

INTRODUCTION

The Newars

In *Growing Up* (Gutschow/Michaels 2008) we expanded at length on Newar life-cycle rituals and life-cycle rituals in general, as well as on our theory of ritual dynamics.¹ We also gave an overview of various Newar rites of passage and described the calculations for finding the auspicious moment (*sāit*) for the rituals. We wish to concentrate in this introduction on the literature of marriage rituals and present an overview of the main ritual events.

The Newars² are the indigenous group that inhabits the Kathmandu Valley. They speak a Tibeto-Burmese language with considerable differences in its dialects, although most Newars are also fluent in Nepālī.

Newars are subdivided into numerous castes that gain their specific identity largely from their locality and people's professions. Making generalisations without specifying the place and the caste is therefore mostly inappropriate (Gellner 1991: 120). The Maharjan farmers of Pyangaon studied by Gérard Toffin (1977) follow cultural patterns and rituals different from those of the Jyāpu farmers in Bhaktapur; they, for instance, do not perform the Ihi marriage. The high caste Śreṣṭhas in Dhulikhel studied by Declan Quigley (1984, 1986) are not the same as the Śreṣṭhas in Kathmandu.

Most Newars are rooted in an urban and at the same time rural culture centred on the three old royal cities, Kathmandu, Lalitpur (Patan) and Bhaktapur. Despite considerable change and processes of modernisation, many Newar castes in Bhaktapur are still

identified by their traditional occupation or occupational specialisation. It is therefore locality, religion, kinship, commensality and purity that govern the caste system of Bhaktapur.

The table on "Castes and sub-castes (*thar*) of Bhaktapur" in *Growing Up* (Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 23) presents the hierarchy of castes and sub-castes and shows that Bhaktapur's society differs considerably from those of the other cities of the Kathmandu Valley, but adopts David Gellner's division into "six 'blocs' or levels of hierarchy" (Gellner 1995: 16-18). The first category presents Hindu and Buddhist priests side by side: a hierarchy does not exist because they act within their own respective communities. But one could argue that the Rājopādhyāya Brahmin priests are superior because they acted as the preceptors of the Malla Kings and only serve clean castes, while a very small group of debased Brahmins, the Dvivedī Brahmins, and the Buddhist Bajrācārya priests serve marginally pure castes and, as the example of the drum-makers (Kulu) demonstrates, even impure castes. The Dvivedī Brahmins are also called Lakhe Brahmins, although they maintain their original designation as Rājopādhyāya.

The Brahmin priests serve families of high status (Chatharīya and Pāñcharīya), all of them former courtiers, merchants and ritual specialists, while the Bajrācārya serve goldsmiths (Śākya) who in the table are placed beneath the Pāñcharīya, although they should be seen as in a parallel location.

As "fallen" Brahmins (Levy 1990: 358), the Śivācārya mark the border between "high" and "middle" in the social hierarchy. They

¹ Since *Growing Up*, only very few new publications have appeared: Christof Zotter (2009) has published his thesis on initiation among the Indo-Parbatīyā Brahmins; Zotter/Zotter 2010 includes a number of articles on initiation; Kaji 2010 is based on the *Daśakarmavidhi* and contains detailed descriptions of all major *samskāras*.

² On the Newar caste system see Levi 1905/I: 230-48, Chatopadhyay 1980 (1923), Nepali 1965: 146-97, Rosser 1966: 68-139, Gutschow/Kölver 1975, Toffin 1984 and 2007, Löwdin 1985, Pradhan 1986: 14-35, Gellner 1992, and Levy 1990.

act as priests on the tenth day after death (Gutschow/Michaels 2005: 109) for purifying the mourning family and the house, and in Ihi rituals they empower the fruits of the wood-apple tree (*belpūjā*).

Within the sub-castes of Jyāpu (farmers) and occupational groups, the notion of hierarchy varies according to the perspective of each of these sub-castes. The next lower group, termed the Chipi, marks however the border between clean and “borderline clean status”. The offspring of inter-caste marriages often hide their origins behind names that veil this. Only once a western researcher comes is the hidden story behind these names revealed, while people of Bhaktapur are only concerned when it is a question of their daughters marrying a Chipi. Already a girl from the higher echelons of the Jyāpu, such as Suvāl or Bāsukala, face a problem when marrying a member of an occupational caste. Even if the lineage members agree to such a liaison, the funeral association (*siguthī*) usually accepts neither the wife of their members nor their children. The *siguthīs* of Jyāpu serve in fact as the guardians of status. The pronouncements of their elders confirm who is of their status and who is “below” and thus unacceptable.

Below the middle section with contested hierarchies follow the “nine castes” (*nau jāt*), which are of “borderline clean status”, as Robert Levy puts it (1990: 358). These are served in rituals by Dvivedī Brahmins or by Buddhist Bajrācārya priests. The barbers mark the borderline, because they serve all those who are “higher” while butcher women have to serve all who are “lower”. The question as to why Buddhist priests serve the *nau jāt* cannot be answered. However, it seems instructive that the members of these “nine castes” are either purity specialists, or belong to occupational groups such as oil-pressers, dyers or blacksmiths whose activities are considered to be “unclean”.

Girls from all nine castes undergo the Ihi marriage in either a Hindu or Buddhist framework. The daughters of the Gāthā, however, only join the ritual on the second day because joining the feast on the first day would be considered polluting. It is unclear what specific quality it is that excludes them from full participation. Is it that they will become the wives of those who perform as the Navadurgā deities, the “living” gods who grace the city with their presence? Their sons are usually initiated by the eldest of the lineage.

Referring to “marginal groups” similar to the nine castes on the edge of the Valley and in neighbouring towns, Gérard Toffin (1984: 19-20) has argued that these are “relatively poorly assimilated to the Newars”. Asking whether “these groups represent an old, strictly Newar tribal substratum that was gradually pushed back towards the edges of the Valley [and to the edges of society, we should add] and in which it should be possible to discover the traces of a putative ‘primitive’ social organisation”, Toffin touches on issues that have also been discussed by Gellner (1995: 32) but that remain unsolved.

Below the nine castes follow sub-castes whose touch does not require purification by those who consider themselves “higher”. These are butchers (Nāy) and purity specialists (Jugi) who as musicians had until recently headed the processions on the occasion of Macājākva (Skt. *annaprāśana*), Kaytāpūjā (Skt. *mekhalābandhana*) and Ihi, and who work as tailors. Buddhist priests from Patan, so-called Nāyghubhāju, serve the butchers, while the Jugi are served by the sole Danyā of Bhaktapur, who belongs to the larger group of Jugi. The only remaining drum-maker (Kulu) in Bhaktapur had, until fifteen years ago, life-cycle rituals performed by the eldest (*nāyah*) of the lineage. In an attempt to attain a higher status, the Kulu started to call in a Subedi Brahmin from Harasiddhi, but shifted to a Bajrācārya from Patan seven years ago. Such

shifts demonstrate the wide range of possibilities in a society undergoing change. For Jugī, the boys' initiation is introduced by music played on a shawm, an instrument that is played exclusively by them. Nāy celebrate the tying of two loincloths, a white one by the eldest of the lineage and a green one by the paternal aunt (*nini*), without the presence of a priest but do not worship the knot.

At the bottom of the hierarchy are the untouchables (Pvaḥ), from whom "clean castes" take no water and, if touched by them, are supposed to purify themselves. The Pvaḥ do not require any priest for the enactment of their life-cycle rituals; the tying of the loin-cloth is done by the eldest of the lineage. Neither members of unclean nor of untouchable status perform the Ihi marriage.

The table (in Gutschow /Michaels 2008: 23) omits a number of sub-castes that have died out (Duī, Hālāhulu, Cyāmākhala), moved away (Dvā, Dhobi), or been assimilated by other groups (Pasi) over the past three decades.

There are also high castes, both Hindu (the Chatharīya) and Buddhist (Śākya, Tulādhar), peasant castes with many members, the Maharjans (Jyāpu) with several sub-castes; numerous small artisan and ritual specialist castes; an «unclean» butcher caste, and several untouchable castes.

The Structure of the Smārta Marriage

"Each caste, and indeed each local clan, has its own traditional ways of performing these [life-cycle] rites," (Gellner 1992: 200). Indeed, while some castes call a Hindu (Brahmin) or Buddhist (Bajrācārya, Gubhāju) priest for their rites of passage, other castes perform it without any priest at all. In particular, high castes celebrate weddings at a considerable cost, and involve auxiliary priests and help-

ers and large amounts of catered food with sometimes over a thousand invited guests.

However, even today many Newar marriages, especially in the lower castes and in cases of elopement, are performed with little ritual. And even among high castes an appreciable number of love marriages are carried out with very simple rites when there is no consent from the families. In these cases it is sometimes enough that the groom applies vermilion to the bride's parting in a temple (Nepali 1965: 231).

High caste marriages in Nepal are normally performed by following the course of events as presented in marriage manuals. Thus, the marriage handbook of the Parbatīyā Brahmin Dadhirāma Marāsini (1882-1963), the *Vivāhapaddhati* (part of his *Karmakāṇḍabhāskara*) lists a number of rites as presented in the table. Like most Nepalese manuals of this kind, the text is based on the *Pāraskāragṛhyasūtra*, a domestic manual of the Mādhyandina school of the *Vājasaneyisaṃhitā*.

Dadhirāma Marāsini sometimes refers to the marriage rules of other Gṛhyasūtras. Comparing six Gṛhyasūtras (Āpastamba-, Gobhila-, Aśvalāyana-, Hiranyakeśin-, Pārsakara- and Śaṅkhāyana-GS), it becomes evident that the following subrites have been essential because they are mentioned by all of the manuals (cf. Winternitz 1892: 18 with variations): astrologically determining the auspicious moment, selecting/receiving the groom (*kanyāvaraṇa*), the couple clasping hands (*pāṇigrahana*), seven steps (*saptapadī*), circumambulation of the fire (*agnipradakṣiṇa*), stepping on a stone (*aśmārohaṇa*), oblation into the fire with roasted rice (*lājāhoma*), looking at the Pole Star (*dhruvadarśana*), and to consummate the marriage after *caturthī*.

These ritual elements must be considered the backbone of the Smārta marriage ritual. Indeed, most Parbatīyā marriage rituals follow a similar pattern, even if the variants are considerable.

Hindu Newars basically follow the same procedure. The following is a list of the main subrites of the two Hindu Daśakarmavidhis from Bhaktapur edited in the present volume.³

However, despite many congruences between Hindu Parbatīyā and Hindu Newar marriage handbooks, it becomes evident that Newar marriage handbooks mention specific ritual elements that cannot be found in the Bramanical-Sanskritic texts. They incorporate the Great Tradition but do not neglect

local customs or ritual elements that might even come from a folk or tribal background – a point that we shall return to in the Conclusions.

Newar Hindu marriage handbooks thus show a pattern that differs in several aspects from the Parbatīyā structure. Besides repeatedly prescribing Newar ritual elements (cf. Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 38f. and below, App. 2), they list a number of rites that diverge from the Gṛhyasūtras and partly follow a different sequence.

³ In Dkv, rules for royal marriages are mixed with rules “for one’s own”, i.e. Brahmins. However, except for some specific rules and places, both marriage rituals are basically the same.

The marriage rituals according to Dadhirāma Marāsini's *Vivāhapaddhati* (after Bechler 2007: 46-8)

Rules for the engagement (*vāgdānavidhi*)

Asking for a girl's hand (*kanyāyācana*)

Betrothal (*vāgdāna*)

Worshipping the groom's father etc. (*varapitrādipūjana*)

Rules for the ritual choosing the groom (*varaṇavidhi*)

Worshipping and choosing the arriving groom at the threshold or door (*dvārāgatavarapūjanavarāṇe*), his praising (*varaprārthanā*) and worship (*varapūjana*)

Giving of *argha* (*arghadāna*) with mantra (*arghapradānamantra*)

Praising of the groom (*varaprārthanā*)

Worship with fragrant material etc. (*gandhādibhir varāṇa*)

Rules for the marriage (*vivāhavidhi*): Worshipping the groom (*varapūjana*)

Ceremonial address (*sambodhana*)

Offering a seat (*viṣṭaradāna*)

Gift of water with which to wash feet (*pādyadāna*)

Again offer of a seat (*punarviṣṭaradāna*)

Gift of *arghya*-water (*arghadāna*)

Gift of water to rinse the mouth (*ācamanīyadāna*)

Gift of *madhuparka* (*madhuparkadāna*)

Taking *madhuparka* (*madhuparkaprāśana*)

Touching specific body parts (*aṅgāmbhana*)

Cutting *kuśa* grass (*kuśacchedana*)

Setting up the fire (*agnisthāpana*)

Clothing the groom and bride (*varakanyāyor vastraparidhāpana*)

Positioning them opposite each other (*parasparasam-mukhīkaraṇa*)

Gift of the girl (*kanyādāna*)

Ritual intention (*saṃkalpa*)

Praising of the groom (*varaprārthanā*)

Preparing the gift (of the girl: *dānapratiṣṭhā*)

Recitation of mantras by the groom (*varadvārāmantrapāṭha*)

Leaving the house (*niṣkramaṇa*)

Looking at one another (*parasparasamīkṣaṇa*)

Marriage *homa* (*vivāhahoma*)

Selecting the Brahmin (*brāhmaṇavarāṇa*), the *brahman* priest (*brahmanavarāṇa*) and the *hotṛ* (*hotṛvarāṇa*), strewing *kuśa* grass around the fireplace (*paristarāṇa*), putting vessels (*pātrāsādana*) and other ritual utensils on their places

Preparing the ground for the *homa* (*homaprṣṭhabhūmi-sampādana*)

Ritual intention for the *homa* (*homasaṃkalpa*)

Āghārājyahoma

Mahāvyaḥṛtihoma

Pañcavāruṅihoma

Rāṣṭrabhr̥ddhoma

Jayahoma

Abhyātānahoma

Guptāhuti

Lājāhoma

(Other *vivāha* rites)

The groom takes the bride's hand (*pāṇigrahaṇa*)

Stepping on a stone (*aśmārohaṇa*)

Singing a song (*gāthāgāna*)

Circumambulation of the fire (*agnipradakṣiṇā*)

Offering the remaining grains of roasted rice (*avaśiṣṭalājāhoma*)

Seven steps (*saptapadī*)

Sprinkling the bride (*abhiṣecana*)

Looking at the sun (*sūryodīkṣaṇa*)

Looking at the Pole Star (*dhruvodīkṣaṇa*)

Touching the heart (*hṛdayāmbhana*)

Giving vermilion (*sindurārpaṇa*)

Placing the bride to the left of the groom (*varasya vāmabhāge vadhvāḥ sthāpana*)

Concluding rites (*homa* etc.)

Offering for *Sviṣṭakṛt* (*sviṣṭakṛdhoma*)

Gift of a filled vessel (*pūrṇapātradāna*)

Dismissal of the *praṇītā* (*praṇītāvīmoka*)

Offering sacrificial grass (*barhīrhoma*)

Full ladle oblation (*pūrṇāhuti*)

"Making three lives" (*trāyusaḥkaraṇa*), i.e. marking the forehead and other parts of the body with the ashes of the sacrificial fire

Sacrificial payment (*dakṣiṇā*)

Ritual elements in two Newar ritual handbooks (Daśakarmavidhis)

(+ = Newar ritual element, cf. App. II; numbers in brackets refer to the folios)

Dkv₃

I. At the house of the bride and the groom

1. Preliminary rites (*pūrvasevā*) (21')

Ancestor worship (*yavodaka*)

Worship of the *pīṭha* deities

2. The day before (*dusala*) (21^r-21^v)

+ Cutting the toenails of the priest and other persons

+ Worshipping clay at the potter's place (for making the *Alīdyaḥ*)

Reception of the groom (in royal marriage) and ancestor worship (*yavodaka*)

Ritual welcome (*lasakusa*) of the bride or groom with offering of a *svastika* seat, worship with lamp, measuring vessel and key, offering of sandalwood and flowers, *pratiṣṭhā*, waving the lamp

Conclusion of *dusala* worship with ritual payment to the priest (*dakṣiṇā*), worship in a nearby temple, grinding of lentils by the groom, leading the groom to the upper floor, meal (*dusalajā*) for the marrying persons

3. Rituals on the main day (21^v-27^v)

+ Arrangements for and worshipping of the sacrificial flasks (*kalaśa*)

Offering of oil and vermilion, purification of the barber, grinding of lentils by the groom, and paring his toenails, bathing and change of dresses

At the auspicious moment (*sāit*) applying vermilion and presenting two golden rings and music

+ Offering of *phalina* food

Concluding rites of the flask worship with *dakṣiṇā*, *pratiṣṭhā*, *visarjana* etc.

II. At the house of the groom

4. Ritual welcome and purification of the groom (27^r-29^r)

Reception of the bride with gifts of dresses and ornaments

+ Grinding of lentils by the groom (28^r)

+ Offering of *phalina* food

Ritual intention (*saṃkalpa*) for *kanyādāna* by the father-in-law (28^v)

Worshipping and praising the groom as Viṣṇu (29^r)

Dkv₄

I. At the house of the bride and the groom

1. Preliminary rites (*pūrvasevā*) (1')

Worship of the *pīṭha* deities

2. The day before (*dusala*) (1^v-6^v)

Cutting the toenails of the priest and other persons

Worshipping clay at the potter's place (for making the *Alīdyaḥ*) with *puṣpabhājana* etc.

Ancestor worship (*nāndikamukhaśrāddha*, *yavodaka*) with ritual welcome (*puṣpabhājana*) of the Brahmin priest, Ācāju, Śivācārya etc., worship of the self (by the Brahmin), *saṃkalpa* for food (*annasaṃkalpa*), worship of the cows and the Viśvedevāḥ, reception of bride or groom, conclusion of the *yavodaka*

Conclusion of *dusala* worship with grinding of lentils by bride or groom, feeding of *dusala* to the bride or groom and Brahmin, tying of the *dusala* thread

3. Rituals on the main day (6^v-8^r)

Arrangements for and worship of the sacrificial flasks (*kalaśa*)

Ancestor worship (*yavodaka*)

Reception of the Brahmin by the Śivācārya

Offering of oil with purification of the barber, grinding of lentils by the groom, and paring his toenails, bathing and change of dresses, offering of vermilion

Applying vermilion and presenting two golden rings

Offering *phalina* food

II. At the house of the groom

4. Ritual welcome and purification of the groom

Preparing the ritual arena with *maṇḍalas*

Ritual intention (*saṃkalpa*) for *kanyādāna* by the father-in-law (10^r)

5. Gift of the Girl (*kanyādāna*) I: Welcoming the groom (31v-37v):

- Preparing the seat (*viṣṭara*), joining of the couple's hands (*pāṇigrahaṇa*), washing the feet (*pādya*), *arghya* water, water for mouth rinsing (*ācamanīya*), *madhuparka*, touching of specific body parts, gift of a cow (*godāna*)
- Giving of the costume and ornaments to the groom
- Giving and consecration of a dress for the bride
- Applying *tikā* made of sandalwood paste and vermilion
- Recital of marriage verses and mantras
- Kanyādāna saṃkalpa* by the father-in-law with pouring milk and water (*hvākegu*)
- Concluding rites: Giving fruits, flowers etc. in the *maṇḍala* to the groom
- Gift of the girl (*kanyādāna*) II (38r-46v): Similar to *kanyādāna* I, but also changing of dresses and gifts of gold and ornaments to the bride

6. Fire sacrifice (*vivāhahoma*) (46v-57r)

- + Worship of various deities in flasks and *praṇīta* vessel etc.
- Rāṣṭrabhṛddhoma, Jayāhoma, Abhyatānahoma, Guptāhuti-homa, Tilāhuti, Saṃkhāhuti, Lājāhoma

7. Other marriage rites (57r-58r)

- Joining the couple's hands (*pāṇigrahaṇa*)
- Stepping on a stone (*aśmārohaṇa*)
- Circumambulation of the fire (*agniparikrama*)
- Seven steps (*saptapadī*)
- Looking at the sun (*sūryadarśana*)
- Applying vermilion (*sindūra*) by the groom and handing the vermilion container to the bride
- Touching the bride's heart by the groom
- Ascending the cattle cart
- Looking at the Pole Star

8. Concluding rites (59r-60r)

- + Dismissal of the Brahmā (flask)
- Sending offerings to the absorbing stone *abhiṣeka*, blessings with *sagā* etc.
- Bride is taken upstairs by the *nakhī* (59v)
- Shared meal
- At night the couple should lie together in one bed

5. Gift of the Girl (*kanyādāna*) (10v-17r)

- Offering of seats (*viṣṭara*), washing feet (*pādya*), *arghya* water, water for mouth rinsing (*ācamanīya*), *madhuparka*, touching of specific body parts, gift of a cow (*godāna*)
- Consecration of the bride's dress
- Consecration of the groom's dress and ornaments
- At the auspicious moment (*sāit*): *pāṇigrahaṇa*, *saṃkalpas*, recital of marriage mantras, handing over of the girl, blessings
- Bridegroom takes out the bride

6. Fire sacrifice (*vivāhahoma*) (17v-33r)

- Worship of flasks and *praṇīta*
- Ten rites for Agni
- Rāṣṭrabhṛddhoma, Jayāhoma, Abhyatānahoma, Guptāhuti-homa, Tilāhuti, Saṃkhāhuti, Lājāhoma

7. Other marriage rites (33r-34r)

- Stepping on a stone (*aśmārohaṇa*)
- Circumambulation of the fire (*agniparikrama*)
- Seven steps (*saptapadī*)
- Looking at the sun (*sūryadarśana*)
- Applying vermilion (*sindūra*) by the groom and handing the vermilion container to the bride
- Touching the bride's heart by the groom
- Ascending the cattle cart
- Looking at the Pole Star

8. Concluding rites on the main day (34r-39r)

- Worship of the Brahmin, the directions, and the *maṇḍala*
- Concluding *saṃkalpa* recitation of the *ratnoṣadhi* verse *dakṣiṇā*, *visarjana*, blessings, *ṭikās* etc.
- Visiting the Kaumārī shrine
- Couple shares a meal from the same plate
- At night the couple should lie together in one bed

9. The day after (60r-61r)

Combing the bride

Welcoming rites, blessing the bride and taking her upstairs
+ Grinding of lentils by the bride

Joint meal for the couple and sending the impure food to
the Kalādyah

+ Dismissal of the Brahmā flask (if in wife-giver's house; if
in wife-taker's house: on *caturthī*)

Ritual outing by the couple (*bhramaṇayātrā*) and welcoming
and blessing on their returning

10. Ritual of the Fourth day (*caturthīkarma*) (62v-70r)

+ Worship (*pañcopacāra*) of the clan deity (*dīgudyaḥ*)

+ Taking the Alīdyah inside

Joint meal for the couple

Ancestor worship (*yavodaka*)

Ritual intention (*saṃkalpa*) for the fire oblations, joint wor-
ship of Brahmā and other deities by the couple with ghee
and sesame oblations, sending the *bali* to different places

Purification of the bride by the groom: applying vermilion
and offering dresses to the bride by the groom, marking
the bride's hair with a porcupine quill, sprinkling water
onto the bride

+ Tying knots in the bride's hair

Bridegroom offers (again?) vermilion to the bride

Bridegroom takes the bride to the ground floor

Bride makes 54 oblations to the fire and *pūrṇāhuti*

Touching the heart of the bride

Dismissal of the fire and the Brahmā flask

III. At the house of the bride

11. Concluding rites of the fourth day (70r-71v)

Special meal for the bride

Looking in the mirror by the bride

+ Husband ties bel-fruit into a shawl (?)

Husband takes her back to his house with welcome and
purification

+ Taking the couple to the upper floor or the shrine of
Taleju with offering of betel nuts and joint meal

+ Burning wicks are sent to different deities in the vicinity

9. The day after (39r)

Ritual outing (*bhramaṇayātrā*) by the couple and welcoming
and blessing on their return, grinding of lentils, joint
meal for the couple

10. Ritual of the Fourth Day (*caturthīkarma*) (39r-40v)

Grooming the bride

Joint meal for the couple

Homa by the couple

Purification of the bride by the groom: parting the bride's hair
with a porcupine quill

Tying knots in the bride's hair by the groom

Applying vermilion to the bride's hair

Looking in the mirror

Touching the heart

Concluding rites

The Newar Marriage

The Newar marriage can be distinguished by three phases: preparatory rituals which mostly entail pre-marriage rituals in the bride's and, to a lesser extent, in the groom's household; the wedding rituals that take place predominantly in the bride's house; and rituals which come after the wedding. The following table is an overview of the major subrituals and ritual elements during Newar Hindu and Buddhist marriages (cf. Pradhan 1986: 154, Asha Kaji 2010: 123-135).

The Newar marriage pattern

- = in the bride's house
- = in the groom's house

1. Pre-marriage rituals

- Arranging the marriage through a mediator or matchmaker (*lami*), not least comparing horoscopes
- Approval of the marriage, betrothal: acceptance of betel nuts and a silver coin sent by the groom's parents (*gvē biyegu*)
- Applying a yoghurt mark (*dhau svagā*) to the bride and later to the groom as another confirmation of the marriage
- Visit to the woman's household by the man's family, bringing sweetmeats (*lākhā-mari chvayegu*)
- Putting on bracelets (*kalyā nhyākegu/chvayegu*)
- Four days before marriage: sending trays with seasonal fruits, vegetables, yoghurt, gifts, *pūjā* plate and other items to the bride's house (*gvē yēkegu*)
- "Farewell" meal with cooked rice (*paynajā bhvay*)
- Ancestor worship (*śrāddha*)

2. Wedding

- Farewell ceremony of the groom by his mother: worship of / with *sukūda* lamp
- → ○ Procession by the groom's party to the bride's parental home (*janta vanegu*)
- Reception of the groom's party with spices, snacks and drinks
- Ritual choosing the groom (*svayaṃvara*)
- Giving the daughter as a gift (*kanyādāna*)⁴ with circumambulation of the groom, touching his feet, parting her hair by the groom, mutual offering or ornaments
- Worship of *sukūdā* (Gaṇeśa) and the bride's lineage deity
- Recitation of *maṅgalasūtra* by the bride's father and *phukī* members of the groom (only Buddhist)
- Offering of various food items and drinks to the bride (only Buddhist)
- Offering and distributing betel nuts (*gvē (biyegu/sāyegu)*)
- Shared meal (*thyābhū nakegu*)
- Tying the bangles (*tutibaki nhyākegu*)
- Handing over of the bride (*bhamcā lalhāna biyegu*)
- Formal discussion between fathers at a Gaṇeśa shrine (*bhamcā khā lhāyegu*).
- → ● Marriage procession (*janta vanegu*) to the groom's house
- Welcoming of the bride (*bhamcā dukāyegu*)
- Distribution of betel nuts to the bride's in-laws (*bhamcā yāgu gvē sālegu*)
- Joining the heads together (*lvākegu*)
- Shared meal (*thāybhū nakegu*)
- Oiling, combing or wetting the hair (*sā pyākegu*)

3. Post-wedding rituals

- Worship of the local guardian deity (*pīṭhapūjā*) with animal sacrifice (only Hindu)
- Distribution of the sacrificial animal's head (*syūkabhvay*, only Hindu)

⁴ Only for *thars* who do not practice the *lhi* ritual.

- Gaṇeśapūjā (*caturthī*)
- Looking at the bride's face (*khvā sva vanegu*) by the bride's party
- Accepting the son-in-law (*jilancā du kāyegu*) by the bride's family
- Admission of the bride to the groom's lineage association (*digudyah guthī dukāyegu*)
- The groom's party (*bhvay*)

Marriage Rituals and its Literature

The literature on marriage and wedding in South Asia in general is vast so that no one can survey the thousands of articles and books that exist. The following is thus a rough synopsis of some of the publications that have been important to us or have attracted the attention of a larger audience.

Studies focused on the situation of women in general (Altekar 1959, Cormack 1974, Kapadia 1966, Meyer 1915, Uberoi 1993), kinship aspects (Dumont 1961, 1964, 1966 and 1983, Fürer-Haimendorf 1966, Karve 1965), gender (Harlan 1995), the role of the married wife or *strīdharmā* (Leslie 1989 and 1991), the changes in social roles (Chatterjee 1972, Srinivas 1978), legal aspects, especially the Hindu Marriage Act (Aggarwal 2005, Menski 1984 and 2000), women's rituals (Pintchman 2007), marriage songs (Agarwala 1982), and much more.

The Indological research on the traditional wedding ritual focused on such relevant texts as the *Gr̥hyasūtras* (Haas 1862, Winternitz 1892, Hillebrandt 1897, Fay 1899, Zachariae 1903, Apte 1939, Sengupta 1965, Keßler-Perseaud 2010) or the history of marriage and the role of the wife in Vedic times (Apte 1978, Ch. K. Chatterjee 1978, Chauduri 1940, Jamison 1996, Sarma 2005, Schmidt 1987, Upadhyay 1941). For *saṃskāras* in general see also Hillebrandt (1897), Gonda (1965) and (1980), Kane (1968 ff.), Pandey (1969), Olivelle (1993) and Michaels (2010b).

A number of modern handbooks in English can also be found that try to explain the marriage ritual to the Indian or Nepalese middle classes, e.g. Sarma (1993) with reference to Rāmadatta's *Vivāhapaddhati*, or, for Nepal, Suvedī (1999) and Majapurīa/Majapurīa 2009.

The regional focus of marriage patterns and rules has always been recognized, from the Dharmaśāstras and *Gr̥hyasūtras* up to the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955. It is an essential part of customary or regional law (*jāti-, kula- or deśadharmā*):

So the norms of the Dharmashastra have always coexisted with an abundance of variations and contradictions of its tenets, with its express sanction. The unitary character of the Hindu culture of marriage has always been a loose synthesis presiding over a pluralism of particular cultures that cannot be deduced from the texts although they point to it. ... Thus any discussion of marriage patterns in India has attended both to the regional patterns and the legal cultures of marriage with the great religious traditions. (Trautmann 2009: 68)

This is precisely what we try to achieve in our study of Newar marriage rituals, in keeping with many other studies that are related to specific regions, e.g. Bengal (Fruzetti 1982), South India (Thurston/Rangachari 1909), Kerala (Mencher 1967), Kashmir (Madan 1965). Other publications deal with special problems such as the dowry system (Tambiah 1973), child marriage (Sagade 2005), the divine marriage (Gatwood 1991, Shulman 1980) or love marriage (Ahearn 2004, Moody 2008, Weiss 1996).

When it comes to marriage rituals in Nepal, especially of the Newars, so far they have mostly been looked at as part of more comprehensive studies, e.g. Nepali (1965: 198-231) on Kathmandu, Bennett (1979: 71-

92) on Parbatiya castes, Toffin (1984: 401-422, M. Allen 1987) mostly on Pyāngāon, Pradhan (1986: 148-179) on Kathmandu high castes, Levy (1990: 126-144 and 673-676) on Bhaktapur, Löwdin (1985: Ch. VI) on the Uray, or on Buddhist Newars in Patan (Asha Kaji 2010: 123-128). To these have to be added the articles by Bajracharya (1959) on Bajrācāryas, Ishii (1995 and 1999), Dumont (1964), Quigley (1986), Vergati (1982), Vajracharya (1992) and Toffin (1975), and the poetic description of the Buddha's marriage in *Sugata Saurabha* (ch. 7), which fairly follows a Newar marriage pattern.

A variety of publications are mostly related to other castes or caste groups. Thus, Bennett

(1983), Furer-Haimendorf (1966 and 1971), Gray (1980 and 1995), Kondos (1991) and Niraula 1994 focus on the Parbatiyās, Ahearn (1994) and Oppitz (1988) on the (Northern) Magars, MacDougal (1979) on the Kulunge Rai – to mention just a few such studies. Bennett (1979) presents a sociological overview on the status of women in Nepal.

There are also a few publications by scholars from Nepal who focus on such rituals from the perspective of the tradition (Bajrācāryya and Bajrācāryya 1962, Prajapati et al. 1997, Dkv-Kaji 2010). A rather simplifying introduction is given by Majupuria/Majupuria (1989).