets. This worship is believed to bring protection from distress during the year. This day is, however, more popularly connected with cleaning of wells, after which it derives its name.

During the bright-half of *Vaishakh*, the most important celebration is the Buddha Jayanti on the full-moon day when the idol of Buddha is taken out in a procession. In it only the Buddha-margi Newars participate and it is a special feature of Kathmandu town.

In *Jaistha*, during its bright-half, a few festivals such

as *Dashehra* (on the tenth), *Jya-Punhi* and *Panauti-Snan* (on the full moon day) are quite significant. This *Dashehra* should not be confused with the popular festival following *Navaratra*. Its observance is marked by the eating of green vegetables of the year, besides involving worship of Ganesh and the Pithas. *Jya-Punhi* is observed on the full moon day, its main feature being the eating of *Chhusya-Musya*. *Musya* means black-soyabean which is widely cultivated in the Valley. *Chhusya-Musya* includes several kinds of fried seeds mixed with mustard oil and chilly-powder. On this occasion, married daughters are especially invited to participate in the feast.

Coming to the month of *Asadh* (June-July), there are a number of sectional festivals held in honour of the various gods and goddesses in the Valley. One among them is the *Trisul Jatra* at Deo Patan on the eighth of the dark-half of the month. The Newars call it *Macha-ya* which derives its name from an event connected with this festival. It is said that in the former days a child used to be balanced on a long *trisul* (trident). This practice has now been discontinued.

On the twelfth of the bright-half of the month, the planting of *Tulsi* is the chief religious activity of the Hindu Newars. The Buddhist Newars do not observe it. The month's events are rounded off by observing the Teacher's Day on the full-moon day. This is more popularly known as *Gu-Punhi*.

*Sravan* (July-Aug.) is of special significance both for the Hindu and Buddhist Newars. In Newari it is called *Gula*. The month is devoted by the Buddhist Newars to fasting and visiting the temple of Swayambhu Nath, while the Hindu Newars dedicate it to the worship of Pashupati. During this month, the Buddhists go every morning to the various Buddhist and Hindu shrines, such as of Ganesh, Bhairava and Kumari, accompanied by

their respective caste-music. The Vanras, Udas and Manandhars are especially noted for their devoutness during this month. During the bright-half of the month, the Buddhist Newars make clay cubes and immerse them in the waters of the Vishnumati. This rite is called *Lakha Chaitya Hawan*. The making of cubes starts on the first day of the month. Every day each of the households which are members of the *Gula Dharma Guthi* have to send one representative to the place where the ritual of making the cubes (*chaitya*) is performed. The house where this ritual is to take place is determined by rotation conforming to the age-seniority of the heads of the families. All the participating families should be of the same lineage group. Daily, the *chaityas* are made on behalf of each family and simultaneously a pilgrimage is made to the shrine of Swayambhu. By the time the month of *Gula* comes to an end, the number of clay *chaityas* is supposed to be a lakh and a quarter. A day before they are disposed, they are worshipped and *deep-dan* (lighted wick) offered on behalf of the families. On the final day, the *hawan* ceremony takes place in which a Gubhaju priest officiates. Besides the *chaityas*, several other deities are also worshipped. Two dishes with curd are placed to represent the sun and the moon, while a *kalash* (jug) containing *Panchamrit* represents *mangal*, auspiciousness. An earthen pot is placed to represent *Nag-Sadhana* (Control of the snake gods) as well. Ganesh, Bhairava, Guheshwari and Kumari are, as usual, represented and worshipped.

The worship is initiated by the head of the family on which the turn for the year has fallen. After puja, all the female members assemble to form a procession, each with a basket containing a few *Chaityas*. The women arrange themselves in the order of their social status, the Thakali Naki being at the head and the youngest woman taking her place at last. The procession proceeds to-

wards the river accompanied by caste-music. It has to pass through the route fixed for the funeral procession. On reaching the river, the clay cubes, all in one heap, are immersed in the waters. They are worshipped by circumambulating them. This ceremony is a counterpart of the Hindu ritual of the *Koti-Ahuti*. The important point to note about this ritual is that, although it is purely a Buddhist worship, the worship of Hindu deities with the use of liquor and buffalo-meat has become an integral part of it. The Hindu Newars may refrain from eating non-vegetarian food during the *Gula* (Sraavan) month, which, besides being a period of sacredness is crowded with important festivals like Gathe Mangal, Vanra Jatra, Nag Panchami, Gu-Puni (Rakhi Purnima) and Byancha Janake (frog worship). Of these, we take up here for review only the fourth and fifth, which have not been described so far. In common with the other Hindus, pictures of Nagas are pasted at the top of the door in every house on the Nag Panchami day. Especially the Jyapoo Newars appear to be more sentimentally attached to this festival. Nag-Panchami is believed to mark the end of the rainy season also.

Rakhi Poornima (the full-moon day of *Sraavan*) marks the completion of rice-planting. It is a day of great festivity which is notable for the eating of nine kinds of seeds. The festival is observed with a ceremonial bath early morning and by getting the Brahmin priest to tie a yellow thread round one's right wrist, a feature common both to Newars and Gorkhas. There is, however, a slight difference between these two communities with regard to the thread (*rakhi*) that is used. The Gorkha Brahmins use only the yellow thread, whereas the Deo Bhaju Brahmins tie to the yellow thread several tiny packets containing incense, *neem*-leaf, *gorochan*, vermilion, *Duba*-grass, mustard seeds, curd and rice.

It may be remarked that the cardinal attribute of Rakhi Poornima in India is the tying of *rakhi* by a sister on her brother's wrist. This is, however, not so in Nepal, where the *Kija-Pooja* (brother worship) in *Kartik* is the only occasion for the manifestation of reverence to brother. Frog-worship, as described earlier, and the eating of nine kinds of seeds mark the full moon day of *Sravan*.

While to the higher caste Newars Rakhi Poornima is the occasion to celebrate the departure of Krishna to the world below the earth, *Patal Puri*, to serve demon Bali, the lower caste Newars look upon it as the day of the triumph of virtue over evil; for it is believed that on this day another demon dies, the first one having already died on the Gathe-Mangal day.

The month of *Bhadra* (Aug-Sept) is replete with festivals and most of them are accompanied by observances in memory of dead relatives. We have already described the festivals of Gai Jatra, Krishna Jatra, Vanra Jatra and Linga Jatra. We need deal here only with four other festivals, namely Mata-Ya, Krishna's Eighth, the sacred bathing at Gokarna and Chatha or Ganesh Chaturthi or Ganesa's Fourth.

Mata-ya or the festival of lamps is especial to Patan. It takes place on the day after Gai-Jatra (the festival of cow), that is, on the second of the dark-half of *Bhadra*. Hundreds of Newars go round the city in a procession visiting the *chaityas* of the city and worshipping them. This festival derives its name from the practice of carrying a lamp by each of the participants. Of the people who mostly take part in it are the orthodox Buddhists such as the Vanras and Jyapoos of Patan.

Men participating in Mata-ya form several groups wearing different dresses and with *ghungru*\* tied to their

\* An anklet with numerous tiny bell-like pendants around it, intended to produce jingles, with the movement of legs.

ankles. Some of them disguise themselves as animals and jokers and create very comic scenes. Each of these mask-wearers is supposed to represent a demon who is said to have tried to disturb Gautama Buddha in his meditation. The men who dance often roll on the ground, which obviously results in bruises and bleeding of the knees and hands. The majority of participants, however, comprise women, each holding a burning lamp.

Mata-ya, like *Mata-Biyu-Wanegu* of Kathmandu, is an occasion dedicated to the memory of the dead and the female participants would be mostly from families in which a death may have occurred during the year. The difference between the Patan festival and its counterpart in Kathmandu is that in the former festival women carry lamps in their hands, as against the practice in Kathmandu of placing earthen lamps on the road.

With regard to the origin of Mata-ya festival, two different beliefs exist among the Newars. Firstly, it is regarded as a ritual to bestow peace upon the souls of the dead. This belief is strongly held by the Jyapoos. The second explanation is from the high caste Buddhists. According to them, it marks the atonement observed by the demons. The demons and evil spirits, having failed in their attempts to break the vow of Gautama Buddha, atone on this day for their sins. This explanation is, however, not so popular among the illiterate masses who hold the first belief.

Mata-ya has social significance, besides religious. It provides an occasion for making public comments on society and the individual. Some of the mask-wearers are especially cast for such roles. Any political or social event of the year which had met with the community's disapproval figure in this festival for criticism. In Kathmandu such criticisms are made during Indra-Jatra. This festival also serves as a means for publicity, since it

is a good occasion for mass-communication. It was the only occasion in the past for public comments to be made known when modern means of mass-communication, like the press and the radio did not exist in the Valley.

Krishna's Eighth is a favourite observance of the Newars. On this day, the Sivamargi Newars observe fast. The Krishna Mandir in Patan becomes the centre of attraction for the Hindus, where a fair is held. The popular way of Newar celebration of this day has, however, its own configuration. It is in the form of Krishna Jatra and the display of Krishna's pictures in the streets. Every street is decorated with numerous pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses, especially those connected with Krishna's life. The Jyapoo celebrate it with marked gaiety. The day is also marked by a procession round the city. In the procession Krishna, Balaram, Radha, gopis and gopinis are impersonated and they form the chief objects of attraction. On the next day a similar Jatra is held in Panga village in which the entire community participates.

The custom of sacred bathing at Gokarna on the last day of the dark-half of Bhadra is common among all the inhabitants of the Valley. Among the Newars this day is more popular as the day dedicated to one's own father, in whose honour a feast is held. Those who have lost their fathers go to have a dip in the river and offer pindas to the manes at Gokarna. The Hindu and Buddhist Newars and the non-Newar Hindus as well participate in it. The site of Gokarna derives its sacredness because of Gokarneshwar Mahadeo who presides over the bank of the Bagmati at a point where the sacred river takes a slightly northerly bend.

During the bright-half of Bhadra, Ganesh's Fourth is the first important sacred day for the Newars. Although the day is dedicated to Ganesh, its observance is



more popularly connected with quite a different feature. This day is known as *Chatha* among the Newars. In the morning Ganesh is worshipped with the offering of *laddu* (ball-like sweetmeat) and radishes. Soon after sunset, the Newars worship the moon without looking at it and later hide themselves in a room. None of them would be seen moving out, though the non-Newars do not mind going about their usual business. But the Newars are so tradition-bound that even the windows would be tightly closed, and if there are any cracks in the windows or doors, they would be tightly stuffed with cotton-pads. This is based on the belief that seeing the moon would result in bad luck, especially being accused of as a thief.

The worship of Basundhara-Devi is a Buddhist ritual and a popular festival. It takes place on the last day of Kumari Jatra (on the third of the dark-half of Ashwin, Sept-Oct.). In 1957, the day fell on November 12. In this worship a Vanra priest is employed and all families which belong to the same Dewali Guthi sit together to worship the goddess. All of them have to wear yellow clothes and take their seats in the order of their age-seniority. The worship is somewhat analogous to *Upakac-Hawane-gu*. After the puja, a grand feast is held. This worship is designed to bring in prosperity and wealth and therefore it concerns with the material welfare of the patrilineal group among the Buddhist Newars.

The month of Ashwin starts with the observance of *Pitri-Paksha*, a fifteen-day period sacred to the manes. During this period, the Hindu and Buddhist Newars offer Sraddha to their kin. The day on which the father died is selected. Pindas are offered to the manes and a feast is held afterwards. The offering of pindas is not restricted to one's own relatives: it is typical of the Newars to make use of the occasion for the offering of oblations to the King, and to the distinguished persons of

the locality, who might have died in the recent past. Oblations are also offered to the souls of the dead servants and domestic pets. As stated elsewhere, the pindas are made of barley-flour; not rice. The relatives whose souls have to be offered pindas come within seven generations both on the mother's and the father's sides. The rite is officiated in by a priest. Thus we find that the offering of oblation on this occasion is designed for the unity of kin, locality and the country.

The next important event is on the fourteenth of the dark-half of Aswin. It is marked by the worship of Bhairava and Pithas. This day is especially sacred to the Newars who have their *Agama* deities. It is also the day when esoteric rituals are briskly observed and worship is offered at the *Smashanas*. But these rituals are mostly confined to the Bajracharyas (Buddhist priests), the Achaju and Joshi sub-castes, they being connected with the tantric practices leading to the worship of *Shaktis* and *Shaktas*.

In the lunar half of Ashwin there is a series of festivals. Of these one is Navaratra. It is a great occasion for the Newars as well as non-Newars. Faith in Buddhism does not come in the way of its celebration by the Buddhamargi Newars. Taken as a whole, Navaratra, along with Dasai (n) (commonly called Dashehra in India), is regarded as the national festival, just as Indra Jatra and Machhendra Jatra are regarded as national festivals by the Newars. Though this celebration among the Newars and the non-Newars is not different with regard to its general pattern, there are two different configurations of celebrations as between these two communities.

The general pattern of celebration is represented by the Gorkhas. On the first day, in every Nepalese house, the ceremony of *Ghata Sthapna* is performed. It is entirely a domestic observance confined to one's own house-

Idol. On the Ghata Sthapna day, an idol of Bhagwati is installed for a nine-day worship. A dark room is assigned to the idol; it is known as *Dasai(n)-ghar*. An earthen pitcher painted in white and yellow stripes represents the *Kalash*. Over the *Kalash*, a handful of rice is kept in a dish and over it, is mounted the icon of Bhagwati. In a corner of the room, a mixture of barley and maize seeds is sown with a view to having yellow seedlings by the tenth day. The desired colour of the sprouts is caused by covering the seeds with a vessel. The deity, mounted on the kalash, is worshipped for all the nine days with the offerings of ducks, boiled eggs, and a mixture of flattened rice and parched rice, called *Samai-Bajee*. All the arms and weapons of the household are also worshipped during Navaratra. Animal sacrifice is made daily. Goats and buffaloes for sacrifice are largely imported from the Tarai. The eighth and the ninth nights are special occasions for a greater number of sacrifices. Every day when a goat is sacrificed it has to be preceded by the sacrifice of a *Kushmand* (white pumpkin). The cutting of a white pumpkin is held by the Nepalese as of the same significance as the sacrifice of an animal.

Ashtami, the eighth day, is a great occasion, for, this is when the *Phoolpati* procession is taken out. Every one looks his best and joins in the procession to receive Phoolpati which starts from an appointed place. A brahmin, donned in yellow garment and with Phoolpati on his shoulders, awaits for being received by the procession. Phoolpati consists of a plantain tree and a sugarcane tied together. From the top of it dangles a basket wrapped in yellow cloth. The basket contains a pair of bel-fruits, some pieces of sugarcane, flowers, a conch and a *damru*. The procession, amidst music, goes to receive phoolpati. When phoolpati arrives home, it is kept by the side of the Dashehra deity. The same

night, a goat or a buffalo is sacrificed. This night is known as *Kalrati*, the night of sacrifice. Again on the ninth day, popularly called *Naumi* or Navaratri, animal sacrifice is offered to Bhagawati.

While the description just given conforms to the general pattern of the Navaratra celebration of the Gorkhas, there is a little variation in its royal celebration, which involves the worship of the kul-deity of the present ruler of Nepal who is a Gorkha. The notable feature of it is that phoolpati is brought every year on the seventh day of Navaratra from the town of Gorkha, his original home. When phoolpati is brought to the Valley, its procession starts from Rani Pokhari, Queen's tank, on the eighth day. This is a state event and all Government officials, even if they are Newars, have to be present in the procession. While the bringing of Phoolpati from outside the Valley shows the greater cultural attachment of the present ruling family with the town of Gorkha, the participation by the Newars in it indicates their cultural link in a non-Newar event.

In addition, the Gorkha part of the animal sacrifice representing the state is done on a huge scale in the historic quadrangle of Kot on the ninth morning. All the regiment flags and arms are put up for display at Kot. A large number of goats and buffaloes are sacrificed to the flags. Formerly, every senior State-official had to donate a buffalo and every junior employee a goat for sacrifice at Kot. Now this has been made incumbent only on the senior officials.

The tenth day is known as *Dasai(n)-teeka*, the day for putting the teeka mark. By then the barley and maize seeds will have sprouted into yellow plants which are pulled out and used as the main item in the teeka-ritual. People go to the houses of their relatives to have teeka put on their foreheads. Among the Gorkhas, cus-

tom warrants that every one who is junior in age, should go uninvited to have teeka from the hands of his seniors. A person failing to do so is regarded as having cut off his social relations. The teeka ceremony consists in getting smeared on one's forehead a mixture of vermilion, rice and curd, and receiving a bunch of the yellow plants. A feast follows; and the festival of Dashehra comes to an end. Later, in the afternoon, Phoolpati and Ghata Sthapna are immersed into the sacred river. For this purpose, again a procession is formed which proceeds with Phoolpati towards the bank of the river. So far as the royal Phoolpati is concerned, it terminates at the Rani Pokhari. The royal Kalash is taken back to Gorkha the same night.

The Navaratra and Dashehra celebrations by the Newars do not differ in their general pattern from that of the Gorkhas. But there are marked differences in the details of rituals involved. The Phoolpati-procession does not exist in the Newar celebration. Besides, their Dashehra celebration as a community event is woven round goddess Talleju. On the eighth and the ninth day goddess Talleju receives a lot of buffalo sacrifices. The Newars have to ritually participate in the propitiation of Talleju. Such privileges, are not available to the non-Newars.

The Newar domestic celebrations of Navaratra and Dashehra are restricted to one's own consanguineal relatives. The main worship during Navaratra is performed in the house of the eldest male member of the patrilineal group. But each individual family has also his own arrangement for worship. The puja starts as usual with the ceremony of Ghata-Sthapna which they call *Nata Same*. This is followed by the worship of the Kul-deity in which all the members of the family participate. The worship continues till the Dashehra day. The objects of worship include, in addition to the Dashehra deity, the Sukunda,

Anti, Ghaucha, Pathi (corn-measuring pot), Khukri, and Khadga (cutlass). Professional tools and implements are also included. Each of these objects of worship is mounted on a heap of rice. In front of each of the deities are placed small cones, made out of a paste of flattened rice, which is typical of the Newars. The worship is performed by the head of the family, without the assistance of a priest, and admission to the place of worship is granted to the members of the family only.

On the eighth, ninth and tenth day, the worship is on a much larger scale with the sacrifice of goats and ducks. The Eighth is especially noted for a ritual feast known as *Kuchhi Bhuve* besides a worship involving animal sacrifice. The feast consists of a measure of *Bajee*, in addition to the usual feast items. This is also the day when the *Sika Bhu* ritual takes place. But it is confined to one's own family. If any consanguine fails to attend this feast all the social and ceremonial obligations of the family in respect of that person are regarded to have ceased to exist.

The ninth is characterised by another domestic feast called *Syako-Tyako* when the *Sika-Bhu* ritual takes place again. In both the feasts, that is, on the eighth and ninth day, married daughters are the most important invitees. But they are not given admission to the Dashehra room, since they do not belong to their parents' Dewali group.

On the tenth day, the main ritual consists, as among the Gorkhas, of applying teeka. In the morning the final worship takes place. The details of the puja and of the teeka ceremony in each individual household are exactly as stated in the following lines. The head of each of the patrilineal collateral families, having finished Dashehra worship and teeka ceremony in their households, assemble at the house of the Thakali to participate in the main

worship. The Thakali in whose house the Puja is being conducted heads the function. All the members worship jointly by offering rice and flowers to the deities. This ceremony is known as *Swan-Chhwaye-gu*. Then the next senior male among the participants collects the flowers that are already offered and the yellow seedlings in a brass vessel. This is called *Swan-Kawa-Kayegu*. Next, the Thakali picks up one object of worship at a time and hands it over to the male members in their order of seniority. Each of them bows down before the Thakali to show respect. These objects of worship and feast materials are taken to the top-floor where the feast is to take place.

Before the feast, the teeka ceremony takes place. The red and white cloth pieces, after having been offered to the Dashehra deity, are cut longitudinally and given to every member to tie round the neck. The Thakali subsequently draws a teeka mark, made of a mixture of rice, curd and vermilion, on the forehead of the members. After this he presents to each of them a bunch of the yellow barley seedlings. They bow down before him respectfully.

An additional feature of the celebration of *Dashehera* among the Newars is the display of *khadga*. Every male member of the family holds a *Khadga* (cutlass) and comes out of the room brandishing it as if he were under a trance. They are believed to be possessed for the moment by the spirit of Kali or Bhadrakali. They move about in the house and retire again into the worship-room.

Apart from these marked variations, the mode of animal sacrifice, too, is somewhat different at the Talleju temple from that adopted at the Kot court-yard. In the Newar mode of sacrifice the head of the animal is not severed at one stroke. The animal's limbs are tied and a wound is inflicted on its neck so as to allow a stream of

blood to gush forth. Only then is the animal's head severed. On the tenth day a fair takes place in the morning at the main temple of Talleju. Thousands of devotees, mostly Newars, come there to worship the goddess. There they first worship the trident of Talleju and circumambulate the temple three times before they go near the deity.

Dashehra day is further marked by a number of *Khadga Jatras* when impersonators of Bhadra Kali, Bhairava, Kumari, Ganesh, Barahi and others go about in a procession with cutlasses in their hands. This is called *Pa-ya*. These processions are too many and mostly participated in by the Gathoo and Jyapoo castes.

Soon after the end of Dashehra, two important festivals follow in Kathmandu on the twelfth of the same month. These are Ganesh Jatra and Annapurna Jatra. The last mentioned festival is connected with the agricultural life of the people. The deity, whose temple stands at Bhotaihity tole in Kathmandu town, as stated elsewhere, is represented not by an idol of the goddess but by the paddy-measuring pot, *Pathā*. The fag-end of Ashwin brings to the Newars the first harvest of paddy and, therefore, the festival of Annapurna has obviously its great significance. In other places where there is no temple of Annapurna, the storing of harvest is celebrated by propitiating Ganesh of the locality. It is also the occasion for eating *yo-marhi* cakes, after offering it to Bunga deya.

We now note here the festival of *Bhoota-Mali-Boye-Ke-gu*, the flying of kite. It starts with the beginning of Ashwin and lasts for the whole month. It is equally popular among the Gorkhas. It has been stated that Kite-flying is one of the aids to the "fathers" to depart to their abode and be with the sun in its northern course.<sup>1</sup> The Newars have their own interpretation regarding this. According to them, it signifies an effort on the part of Manjusri's teacher to establish contact with some person



by name Bharabharaju, who was then observing his penance in the Himalayas. Bharabharaju then flew to China like a kite. Kite-flying, in addition, is believed to bring in prosperity to the family.

During Kartik, Akash-Deep is one of the popular festivals in the Valley among the Hindus. It commences on the full-moon day and lasts upto the fifteenth of the dark-half of Margsir. It is known as *Ala-Mata* among the Newars. Ghurye, who refers to it as a feature of the Indo-Aryan culture, says that its original purpose was to enable the 'fathers', who had returned from their earthly homes, to reach their heavenly abode,<sup>2</sup> although its scriptural meaning was to please Lord Vishnu.<sup>3</sup> So far as the Newars are concerned this festival of raising high the sky-lamp is a feature of the Shrestha and Chhatharia castes only. The majority of them, especially the Jyapoos, do not observe this festival. The Manandhar caste has, however, adopted it recently under the influence of Hinduism. In the town of Kathmandu the sky-lamps are put in two ways. It is either erected on the ground close to the front wall of the house, the lamp just reaching the window; or on the terrace. In contrast with the Newars, the Gorkhas put up such sky lamps near the *tulsi* plant. It is an additional feature with them to put up a *patal*-lamp side by side. This *patal*-lamp represents the lamp in the world below the earth. It is done by placing an earthen lamp in a small ditch just at the base of the pole of the sky-lamp.

Along with the festival of *Ala-mata*, there is another festival which appears to be the counterpart of the sky-lamp, and finds its popularity among the Jyapoos. It is known as *Yo(n)-Si-mata*. A big wooden pillar is erected during the lunar half of Kartik. Every night a lamp is lighted on its top. It is generally put up at the cross-roads, but preferably in front of a temple. The common

belief centred round this observance is that it enables the soul of the dead to go to heaven just as king Harischandra was enabled by Indra to go to heaven. *Yo(n)-Si-Mata* is, however, on the wane. The month of Kartik is equally sacred to the Buddhists. Pieces of red-cloth, known as *jhalar*, is put up over the *chaityas* during this month.

The last four days of the dark-half of Kartik are also important. The first day is marked by the festival of *Kisi-Puja* or elephant worship. It is also the day when Ganesh is worshipped. The specific use of the term *Kisi* (elephant) is perhaps suggestive of the olden days when Ganesh had not shed its more primitive form. Elephant is, however, rare in the Valley. It is, therefore, substituted by the worship of Ganesh.

The thirteenth of the dark-half of Kartik is dedicated to the worship of the crow. It is not a feature exclusive to the Newars. All the Nepalese worship the crow on this day. The fourteenth of the month is dedicated to the worship of dogs as described elsewhere. The last day of the dark-half of the month is the last day of the Newar year. It is also the day marked by the worship of the cow in the morning and goddess Laximi at night. It is a feature common to all the inhabitants of the Valley. It is more popularly known in India as Diwali. In every household goddess Laximi is worshipped. An additional feature of this celebration is the placing of lamps on buildings for illumination.

Thus the round of the year having been completed, the first of the bright-half of Kartik heralds the Newar New Year as described in the beginning of the present chapter.

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2. Ibid, p. 64.
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## 15. CONCLUDING REMARKS

**N**OW that we have given a fairly detailed account of the Newars, we would here recapitulate some of the salient features that distinguish their society. We have seen that though the Newars are fewer, as compared with the Gorkhas, they are a culturally-dominant community. Their high material culture and the existence of specialised artisan groups among them enable the Newars to make all the other ethnic groups of Nepal dependent on them.

Racially they reveal themselves as a complex of many elements. That the earliest inhabitants of India are responsible for their racial as well as cultural substratum may not be ruled out. This is fairly suggested by an analysis of their culture as well as some physical traits noticeable among some of the low caste Newars.

In addition, despite their pronounced mongoloid traits, the whole complex of traits reveal their closer affinities with a people living in the distant south-west India. The traditions of migrations among them also lend support to such a view. This is further strengthened by the fact that many of the cultural traits of the Newars are found diffused in the entire territory where the western mesaticephals predominate.

Protected in the mountain fastness of the Valley of

Kathmandu, the ancestors of the present Newars had evolved from the very early times a culture which represented a synthesis of traits incorporated from different sources. This culture, though many of its traits are also found among the Gorkhas, is oriented towards emphasizing peacefulness, toleration, compromise and the cultivation of the artistic sense. The absence of express physical aggression in the Newar has invited for him from the Gorkhas such epithets as "coward" and "timid". It is to be noted that when two cultural groups meet, one as the conqueror and the other as the conquered, the latter normally suffers from some handicaps. But the Newars have shown the strength of their culture inasmuch as they have outlived their cultural conquest by the dominant group. At the same time, instead of blindly imitating other cultures, they have assimilated traits from them. They have in a way even influenced the cultural tradition of Nepal. Such a strength of culture can result only from a tight group-control over the individual. Complete integration of the members of the community is sought through a large net-work of feast-dominated institutions, which are not found among the other ethnic groups of Nepal. The scope for breaking away from the norms of the society is limited. An aberrant course may be taken up by an individual only at the cost of complete social isolation which will make his life miserable and his personality debased. The lack of any concerted action to effect change in the traditional norms is in evidence.

The social organisation of the Newars is unique in the sense that it maintains two different wings of the Buddhist and Hindu groups. Mutual toleration and respect between the two religious groups are amply reflected in their behaviour. But friendly attitude towards each other is not so much due to the conscious realization of religious truth as to the common body of deities which these religions share between themselves.

The Newar religion is predominantly motivated by the desire for material gains. It is not the other world that matters so much as this world. The foundations of religion are fear and strong appetite for earthly pursuits. The divinities of practical importance are the *Ajimas* (various forms of mother-goddesses of the lower order), Bhairavas, Ganesh, Bhimsen and a host of malignant spirits. The lower aspects of the pantheon, it needs be noted, overwhelmingly characterise their religion. Another remarkable feature of the religious complex is the female role given to some of the male deities at certain religious rites. Mother-worship is carried to the extreme of worshipping the living human female in the form of Kumari. All this may suggest the probability of matrilineal organisation among them.

Religion is further characterised by the functional relation of castes. The grip of caste in Newar culture is so strong that even the Buddhist section is characterised by it. Caste is based on occupational groupings. Formerly, each caste was associated with certain types of hereditary functions — some relating to religious events and others to the community. Such a functional interdependence of the double order bespeaks the well-knit internal integration of the Newar community. Though the non-religious occupations associated with the castes are now much in flux, those of religious character still endure.

Caste is again characterised by the merging of the different sub-castes into a larger whole, consequent on the disappearance of their respective hereditary occupations. On the other hand different status-groups have come to merge themselves into an endogamous group. This is mainly due to the loss of original status as a result of the alliance with women of lower status-groups. The loss of original status comes about according to the prevailing custom of relegating a child born of such

alliance to the status-group of its mother. This also explains the steady numerical decline of the higher castes.

While caste sets the outer limit beyond which a person is not permitted to marry, it is not necessarily a group within which complete commensality prevails. From the point of view of food, only the *bhoj* type of inter-dining is permitted. In matters of *kachha* food, interdining is confined to the circle of relatives only.

Hypergamous sentiment rules to such an extent that aberrant sexual unions are without punitive consequences. At the same time anti-hypergamous union — the *pratiloma* marriage of the Hindu law books — is possible. But the woman loses her parental caste. Caste segregation is manifested through the institutions of *Sana Guthi* and *Dewali Guthi* both of which impose restrictions on inter-dining during ceremonial feasts.

It is, therefore, not possible to say that caste is losing its hold among the Newars. There is no sign of a notable change in the traditional sentiments for caste. There are, of course, a few cases of educated Newars who have contracted inter-caste alliances. But these cases do not meet with the approval of the society and are so much looked down upon by the caste-elders that such women and their children are debarred from the paternal caste-privileges.

Marriage is in essence a civil contract and the traditional values in this respect prevail. The mock-marriage (*yihee*) of a Newar girl with god Narain is not different in its objective from the *talikettu-kalyanam* of a Nair girl. The mock-marriage gives the Newar girl the sanction for divorce in her later life. Though divorce and remarriage are not favoured in practice by the high caste Newars under the force of Gorkha tradition, they are still recognized by the society. Consensus is not in favour of its abolition. Thus the status of a woman is not affected by her remarriage. We have seen that the kinship

terms bear ample testimony to the existence of polyandry among the Newars in the past.

A Newar marriage is characterised by the customary belief that parents should not bother about searching for a mate for a daughter. The customs of *gue-bi-ye-gu* and *lakha-bi-ye-gu* clearly suggest the payment of bride-price. The sharing of *lakha* by the relatives of the bride's parents may suggest group-ownership of women. In practice, however, such a feature bespeaks the strong bond existing among the kin through mutual rights and obligations.

The insignificant role of the bridegroom in a Newar marriage may be noted. He does not emerge on the scene till the bride enters her family of orientation. Till that period it is the *thakali* of the bridegroom's consanguineal group or his father who is the centre of attraction. We may say that either the *thakali* or the father of the bridegroom heads the marriage-procession and brings the bride home, signifying her handing over to the bridegroom. It is, however, to be noted that in some cases the bridegroom accompanies the marriage procession. But it is merely a novelty without any ceremonial significance.

The customary practice recognised by the society under which a boy can elope with a girl is quite remarkable inasmuch as the bond thus created is considered on a par with the traditional marriage. Changes in the Newar marriage customs, if at all they are felt, are in a different direction compared with the Gorkhas. The Newars favour *swyamvara* marriage and they do not seem to be at all influenced by the Hindu marriage rites followed by the Gorkhas. This is a trend which is in striking contrast with the direction of change in the social customs of the non-Brahminic castes in India. In India such castes are often found to imitate the customs and manners followed by the higher castes with a view to rising in the social

scale. But the Newars do not appear to favour such an imitation — not at least in their marriage customs.

The strong preference for territorial endogamy is another feature of the Newars. This feature seems to be closely related to the variety of roles that a married woman has to fulfil in her family of birth. Such roles demand that a woman's family of orientation be in close physical proximity with her family of birth. A child generally spends much of its time in its maternal uncle's house, where it is treated with unusual affection by the members of the family; and is allowed to enjoy liberty to a great extent. All these show that though a Newar woman on marriage breaks her residential continuity in her parents' family, she comes to live in her parents' home very frequently.

A traditional Newar family is rendered typical by its unusual numerical strength as well as the range of relationship it covers. We find that the large-sized joint family is still favoured by the Newars. In this matter a parallel to the Newars can be found among the Tharus. Though a joint family of more than fifty members is not so common now, families of 20 to 30 members are common. The tendency to form joint families is seen to be stronger among the economically better-off classes than among the poor. It could also be found that the large-sized joint family is more favoured by the urban Newars than the agricultural Newars. This is perhaps again due to the low economic condition of the peasants. From the point of view of relationship the usual joint family consists generally of three generations : married brothers, their married and unmarried sons and married or unmarried grand-children. A divorced daughter and her minor children are also members of the family.

In a Newar family the gradation of age and generation is strictly adhered to in matters of mutual behaviour and privileges. Newar housewives are evaluated of their



worth in terms of their capacity for hard work. This is especially significant when we take into account the fact that the traditional out-look does not very much favour the employment of domestic servants. When the strength of the household is, say, above twenty, the burden of cooking, laundering and other domestic chores cause drudgery for the women folk. The trend of higher education among women has brought about a conflict-situation in this regard.

The common causes for the break-up of the joint family are the unwieldiness of the household, conflict among the wives, and their inadaptability to the traditional values set upon them by mothers-in-law. In a Newar family the mother-in-law's authority is so absolute that a fairly large proportion of divorces seem to be caused by the intervention of this relative.

The Newar society is notable for its numerous *Guthi* institutions which grant membership to the individual house-hold groups. These Guthis divide the Newars horizontally in a number of groups for achieving different objectives. Of these, the caste-Guthis and the Fukee-Guthis are most effective as regards group control. The *Dewali Guthi*, the main *Fukee Guthi*, is the real means of upholding the norms of the society. This feature speaks for the well-knit functioning of the patrilineal solidarity within the frame-work of caste.

The entire net-work of social relations in the Newar community is kept strong through the feasts and festivals under the auspices of the various *guthis*. These feasts and festivals are numerous. They are not so much religious as are social. It is through the participation in these feasts that a Newar individual enjoys the protection of the society. Solidarity is sought to be maintained through the feasts and festivals on four different levels-- family, patrilineal grouping, caste and community. On the other hand, the feasts and festivals not only effect

the integration of the different living individuals but also act as a bridge between the living and the dead. In the Newar social organisation, the living and the dead both go to make the social group.

Feasts and festivals involve expenditure on a lavish scale. From the economic point of view, they are becoming a burden on the community. Alongside, the introduction of modern consumer goods has created new needs and these cannot be met without curtailing the expenses on the traditional items. The extent to which the feasts and festivals undergo changes reflects itself in the new relationship between the individual and the group. Such changes may be considered an index of the changes that may take place in the Newar family.

Thus the sum total of Newar culture-traits goes to make such an institutional complex that there is complete integration of the individual with the society. The rigidity is too orthodox, while the ceremonials are elaborate and rich. Aberrant individuals find themselves completely rooted out of the rich life offered by the society. However, the traditional features face many challenging factors that have recently come to exist. What will be the direction of change in the traditional values of the Newars is difficult to say at present.

The exit of oligarchy in 1950 took away a number of social and civil handicaps from which the Newars formerly suffered. Now they are no more a conquered people. They constitute an influential section of the Nepalese community. The new political set-up and the sudden opening of the Valley to the outsiders have altered the old, existing ethnic relationships. Combined with this the spread of modern education is bringing in new ideas which are in conflict with the traditional values.

Another factor, which has influenced Newar life is the introduction of the radio and the cinema. Till 1950,

these media were the monopoly of a few and were controlled by the Rana oligarchy. At the time of this study there were six cinema houses in the valley — four in Kathmandu and one each in Bhatgaon and Patan. Radio has become a very common thing. Newspapers, too, have sprung up. These means of dissemination of news and ideas were rare till the recent past. The younger generation is being attracted towards the new ways of life. Whatever is exciting is more appealing to the young people of the Valley. On the other hand the net-work of the Newar institutional complex demands obedience from the younger generation. Therefore, there exists a conflict-situation.

The role expected by the traditional norms is in direct conflict with the aspiration of the younger people for greater individualism. This is particularly noticeable in relation to women. As the married Newar women have to bear the burden of household duties under the the strict surveillance of their mothers-in-law whose authority is great, they are finding it difficult, if educated, to compromise with their notions of freedom. In many other matters as in this, there is conflict between the two sets of values. Perhaps it is due to such a state of value-conflicts that crimes have increased.

Another noticeable trend concerns the numerical proportion of Newars in the Valley. Writing on the 'Plural Societies in Sikkim', Nan Chie has pointed out that as a result of the polygynous habit of the Nepalese and polyandry among the Lepchas of Sikkim the rate of increase in population is much higher among the Nepalese than among the natives.<sup>1</sup> This is a feature in Nepal as well. Of the mongoloid tribes some are polyandrous and others monogamous, while the Gorkhas are polygynous. Therefore, the rate of increase in population is higher among the Gorkhas than among the mongoloid groups. In relation to Newars also, the Gorkhas have a

higher rate of increase in population, since, as we have discussed earlier, the majority of Newars practise monogamy. This feature may in course of time affect the numerical proportion of the Newars in the Valley. Migration into the Valley is an additional factor contributing to such a trend.

The upward trend in the population of the Valley creates pressure on land for housing as well as agriculture. The Valley has already a high density and the demand for housing can be met only by encroachment on the agricultural land. This is likely to tell upon Newar peasants who do not like to settle down outside the Valley.

For the increasing population, the sources of employment are only the Government services and trade, besides agriculture, as modern industry has not taken roots in the Valley. But these available avenues of employment are being scrambled for by people from all parts of Nepal. Competition of this nature did not exist to such a degree in the past. In the sphere of trade, keen competition comes from the Indian Marwaris who steal a march over the local Newar traders by virtue of their larger capital resources and greater amount of business-skill. On the other hand, the Newari artisans are slowly abandoning their hereditary occupations in favour of more gainful employment. This brings us to another point: namely the need to preserve their craft-skill which had made them a widely famed people.

Although the emergence of political parties has given rise to a new type of solidarity which cuts across the loyalty to one's own ethnic group, it is yet not so strong enough as to counteract group-nationality. Particularly, the values possessed by the Gorkhas and the Newars are so much in contradiction that the political parties as a single factor are unable to prevent segregation among them. Segregation of this kind is also found among the other ethnic groups of Nepal. Each group has a world of its

own and loyalty to one's own group is stronger than the loyalty directed towards inter-community solidarity.

#### REFERENCE

1. The Japanese Journal of Ethnology, Vol. 22, p. 16.

## GLOSSARY

*Aga(n)-bo* : Food items offered to the goddess of small-pox, *Ajima*, at the time of birth-rite.

*Aila* : Liquor.

*Aitha* : A kind of sweet-meat.

*Aja* : Collyrium.

*Aji* : The professional local mid-wife; also a term applied to designate a grand-mother.

*Ajima* : Goddess of small-pox and infant diseases. *Ajima* is regarded by the Buddhists as the mother of Sakya Sinha (Gautama the Buddha). She is believed to have six more sisters. The Newars classify seven types of poxes.

*Akash Deep* : A festival held during the month of *Kartik-Ashwin*. It consists in raising a sky-lamp high.

*Ala-mata* : See *Akash Deep*.

*Ala-ta-ye-gu* : A ritual act of colouring the toes and fingers of women by a *Naini*, a female barber. In every Newar ceremony it forms the main part of purificatory rite.

*Ampah* : Four clay-vessels used for ritual purpose in the festival of *Pachali-Bhairava*.

*Angu* : A ring; derived from *Anguthi*.

*Anti* : A long-necked jug with rice-beer used for representing *Bhairava*.

*Argha* : Seven copper vessels used in rituals.

*Argha-jal* : A marked place on the ground-floor where the dying person is placed; it is synonymous with Brahmanal.

*Ashwaratha-rohan* : Part of the second old-age ritual; takes place at the age of 99 years, 9 months, 9 days, 9 hours, 9 *palas* and 9 *ghadis*. The initiate is drawn in a car through the streets.

*Ashta Matrikas* : The eight mother-goddesses.

*Ati-Daye-ke-gu* : A death-rite on the 10th day; mourners go to the nearest river for a ceremonial bath.

*Awa* : Also called Awal. It is an occupational group of brick-makers; also a sub-division of Udas.

*Ba-Fukee* : Agnatic members who have opted out of the circle of *Dewali Guthi*. Literally it means those who have become 'away' (*Ba*).

*Bahal* : The former monasteries where the Buddhist ascetics used to dwell. They are now homes of the Vanras; also called *Vihar*.

*Bahi* : An arm-ornament for women; also called *baju*.

*Bahu-Muta* : The ritual of taking out in procession a structure of bamboo-sticks with a number of lighted lamps on it; practised by Manandhars in Kathmandu. It is a cult connected with the dead.

*Bajee* : Flattened rice called *Chewra* in Nepali.

*Bala-Charhe* : A sacred day on the 14th of the dark-half of *Margasir*.

*Bali-piye-gu* : A purificatory rite for those who return from the cremation ground.

*Bali-Taye-gu* : Offering of food to evil spirits.

*Bal Kumari* : A deified female being worshipped as a form of Durga or Bhagwati.

*Bara* : A kind of delicacy of ritual importance.

*Barha* : Puberty ceremony; for seven days the girl is confined to a dark room occulted from the males.

*Barha-chhui-gu* : Ceremony of filling the lap of a girl

with a mixture of rice and paddy. It is a purificatory rite concerning the puberty-pollution of a girl.

*Barha-Chane-gu*: Observing the *Barha* when a girl actually gets her first menses.

*Barha-Khya*: A sub-variety of *Khya* (female-spirit) who is believed to dwell in a house where a girl has died during her *Barha*; worshipped daily during eleven days when a girl is observing *Barha*.

*Barha Taye-gu*: Puberty rite to be observed before a girl has her first menses.

*Barkhi*: Mourning for one year during which the chief mourner has to be in white-dress.

*Bassi-kachha*: Leaves of peach.

*Bhau-Pwa*: Bhau=cat; Pwa=hole; A large opening on the front roof of the house.

*Bata*: A big copper vessel.

*Bau-pee*: Ritual of pacifying the evil spirits.

*Bee-Bha*: Nine leaf-dishes containing respectively a special type of paddy called *Swa(n)-Wa*, gahat pulse, black soyabean, red mass-pulse, rice, mustard seeds, black til, barley and peas; these are used for ritual purposes.

*Benke*: Ritual-purification.

*Bhaja(n)*: A pot usually used for carrying worship-material.

*Bhalincha*: A kind of pot containing oil-cake mixed with mustard oil, paddy, a few blades of grass and meat. It has a ritual purpose.

*Bhamba*: A sub-caste among the *Ektharia* Newars.

*Bhau-Macha-Du-Kaye-gu*: The ritual of introducing a new daughter-in-law of the family to the Digu deity.

*Bhimpati*: A plant worshipped by the Buddhist Newars; it is the counterpart of the *tulsi* plant.

*Bhim-Ratha-Rohan*: A ritual in the first old-age ceremony, at the age of 77 years, 7 months, 7 days, 7 *palas* and 7 *ghadis*.



- Bhimsen-Guthi* : An institution connected with the worship of Bhimsen.
- Bhina-masta* : Circle of nephews and nieces.
- Bhincha* : Sister's son.
- Bhoota-mali-Boye-ke-gu* : The festival of flying kites; starts with the commencement of *Ashwin* and lasts for the whole month; is motivated by the Buddhist belief—at least in Nepal—that it is a means of contacting the dead ancestors.
- Bhui-Phasi* : Cucirbita Pepa.
- Bhuta* : A spirit or ghost.
- Bhuti-sa* : A place in Kathmandu believed to be the dwelling place of ghosts and spirits.
- Bicha-Fa-ye-gu* : The ceremony of offering condolences by the relatives of a bereaved family.
- Bijli Guthi* : An institution connected with the worship of the *Pithas*.
- Bosala* : A spirit which is said to appear as a white horse; regarded to be the giver of riches.
- Bow-Taye-gu* : An act of placing a small quantity of wash-water of rice, turmeric powder and black-mass pulse at the nearest cross-roads to ward off evil spirits.
- Boxi* : A term applied to a woman practising black-magic.
- Brahmanal* : The place where a dying-man is placed to rest and breathe his last.
- Bulla* : A variety of meat preparation.
- Bunga-Nha* : Sacred bath at the Bungamati on the first of the dark-half of *Baisakh*.
- Bunga-ya* : A festival held on the first of the bright half of *Baisakh* at the Bungamati river.
- Burha-Junko* : Old-age initiation ceremony; takes place thrice in the life-time of an individual.
- Bu-Sa-kha* : Hair cutting ceremony.
- Byancha-Janake* : Festival connected with the wor-

ship of frog: It is held on the *Rakhi-Poornima* day (*Gum Punhi*).

*Byangini*: One of the two brides-maids.

*Chaka Puja*: The worship of the 'Kul' deity in which all the family members participate.

*Chakuwa-Deya*: A deity believed to be sometimes a son and sometimes a daughter of Machhendra. The name 'Chakuwa deya' is derived from the word 'Chaku' (Jaggery) and 'Wa' (rice).

*Challa*: A kind of meat dish.

*Chare-Guthi*: An establishment connected with the worship of the *Pithas* on the 14th of the dark-half of every month.

*Chawar*: A ritual-fan made of yak's tail.

*Chaub-Nha*: Sacred bathing (*Nha*) at Chaubar on the first day of Chaitra.

*Chhakula*: A variety of meat dish.

*Chhetra-pal*: A circular design in front of the entrance of every Newar house where sacred things are thrown away ceremonially.

*Chheri*: Ground floor of a Newar-house.

*Chhoyala*: A special variety of meat preparation.

*Chhoyala-Bhu*: A feast at the beginning of the *Dewali* worship in which *Chhoyala* is served.

*Chhuti(n)*: A person who represents a group of agnatic families on the *Dewali Guthi* Committee.

*Chhusya-mussya*: Fried seeds of several kinds including soya bean, gram, mass pulse and beans used as ritual food.

*Chhwali*: Wheat-straws.

*Chhwasa*: A ritual place located at the cross-roads for throwing all inauspicious and ceremonially impure material; it is believed to be haunted by *Chhwasa Ajima*.

*Chhwasa-Ajima*: Younger sister of *Ajima*, the goddess of small-pox; believed to reside at the cross-roads.

*Chhwasa-Wane-gu* : Ritual of propitiating the evil spirits located at the Chhwasa. This is practised in all the Newar ceremonies.

*Chuka* : A variant of *Chouk*; the inner court-yard of a house.

*Chwaka* : A kind of thorny plant found in the Valley.

*Chwata* : Second floor of a house.

*Chyal-Batta* : A special kind of grass held to be ritually important.

*Copra* : A copper vessel used as wash-basin, or for urination.

*Dachhina Chha-ye-gu* : Ritual of presenting coins in *Macha-Bu-ka-Wane-gu* ceremony to a newly born child and the mother by the female members of the child's maternal uncle's house.

*Dafa-Swa(n)* : A special kind of flower.

*Dagi* : A demon impersonated by an Udas during the Indra Jatra; it is a cult of the dead.

*Daju-kija-Khala* : Families of brothers.

*Dakarmi* : House-builder.

*Danuwar* : An aboriginal tribe found in the lower hills of Nepal.

*Dasai-ghar* : A dark room where the deity is installed for the Nava-ratra worship.

*Da(n)* : An unclean caste also known as Pore; see under Pore.

*Dashami Guthi* : An institution meant for the propitiation of goddess Ajima on every 10th day of the month.

*Dasai-teeka* : The day of putting teeka-mark; on the 10th of Ashwin; also called Dashehara.

*Dechha* : Shawl worn by a woman.

*Deep* : Burning pyre.

*Dekha* : A ritual among the Buddhist Newars. After undergoing this ritual, a person becomes a member

of the cult of secret worship connected with the 'Ajima' deity.

*Deo-Chhaya*: The ritual of offering food to Digu-Deya in the Chhoyala-bhu feast during the festival of Dewali worship.

*Deva Brahmin*: Brahmin caste which provides priestly functions to the Newars; called also Deva-Bhaju or Deva-Brahmu or Guru-Baje.

*Dewali*: A deity of the Newars which unites all the agnatic members into a group. It is also called *Digu*. It is woven round the cult of ancestors.

*Dewali Guthi*: Also called Deo-Guthi. An institution to perpetuate the cult of ancestors through feasts and festival of the *Dewali* deity.

*Dewali-Puja*: Worship of *Dewali* or *Digu* which takes place between the first of the bright-half of *Baisakh* and the sixth of the bright-half of *Jaistha*.

*Dewa(n)*: A special textile material kept at the Sana Guthi office; this is put over the corpse during funeral procession.

*Dewapala*: Temple attendant. Dewapalas are generally from the unclean castes.

*Dhali-Kacha*: Twigs of pomegranate tree.

*Dharmis*: Twelve male-dancers who wear the masks of goddesses and dance in the *Badrakali Jatra*.

*Dhau*: Curd.

*Dhau-Bajee-Nake-Wane-gu*: Ritual of feeding a pregnant woman with *Bajee* and curd a couple of weeks before the delivery is due. This is performed by the woman's parents' family.

*Dhau Saga(n)*: Giving a person a little curd to eat as a mark of wishing auspiciousness.

*Dhumba-rai*: A deified pig worshipped as the door-keeper in a temple along with its companion, Simbharai.

*Dhunjya-Munjya*: A long pole with multi-coloured frills

tioned to it. It is usually held at the head of a festival-procession.

*Dicha* : The assistants of Mho-patra.

*Digpalas* : The ten divine sentinels.

*Digu Deya* : Dewali deity. See under Dewali.

*Digu Kheya-Puja-Wane-gu* : The ritual of sending a 'Kala(h)' containing material for worship on behalf of each of the agnatic families to the house of the Thakali during *Digu Puja*.

*Dila Punhi* : A sacred day in honour of teacher, which falls on the 15th of the bright-half of *Asadh*.

*Disi Puja* : A Buddhist calendar festival.

*Dooly* : See under 'Du'.

*Du* : The traditional Newar palanquin; also called *dooly*.

*Du-Chhai-ke-gu* : Act of ritual-welcome given to a bride or to a person while entering the house.

*Du-Du-Chya-Chya* : A festival held in honour of Mahadeo. It is held eight days before the 14th of the dark-half of *Chaitra*.

*Dugu-Chhayaye-gu* : The ritual of sacrificing a goat to a deity during its worship.

*Dui-Khutte* : Two legged wooden stand used for resting paddy-pounding mortar.

*Dukha-Pikha* : A ritual act of wrapping a dead body with white cloth and stitching it.

*Dware* : Former regional administrative-head who used to be annually appointed by the State.

*Fukee* : A term applied to the agnatic members coming under a common *Dewali Guthi*. (See also *Ba Fukee*)

*Ga* : A shawl.

*Fukee Mhasi-ke-gu* : Ritual of introducing a bride to the bridegroom's kin

*Gado-Ju-Ju* : A deified king of the Vaishya Thakuri dynasty. The term ju-ju means a king in Newari. It is also known as Chaka(n)-deya.

*Gai-Jatra* : The festival of cow; also known as *Sa-Ya* in

Newari. It takes place on the first of the dark-half of *Bhadrapad* in memory of the dead relatives.

*Gathe Mangal* : This festival falls on the 14th of the dark-half of *Sravan*. Its celebration is based on the belief of the triumph of virtue over evil. On this day an effigy of a demon, *Ghanta Karan*, is burnt in every street. It is called *Gathe Muga* in Newari.

*Ghanta Karan* : See *Gathe Mangal*.

*Ghasu* : Death rite on the 11th day. It aims at complete purification with the performance of *Hom* of those who have been affected by death-pollution.

*Ghata-Sthapana* : A religious act held on the first day of *Navaratra*. *Bhagwati* is installed for nine days' worship.

*Ghore-Jatra* : The festival of horse. It takes place on the 14th of the dark-half of *Chaitra*.

*Ghya-Chaku-Sanhu* : A festival held on the last day of *Margsirsha*. It consists in eating clarified butter (*ghya*), jaggery (*chaku*) and *tarul*.

*Goja* : A ritual object of conical shape made of a paste of flattened-rice. This is necessary in every Newar ceremony.

*Gokarna Aunsi* : The last day of the dark-half of *Bhadra* named after *Gokarna*, a mythical personage. On this day people bathe at *Gokarna*. This is done in memory of the deceased father. Those whose fathers are alive feed them with sweet-meat on this day.\*

*Gokarna Snan* : Bathing (*Snan*) at *Gokarna*.

*Gonta* : A social group among the members of the *Sana Guthi*, which is concerned with the carrying of the corpse.

*Gorma* : A variety of meat dish.

*Gue* : Betel-nut.

*Gue-biye-gu* : Act of presenting betel-nuts by the bridegroom's *Thakali* to the bride's *Thakali* to mark the betrothal.

*Gue-Kaye-gu* : Act of accepting the betel-nuts by the bride's *Thakali* in the above ritual; it also means the ritual of bride's taking leave of her parents' house. This is signified by the acceptance of ten betel-nuts by each of the bride's kin in the ritual of leave-taking.

*Gue-Saike-Gu* : Ritual of introducing a person. The person to be introduced presents betel-nuts; this takes place twice in a marriage ceremony, first in the bride's parents' home and second, in the bridegroom's home.

*Gula* : Newari term for the month of *Sravan*.

*Gula-Lakhe* : The numerous mask-dancers who during the month of *Sravan* represent demons and go about dancing in the streets.

*Gul-Marhi* : A kind of sweet-meat.

*Gula-Paru-Blue-Guthi* : A sub-variety of *Guthi*, which is connected with the celebration of the month of *Sravan*.

*Gum Punhi* : The 15th of the bright-half of *Sravan*.

*Gunruk* : Dried vegetable leaves commonly relished by the Nepalese.

*Guthi* : The term means a trust or an establishment which manages and looks after religious property or charitable funds. The *Guthi* splits the Newars into a number of social-groups on the basis of caste, kin and religion.

*Guthiar* : A member who represents his house-hold on the *Guthi* Committee.

*Haku Musya* : Black Soyabean.

*Hathu-Haye-gu* : Ritual-act of causing rice-beer to flow out of the mouth of *Bhairava*. It is performed when the car of *Kumari* arrives at *Indra Chowk* during the festival of *Kumari*.

*Hawan Kunda* : The hearth of sacred fire.

*Hi* : Sweet potato.

*Hitty* : Traditional water-tap.

*Holi*: Festival which is observed for seven days beginning with the 8th of the bright-half of *Falgun*. It is a Hindu festival but equally important for the Buddhist-Newars.

*Honke-gu*: Marriage-ritual which takes place in the house of the bride-groom.

*Holi-Guthi*: An institution which is meant for the purpose of celebrating the festival of Holi.

*Hom*: Ritual of worshipping the sacred fire. The term is synonymous with 'Hawan'.

*I(n)*: A sickle.

*I(n)-cha*: A sickle.

*Indra Jatra*: Festival held to mark the visit of Lord Indra and his mother to the Valley; it starts on the twelfth of the bright-half of *Bhadrapad* and lasts for eight days; it is a period of revelry.

*Jamra*: The yellow plants of barley which are grown in a dark room where the *Navaratra* worship is held. They are essential for the celebration of Dasherā.

*Jangh-wal-Suruwa*: Lower garment of unmarried girls.

*Jani*: Cloth-belt known as *patuka* in Nepali.

*Janta*: Marriage-procession; derived from the Nepali term, *Janti*.

*Java-Chatu-Pi-Nhya*: A kind of fish used for the ritual purpose.

*Jh(n)akari*: Priest-magician who is employed to counteract the evil designs of the spirits.

*Jhya*: Window; derived from the Nepali word *Jhyal*.

*Jhayata Pola*: A special deity represented by a long stone phallus to which is attributed the power of bestowing a child.

*Jogini*: Generic term to designate the tantric goddesses of the lower order.



*Jutho* : Death-pollution.

*Jwalah-Nhai-Ka(n)* : Traditional bronze-mirror which is required in every Newar ceremony.

*Jya-Punhi* : Sacred day which falls on the full-moon day of *Jaistha*.

*Jyapoo-Phyakha* : The traditional stage-plays associated with the Jyapoos.

*Jyapoo-Sikha* : A female head-ornament popular among the Jyapoo Newars.

*Kahabaja(n)* : A long musical pipe of the Jyapoo caste.

*Kaita Puja* : Initiation ceremony of a boy. *Kaita* means *Langoti* (a 'wide ribbon') used for covering the penis.

*Kaji* : The head of the caste-council of the Manandhars. It is also a term of respect. Also the four chief girls among those undergoing the *Yihee* initiation.

*Kala* : A pot for carrying worshipping material.

*Kalah-Waye-gu* : A ritual performed for warding off the influence of the evil spirits by placing a share of food at the *Chlwasa* after the feast is over.

*Kalampo* : Ritual of warding off the influence of the evil spirits during wedding ceremony.

*Kalya-Nhaye-ke-gu* : Ritual of presenting the arm-ornament, *Kalya*, on behalf of the bridegroom to the bride before marriage.

*Kan-deota* : Goddess of ear-disease located on the way to Patan from Kathmandu.

*Ka(n)-Joshi-Bwake-gu* : The ritual of worshipping a copper pot big enough to contain four persons. This is done by an Achaju priest at the Pachali Bhairava Jatra.

*Kanyadau(n)* : Ritual of offering a girl to God Narain in the *Yihee* ceremony.

*Karua* : A water pot.

*Kata* : A head-ornament for females.

*Kau* : Blacksmith caste among the Newars.

*Kaula Bwo* : Ritual of offering a feast to the Kusle on

the 7th day of death. The feast has all dishes but rice.

*Kaya-Ashtami* : An auspicious day on the 8th of the bright-half of *Bhadrapad*.

*Kee-gatecne-gu* : The ritual of offering pindas, made of barley-flour, to the dead persons upto five generations.

*Kha* : Abbreviated form of Khat, a wooden structure. In festivals, a deity is carried in it along the streets.

*Khadga Jatra* : The festival of displaying the swords held on the *Dashehera* day. It is also called *Pa-Ya*.

*Kharu-Puja* : See *Kha*; *Kharu* = door; A ritual connected with the worship of the door of a new house.

*Khatta-Muga* : A wooden pulverizer.

*Khyekuri* : A pot containing rice-beer; represents *Bhairava*.

*Khicha-Puja* : Dog-worship on the fourteenth of the dark-half of *Kartik*.

*Khila-Goi-ya-Dashami* : Sacred day of the Buddhists which falls on the 10th of the dark-half of *Margasirsha*.

*Khukri* : Nepali dagger.

*Khula* : Sixth month of the year.

*Khumu* : Basket.

*Khu(n)* : Thief.

*Khurpi* : Spud.

*Khwa-swe-gu* : Seeing the face; ritual of bride's kin visiting bridegroom's home to meet the bride.

*Khyaka* : A sub-type of *Preta*. It is a female spirit, believed to be malignant.

*Kija-Puja* : Festival of brother-worship which takes place on the second day of *Kartik*.

*Kichkinni* : A female spirit, very beautiful, with her toes behind.

*Kimila* : A variety of meat dish.

*Kisi-Gane* : Elephant *Ganesh*. In Newari *Kisi* means elephant.

- Kisi-Puja* : The festival of worshipping an elephant on the second of the lunar month of *Kartik*.
- Ko-Bali-Pind-taye-gu* : Act of offering pindas to crows during the *Nhyanuma* ceremony on the death of a person. It is associated with the Siva-Margi Newars.
- Kolla* : A brass vessel.
- Ko(n)-Chhika(n)* : Wheat-flour mixed with oil; used in place of soap.
- Koo* : A load containing worshipping material and some other items.
- Ko-Puja* : Crow-worship; held on the 13th of the dark-half of *Kartik*.
- Kota* : A bier.
- Kota* : Pot for worshipping material.
- Krishna Ashtami* : A festival day in honour of **Krishna**.
- Ku* : Digging hoe called *Kodali* in Nepali.
- Kuchhi-Bhue* : A family-feast held on the night of the eighth day of *Navaratra*.
- Kuki-cha* : Digging-hoe with a long handle.
- Kul* : Lineage.
- Kule* : Grain-measuring pot.
- Kumari* : Living human female installed as goddess *Bhagwati* and worshipped by the Newars. Each *Bahal* has its own *Kumari* beside the main *Kumari*.
- Kumari Guthi* : An establishment dedicated to the *Kumari* and connected with the management of the *Kumari-Jatra*.
- Kumari-Jatra* : The festival in honour of *Kumari* which begins on the full moon day of *Bhadrapad*.
- Kushmand* : White pumpkin.
- Kushmand Navami* : Sacred day when *Satya-yuga* is believed to have begun. It falls on the 9th day of the bright-half of *Kartik*. The offering of *Kushmand* forms the main part of worship.
- Kusle* : An unclean caste, also known as *Jogi* or *Darshandhari*. A *Kusle*'s hereditary calling is tailoring; but he

is also the temple priest of minor deities. He provides music at festivals and ceremonies; also accepts death-gifts on the 7th day.

*Lai*: Radish.

*Lakha-Bi-ye-gu*: Custom of presenting *lakha* sweets to the bride's parents before marriage.

*Lakha-Marhi*: A kind of sweet-meat.

*Lakha-Tirtha*: The famous Buddhist *tirtha* (Sacred spot) the banks of the Vishnumati.

*Lakhe*: Etymologically it means a demon; it also means progeny of Brahmin widows. It is an inferior section of the Deva-Brahmin.

*La(n)*: Upper garment.

*La-pya-ke-gu*: Ritual of praying for the rains.

*La-pya(n)-Thaye-gu*: Monthly *sraddhas* for one year after the death of a person.

*Lasa-Kusa*: A ritual which involves the conducting of a person to be initiated to the ceremonial booth by means of a long iron key, held by the *Thakali Naki* and the person concerned. The *Noku Naki* has to mark the route by sprinkling water on the ground.

*La-Swa-Wane-gu*: Act of taking out a marriage procession.

*La-To(n)-ke-gu*: The ceremony of offering water to a corpse.

*Leesa-Paye-gu*: Worshipping the Dewali deities at the various places on the route when they are brought back home from the *Digu-Kheya*.

*Lhuti Punhi*: Sacred day on the 15th of the bright-half of *Chaitra*.

*Linga Yatra*: Erection of *linga* at the festival of Bhairavi; it is also known as *Vishwa-Dwajotsthanam*.

*Locha*: Custom of married women calling on a bereaved family on the sixth day of death for the purpose of offering condolences.

*Locha-Bhoye* : A light feast in which married women who come for *Locha* participate.

*Lo(n)-Digu* : The digu deity of stone at its aboriginal site. Lo(n) means stone. Also see *Loo(n)-Digu*.

*Loh(n)-Karmi* : A sub-division of Udas working in stone and ivory.

*Loo(n)-Digu* : The group of deities worshipped at the house of the Thakali which are mostly of conical shape. It is made of metal and is the counter-part of *Lo(n)-Digu* which is kept at home.

*Luchuri* : Wrist-ornament.

*Luchumari Mai* : A form of *Mai* (female deity) in the Valley.

*Lu-Incha* : A piece of white cloth.

*Lusi-Thi-ke-gu* : A purificatory rite involving the paring of nails.

*Lukuma-Deya* : The hiding Siva. He is worshipped by both the religious groups of Newars, the Buddhist and the Hindu. This deity is always kept hidden amidst garbage and covered by a stone.

*Lumari Mai* : A form of *Mai*. She is also called *Bhadra-kali*.

*Lu(n)-We-Swa(n)* : Female head-ornament.

*Luti Mai* : A form of *Mai*.

*Lya-Sikhya* : A location where a huge wooden pole, *Linga*, is erected. It is situated in front of *Bhairavi Indriani* at *Bhatgaon*.

*Macha-Bu-Benke-gu* : Birth purificatory rite.

*Macha-Bu-gu-ka-Wane-gu* : A custom of visit by the female members of the child's maternal uncle to get the newly born child and its mother back to their home.

*Macha-Junko* : Rice-feeding ceremony.

- Machhendra Jatra* : National festival of the Newars which is held in the town of Patan for about two months. It is a festival in honour of the rain-god.
- Maharia* : Village functionaries in the olden days.
- Mai* : The lower forms of Durga or Kali, endowed with malignant powers whose propitiation and appeasement are essential for the protection and peace of the community. They are represented by round stones. These Mais are also known as Bhairavis, the consorts of Bhairavas.
- Maite-Devi* : A form of *Mai* (female deity).
- Maitee* : A Nepali term designating a married woman's parents' home.
- Maka-phosi* : Ear-ornament of the female.
- Mandal* : A geometrical design drawn on the ground in front of a person undergoing a ceremony.
- Marhi* : Sweet-meat.
- Marhi-Karmi* : A sub-division of Udas who are confectioners.
- Mata-Bue-Wane-gu* : Festival of placing lamps on the streets in memory of the dead on the 12th of the bright-half of *Bhadra*.
- Mata(n)* : First floor of a house.
- Mata-ti Charhe* : The 14th of the dark-half of Baisakh believed to be sacred in honour of one's mother.
- Mata-Ya* : The festival of lamps at Patan, which falls on the day after Gai Jatra. It derives its name from the custom of carrying a lamp by each of the participants. It is held in memory of the dead.
- Me-pu* : A sub-division of Hale. Etymologically the term means a dealer in buffalo's milk.
- Mha-Puja* : It means 'worship of the self'. It is confined to the members of one's own family. This festival takes place on the first day of the bright half of *Kartik*, the New Year's Day of the Newars.
- Mho-patra* : A mask-wearer representing a demon at the

festival of Pachali Bhairava.

*Mhya-Masta* : Daughter's children.

*Misa-La(n)* : Ladies' upper-garment.

*Mitaima* : The chief mourner who sets fire to the funeral pyre.

*Mitha Punhi* : The 15th of the bright-half of *Paush* which is sacred to the Newars.

*Mohar* : Nepalese rupee.

*Momocha* : A Tibetan dish.

*Mukha-Ashtami* : A sacred day, which falls on the 8th day of the bright half of *Kartik*.

*Murda-Do-Pat* : Cross-roads where a funeral procession stops to place three unburnt bricks while on its way to the burning ghat.

*Murhi* : Unit of weight; 1 Murhi=160 pounds avoirdupois.

*Musya* : Black soya-bean. In every Newar ritual it is a necessary item.

*Muta* : Custom of conveying to *Fukee*-members the news of having burnt the corpse.

*Nachha* : The worship of Dewali which takes place between the first of the dark half of *Bhadra* and the first of the bright-half of *Ashwin*.

*Naga* : Serpent-god.

*Nag Hrid* : Mythological name of the Valley of Nepal meaning 'the abode of the serpent-gods'

*Nag Panchami* : Festival observed in honour of the serpent-gods on the fifth of the bright-half of *Sravan*.

*Nasa Deya* : Siva as the god of dance and music. It is worshipped by the Newars and forms a part of their group-life. This deity is given animal sacrifice in addition to the offering of rice-beer and liquor.

*Nasa-Khala* : Caste music-group.

*Nasa-Puja-Guthi* : An institution for training in songs and caste music. Also connected with the worship of *Nasa Deya*, the Newar deity of dance and music.

*Nhayenuma* : Death-rite on the 7th day of death

when the married daughters of the bereaved family offer rice-balls to a Kulse.

*Nai-Ajima*: Consort of Pachali Bhairava impersonated by a Kasai during the Pachali Bhairava festival.

*Naini*: Woman-barber from the Kasai caste.

*Nanda-Gwa*: A cowherd boy referred to in the mythology of the Newars.

*Nani-cha-ya*: The car-drawing procession of Kumari; held on the third of the dark-half of *Ashwin*; the car is drawn through the centre of the town.

*Nandi-Mukh-Sradha*: One of the rituals connected with the worship of the manes by offering *Pindas* of ber-fruits, bamboo shoots and some blades of grass. It precedes all important ceremonies.

*Navaratra*: The nine-day festival. It starts on the first day of the Lunar month during which goddess Bhagwati is worshipped and offered sacrifices.

*Navmi*: The 9th day of Navaratra.

*Nayakas*: Village officials in the olden days.

*Neena-Puja*: Ritual connected with the worship of beams and pillars of a newly constructed house.

*Neta-Ajima Jatra* or *Nardevi jatra*: A festival held in the town of Kathmandu. The term Neta-Ajima means the grand-mother of Neta locality. She is also known as Nara Devi. The festival takes place annually on the 14th day of the dark-half of *Chaitra*; and also every 12th year.

*Nigali*: A kind of bamboo plant called *Ti(m)* in Newari.

*Nisala*: A big earthen-pot containing flattened rice, sweet-meat and two betel-nuts to be sent to the place of worship on behalf of each of the families.

*Nisala-Chhya-guthi*: An institution which is connected with the Swayambhu worship; it is associated with the Buddhist Newars.

*Nisi-Ya-ye-gu*: A generic term for purificatory rituals; it includes *Lusi-Thike-gu*, *Ala-ta-ye-gu* and the ritual of house-purification.



*Nitya-Puja* : Daily worship.

*Noku-Naki* : Wife of *Nokuli*.

*Nou* : Newar barber caste; also known as *Napit*.

*Nyakuli* : One of the eight senior members of the clan.

*Ohai-(n)cha* A piece of yellow cloth presented to the mother of a newly-born child.

*Pa* : Hatchet.

*Paha(n)-charhe* : An auspicious day on the 14th of the dark-half of *Chaitra* when the goddesses, specially those connected with black-magic, are propitiated.

*Pai-Jani* : A former custom under which Government servants had to be annually reappointed to their respective posts.

*Painā Ja* : A custom of inviting a betrothed girl by her relatives to dine with them; it is a sort of farewell dinner.

*Pai(n)ti-La-gu* : The act of placing a replica of an wooden-ladder, an eyeless needle and a cooking furnace at the cremation ground; this is performed on the 7th day of death.

*Paju-Khala* : Family of maternal uncle.

*Pakha-Ja* : The custom of offering food by the agnatic members to the soul of the deceased on the seventh day of death after *Sraddha* feast.

*Palawari Tuchi* : A female ear-ornament.

*Palu* : Ginger.

*Panch-Bihi* : Five types of grass used as ritual objects.

*Pancha-gabhya* : Solution of cow-dung and cow's urine used for ritual purification.

*Panchalinga-Bhairava Jatra* : A festival held in honour of Panchali Bhairava or Pachali Bhairava, observed during the 4th, 5th and 6th of the bright-half of *Ashwin* in Kathmandu.

*Panch-Shikha* : A ritual-garland made of five kinds of leaves, namely, *var*, *peepal*, *bimri*, mango and *palas*; it

also contains a golden ring of *Nava-Ratna*; it is used in the initiation ceremony of a Newar boy.

*Parsi* : Sari.

*Pasi-Kacha* : Twigs of pear-tree.

*Patal-Deep* : The ritual of placing a lamp at the base of the pole of *Akash-deep*; it signifies lighting the underworld.

*Patee* : Resting places at the approaches to a Newar settlement.

*Pathi-Lui-gu* : A ritual which consists in showering rice, flowers and fruits over a person three times from a *pathi*; it is done by the Thakali-Naki.

*Patra-Khola-Ajima* : The consort of Pachali Bhairava, impersonated by a Jyapoo during the Pachali Bhairava festival; the name is derived from the type of pot 'Patra-Khola' which is held by him.

*Patuka* : A long piece of loin-cloth worn to serve as a belt for keeping the stomach warm.

*Pekuli* : One of the eight senior members of the clan.

*Phali-Baji* : A ritual in *Yihee* which involves the eating of *Taye* (*Powa*), curd, milk and fruits by girls under initiation.

*Phanga-Taye-gu* : Ritual of covering the 'du' with a red silken shawl when the bride sits in it at the time of leaving for the bridegroom's home; this ritual is performed by the Thakali.

*Pho* : A ritual connected with death.

*Phoo-Bare* : A Vanra-priest who is named so owing to his special function of rounding off the Vanra-Jatra.

*Phool-Pati* : A ceremony held on the 8th day of *Nava-ratra*.

*Pihi* : A sub-division of Jyapoo; as an original tribe they are known also as Pahari.

*Pikha-Lakhu* : See *Chhetra Pal*.

*Pikha-Lakhuee* : Same as *Pikha-Lakhu*

*Pindas* : Rice-balls offered to the manes.

- Pitha-Puja** : Worshipping of eight flags representing various *Pithas* and goddesses; every Newar ceremony involves this ritual.
- Pitri-Paksha** : A fifteen-day period regarded as sacred to the manes, which falls during the dark-half of *Ashwin*; both the Hindu and Buddhist Newars offer rice-balls to their dead relatives on some day during this period.
- Pi-Yu-Cha-Nhya-ke-gu** : A custom of presenting a golden bangle and red coral-beads to a newly-born child by its father's sister.
- Po-holae** : Designation of a married daughter when she walks at the head of a funeral procession, scattering paddy-grains on the way to the burning ghat.
- Postiga(n)** : A special kind of tonic-giving sweets made of milk, dry fruits and jaggery; this is normally supplied to a woman during her post-delivery period.
- Preta** : Spirits of persons who have died of accident or whose souls are believed to have not yet found salvation on account of the sins committed while alive.
- Pula-Kisi** : A dance performed on the fifth of the dark-half of *Bhadra* by a person wearing an elephant's mask.
- Pulu** : A leaf-umbrella or a bamboo mat.
- Pupala** : A variety of meat-dish.
- Putu-Gue** : Betel-nuts given by a bride to her parents on the eve of her departure for the bridegroom's house. This connotes leave-taking.
- Pya(n)-Tha-ye-gu** : *Sraddha*; etymologically *Pya(n)-tha-ye-gu* means dividing the anus into two parts.
- Rakhi Poornima** : The fifteenth of the bright-half of *Sravan* when the festival of tying a yellow thread round the wrist is celebrated; the thread is tied by a Brahmin; also a day of great festivity marked by the eating of nine kinds of seeds.

- Ropani** : A Newar unit of land measurement; 1 Ropani—  
608  $\frac{1}{2}$  square yards.
- Rudraksh** : Seed of Eleo-carpus-genitrees which is held in high reverence by the Hindu Newars and by all other Hindus as well. It is identified with Siva.
- Sa-Duru-Ha-Ha-Ya-ye-gu** : A rite concerning purification of the house by sprinkling cow's milk all over the floor.
- Saga(n)** : Ritual food items which include boiled egg, liquor, dried fish, boiled meat and Ja(n)ra. It is pronounced सगः . It is offered to an individual by Thakali Naki for wishing an auspicious moment.
- Sahasra-Chandra Darshanam** : Part of the old age initiation ceremony. It is performed at the age of 83 years, four months, 4 days, 4 palas and 4 ghadis. It means 'seeing a thousand moons'.
- Saki** : Bulb of Arum Colocasia.
- Saki-Milha-Punhi** : The 15th of the dark-half of *Margasir*, when the Buddhist Newars scatter seven kinds of seeds round the hill of Swayambhu and the Hindu Newars round the hill of Pashupati. It is observed in honour of the dead.
- Samai** : A kind of ritual-breakfast which generally precedes a ceremonial feast. It includes a cup of liquor, flattened rice and a few pieces of buffalo-meat.
- Samba-Ja-Nake-gu** : A dinner which takes place at the Bride's place on the night of the arrival of the marriage procession. Only the bride and her consanguineal relatives participate in this dinner.
- Sana-Guthi** : Caste institution which is concerned with the cremation of the dead.
- Sanga(n)** : Also called Sangat. A washerman caste of the Newars.
- Sankalpa** : A ritual of offering flowers and rice to Sukunda, Panch-Bali and Ashta-Matrikas.

*Sanya-Khunya* : A kind of meat dish.

*Sapta-Beej-Hole-gu* : The ritual of scattering seven kinds of seeds around the Pashu-pati hill in memory of the dead.

*Sa-Pu* : A sub-division of Hale. Etymologically it means a dealer in cow's milk.

*Sasu Puja* : An institution which is connected with the worship of goddess Saraswati.

*Sat-Brindika* : Yellow thread, one hundred and eight times equal to the height of a girl undergoing the *yihee* ceremony.

*Satoo* : Rice-flour.

*Sat-Sudra* : The Hindu section of the Jyapoos of Bhaktapur. It is also known as *Swa*.

*Sava-Bhaku* : Two mask wearers who are believed to represent the *Ganas* of Sava deva (Akash Bhairava) at the time of the latter's festival.

*Sa-Ya* : 'Sa' means cow and 'ya' is an abbreviation of Yatra or Jatra. The term, therefore, means the festival of cow which is connected with the cult of the dead.

*Sa-Ya-Wa-Pi* : Cow-mask wearers in *Gai Jatra*.

*Seto-Macchendra Jatra* : The festival of white Macchendra which takes place on the 8th of the bright-half of *Chaitra* in Kathmandu and lasts for four days.

*Shila(n)* : Firewood used for kindling the sacred fire.

*Shinhamhu* : Traditional bronze-pot for keeping vermilion.

*Shinha* : Vermilion.

*Shiya-baji* : A special kind of *Chivra* (flattened rice).

*Sie-Guthi* : An institution which is in charge of carrying out the various stages connected with the disposal of a corpse. It is confined to caste-members only. Some times it refers to a group of families within Sana Guthi, which alone can touch the corpse and dispose of it.

*Sika-Bhu* : Ritual-distribution of the different parts of the

head of a sacrificed animal among the eight senior members of the group and the ritual-eating of these parts by them.

*Sikarmi* : Also called Si-ka-mi, a carpenter; also a subdivision of Udas whose hereditary occupation is carpentry.

*Sikha* : A sub-type of *Preta*, which is a household spirit. It is the spirit of a person who had been a member of the family and is, therefore, regarded as an ancestor's spirit.

*Sincho-Phaye-gu* : Ritual of fixing vermilion on a woman's forehead. This is done at the ceremonies of puberty, mock-marriage and marriage. In the first two cases, it is done by the Thakali-Naki, while in the last case, the husband does it.

*Singha Sankranti* : The sacred day on the 1st of the bright half of *Bhadra*. A festival is held on this day in honour of Bagh-Bhairava.

*Sinja-Benke* : The purificatory rite performed after the transplantation of paddy; it is motivated by the belief that during plantation, inter-dining results in the temporary loss of caste.

*Sinduri* : A type of head-ornament worn by a woman.

*Sinki* : Fermented vegetables or their leaves commonly relished by the Nepalese.

*Sirbandi* : A female head-ornament.

*Sisa-Palu* : 'Prasad' distributed among members of the family after worshipping *Ajima*; following the birth of a child.

*Sisi-Taye-gu* : The custom of not bringing the bride straight-away home when the marriage party returns, but keeping her for a night at a friend's house.

*Sithi-Nakha* : An auspicious day on the 6th of the bright-half of *Jaistha* when the worship of Dewali comes to

an end; on this day a festival is held in honour of Kumar, brother of Ganesh; it is also the day when the Newars clean the wells.

*Sithi-Nakha Guthi* : An institution which is concerned with the cleaning of the well on *Sithi Nakha day*.

*Situ-Ghai(n)* : A special kind of grass used for the ritual purpose.

*Sokuli* : One of the eight senior members of a lineage group.

*Sonsi* : Firewood used for *Hawan* ritual.

*Sri Panchami* : A festival observed in honour of goddess Saraswati by the Hindu Newars and of Manjusri by the Buddhist Newars; it takes place on the fifth of *Margasirsha*.

*Suruwa* : Lower garment.

*Sukunda* : The traditional oil-lamp with a serpentine handle to represent Ganesh; this article is essential in the religious ceremonies of the Newars.

*Sutak* : Pollution; it is a Nepali term.

*Swa(n)-Chhayegu* : The ceremony of offering flowers; *Swa(n)* means flowers and *Chhayegu* means 'the act of offering to god'.

*Swa(n)ke-Wa-Kayegu* : The act of collecting barley seedlings in a vessel on the day following Navratra.

*Syako-Tyako* : A feast which takes place on the last day of *Navaratra*; it is confined to the members of one's own family. It is the day of offering sacrifices to Bhagwati.

*Syangini* : See Byangini.

*Syapati* : A variety of meat dish.

*Taha-Kha* : A variety of meat dish.

*Taha-Si* : Common citron.

*Tamba* : Fermented young bamboo-shoots commonly relished by the Nepalese.

*Tatee* : A sub-caste of Jyapoo whose hereditary occupa-

- tion is to weave *Deva(n)*, a ceremonial textile material placed over a corpse.
- Tau-Maka* : Earthen pots of ritual significance for marriage.
- Tepa* : Earthen jars for storing liquor or foodgrains.
- Thai-bhu* : Ritual of eating in a ceremonial plate; it is specially important in *Yihee* and marriage.
- Thaima-Puja* : A ritual connected with the worship of the roofs whenever a new house is constructed.
- Thakali* : The chief among the members of a *Guthi* or of the agnatic circle.
- Thakali-Naki* : Wife of Thakali.
- Thako-ju-ju* : A sub-caste of the Chhatharia Newars; believed to have descended from the ancient Vaishya Thakuris of Nepal.
- Thakuri* : A sub-caste of the Gorkha Kshatriya, which traces its origin from the Rajputs in Rajasthan.
- Thalai-Kulai* : A ritual in which a dead person's face is washed and vermilion applied to his forehead; his horoscope is also tied to his neck; this is to be done by a *fukee* relative.
- Tho(n)* : Pronounced थोँ; a special type of rice-beer.
- Tika-Jhya* : Window on the frontside of the first-floor.
- Tri-Ratna* : A Buddhist deity.
- Trisul Jatra* : A festival held on the 8th day of the dark-half of *Asadh*; the Newari term for this is *Macha-ya*; on this day a child is carried on points of tridents and drawn in a car.
- Tuchi* : Women's nose-ornament.
- Ukhu-Charhe* : A calendar festival of the Newars which is observed on 14th of the dark-half of *Paush*; it is observed by exploding baked sugar-canes; it signifies the act of driving away the evil spirits.
- Unmateshwar Bhairava* : One of the Bhairavas; its temple



stands near Pashupati; it is represented by a huge idol with a long genital organ in an erect posture; which, if worshipped, is believed to help overcome frigidity in women.

*Upako-Hu-Wane-gu* : A ritual held in honour of the dead relatives by placing lamps on the streets.

*Vana Jala* : A ritual in marriage when the bride and bridegroom have to be introduced to the presiding deity of the latter's locality.

*Vanra Jatra* : A festival held on the 13th of the dark-half of Bhadra and of Sravan in honour of the Buddhist priestly class, Vanra.

*Vishwa-Karma* : A god worshipped by the Newar artisan castes; it presides over the crafts.

*Wa-Shya Deya* : A special deity in Kathmandu, which is worshipped for the cure of tooth-ache by driving a nail into a tree-trunk; 'Wa' means teeth and 'Shya' means pain.

*Waye-Bhu* : A feast which signifies a farewell party and the end of Dewali-Puja.

*Wo-Sikha* : A necklace much in vogue among the Jyapoo women.

*Ya* : An abbreviated form of the term Yatra or Jatra.

*Yanki-Daha* : A tank connected with the belief that Lord Indra left the Valley of Nepal from that place.

*Yihee* : Mock-marriage of a Newar girl with god Narayan who is represented by a golden emblem; a bel-fruit is kept as a witness to this marriage.

*Yo-Marhi* : A special kind of cake made out of rice flour and stuffed with black *til* and jaggery; It is regarded by the Newars as very auspicious and forms an essential ritual item in birthday celebrations.

*Yo-Marhi-Punhi* : A celebration in honour of the new harvest; it consists in eating and distributing *Yo-marhi*; it is motivated by the desire for prosperity.

*Yoni* : Symbol of the female reproductive organ in the

form of a triangle. The Buddhists regard it as the symbol of the sacred spring in which the root of the divine lotus was enshrined and which was the residence of goddess Guheshwari or Dharma.

*Yo(n)-Si-Mata*: A festival which consists of burning a lamp on the top of a wooden pillar to light the path of the dead ancestors; it is popular among the Jyapoos.

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