

5 The Body of Rules

From the historical conditions and the literary context surrounding the production and further development of the PuCi and its main topic, the analysis now shifts to its contents. Thus the angle from which the text is looked at is reversed from an out-to-inside to an in-to-outside perspective. Before proceeding to the subject matter proper, one needs to state in advance some basic characteristics of the text. Three deserve special mention: the text is 1) prescriptive, 2) highly specialized and 3) encyclopaedic.

1) The PuCi does not describe what is really done with flowers in *pūjā* but rather prescribes what should be done. These instructions are, moreover, not gleaned from actual practice but are reported in the form of quotations from textual sources. As has been shown in chapter 3.2 above, even most of the commentarial passages, which might be expected to relate to the practical context, were adopted from previous texts. The rules are only referred to as authoritative statements (*pramāṇa*) and are not developed any further for purposes of application (*prayoga*).¹⁶² The text is, in short, not a *paddhati*,

literally a ‘pathway’, being a practical manual that guides the performer of a ritual by co-ordinating the Mantras and actions ..., setting them out explicitly in the order of their performance and utterance (Sanderson 2003–2004: 356).

As a *nibandha*, it belongs to the śāstric literature. S. Pollock’s (1985) observations on the general character of *śāstra*, “according to the standard definition, a verbal codification of rules” (ibid.: 501), are worth reporting in some detail, as they touch upon the relationship of text and practice as well as on the ideological status of knowledge and its production. According to the opinion of learned ones (*śāstrī*), *śāstra* as theory precedes practice (*prayoga*), which it rules.¹⁶³ Given

162 See also Bühnemann’s (1988: 31–32) classification of normative texts on *pūjā* as being either referential or operational. As the example of the *Durgābhaktitarāṅginī* shows, which “unlike other digests ... treats of both the *pramāṇa* and the *prayoga* aspect of ritual” (Ganguly 1972: 98), the two aspects can also be combined in texts.

163 A discussion of the relationship of *śāstra* and *prayoga* is found in the third chapter of the *Kāmasūtra* (Pollock 1985: 507). It is there stated that *śāstra* precedes *prayoga*

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such a point of view, the question of whether the rules for *pūjā* flowers might have been inferred from practice during the period of their formulation does not arise. Knowledge as transmitted by the Śāstras, the authoritative treatises, is considered as pre-existent and eternal, ultimately rooted in the authority of the Veda (as concerns the tradition of the Dharmasāstra)¹⁶⁴ or in that of the Tantric scriptures, or in Śiva himself. In order to produce valid normative formulations, authors had to shift back in time or hierarchically upwards. In this ideology, “discovery and innovation” are styled as “renovation and recovery” (ibid: 515). Or, as Derrett has remarked,

no scholar ... could expect his compositions to have any effect ... unless he related the wisdom of ages in a contemporary guise. His name would add nothing to its value, which lay in its being accepted and transmitted as a true statement of transcendental verities. (Derrett 1973: 3)

As the prescriptive literature of the Śāstras was “an attempt at an exhaustive classification of human cultural practices” (Pollock 1985: 502), any human activity—each and every aspect of cultural knowledge—could come under its lens.

2) The PuCi is a Śāstra in which highly specialized ritual knowledge is codified. Rules governing the use of flowers as *upacāra* are specified,¹⁶⁵ both general and specific in their application. The context is taken for granted, and so not described. Special expertise is needed to turn the instructions into actual practice. The PuCi discloses neither that the offering of a “flower” (*puṣpa*) is part of a series of *upacāras*, where it is typically inserted between offerings of “scent(ed paste)” (*gandha* or *anulepana*) and “incense” (*dhūpa*), nor that the offering of the *upacāras* itself is embedded within preliminary and concluding rites. Likewise, the text does not mention ritual acts that accompany the offering of a flower.¹⁶⁶ Usually a liturgical formula, called a mantra or *vākya*, is to be pronounced, which varies

(*prayogasya ca śāstrapūrvakatvāt iti vātsyāyanaḥ* 3.4) and that the former, however remote from it, is the sole basis of the latter (*prayogasya dūrastham api śāstram eva hetuḥ* 3.6).

164 As has been discussed by D. R. Davis (2004) and others, authors of Dharmasāstra were not ignorant of the fact that most topics treated by them were not addressed in the Vedic texts. They found ways, however, to cope with the situation, e.g. by introducing the authority of knowledgeable persons (*śiṣṭa*) in matters of *ācāra*. These people, again, were perceived and depicted as rooted in the Vedic tradition.

165 For other uses of flowers in *pūjā*, see chapter 1.

166 An exception is PuCi 4.47–50, where the ritual directions are unusually elaborate (see pp. 133–136 below).

depending on, among other things, the deity, tradition or occasion.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, different “gestures” (*mudrā*) are prescribed.¹⁶⁸

Dropping all information from his sources that went beyond the immediate thematic scope, the compiler of the PuCi set about fashioning a digest that covered all conceivable material options for the *upacāra puṣpa*, a “material culture study” of *pūjā* flowers. Such specialization is only possible when sources are available that are, on the one hand, sufficiently diversified from a thematic point of view but, on the other hand, still comparable on a formal level. The thematic restriction could also bespeak a particular experts’ tradition or a targeted expert readership, at least if one presupposes a practical purpose to the composition.

3) The PuCi is purely encyclopaedic; that is, rules both general and special have been compiled, together with textual backing for them. As has been argued in chapter 3.1 above, their arrangement follows certain ordering principles, but they are not connected by meta-rules. Apart from a few instances, the compiler’s moderating voice, which could have elucidated the interrelation among the rules and stress their relative importance or validity, is missing. With all justification, the PuCi can be counted among those *nibandhas* where “primary sources told their own tale in their own ways” (Derrett 1973: 52), as distinguished by Derrett from those in which authors used quotations to illustrate or support their own arguments. Like the practical environment and the bondedness between rules, the theoretical background remains unaddressed. But whereas the omission of the wider context can be chalked up to the specialized nature of the text and the lack of links between rules may be attributed to a conscious compilational choice to let the quotations largely speak for themselves, the absence of theoretical reasoning is a common trait of the *nibandhas*:

Very often, reasons are not expressly stated, not given, and sometimes one is not so sure whether the authors of the digests knew them. In any event, they make no effort to convince their readers; they stipulate.¹⁶⁹

167 For examples of mantras, see Bhaṭṭarāi (2003: 42–44, 88), Bühnemann (1988: 162), Duda (2005: 116–117), Tripathi (2004: 324), G. Upādhyāya (2004: 86). The *Puṣpamāhātmya* [I] provides *vākyas* for some of the rules stated in PuCi 4 (see Table 4.1 above).

168 In the *Puṣpasāra*, the *jñānamudrā* is prescribed (*jñānamudrāsamāyuktaṃ puṣpaṃ niḥkṣepanaṃ caret*, NGMPP H 340/2 fol. 3a₂). Tripathi (2004: 324) records a *puṣpamudrā*. According to the *Tantracintāmaṇi* (17.486–488b) the flower is taken between the thumb and the index finger, according to Miśra and Miśra (2004: 113) between the thumb and the middle finger, according to the *Kālikāpurāṇa* (cited by Bühnemann 1988: 162) between the middle and the ring finger.

169 “Begründungen werden ... sehr oft nicht ausgesprochen, nicht gegeben, und manchmal ist man sich nicht so sicher, ob die Autoren der Kompendien sie kannten.

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But how can the rules thus assembled in the PuCi and presented free from context be comprehended? Are the assignments of flowers to deities purely arbitrary or do they follow certain principles? Which contexts might help to explain the rules? Do these latter integrate into an overarching system? Are there major contradictions or inconsistencies? What is the relationship of the text to actual ritual practice? To approach these issues, the content of the text is submitted in the following to a gradual analysis. Firstly, the set of rules is explored, sequentially treating the general and special rules. Subsequently, those parts of the text are dealt with that, partly or completely, evade this overall scheme. The last part looks at the translation of the Sanskrit text into Newari and enquires into potential ritual applications of the text.

5.1 General Rules

It is perhaps one of the universals of religious practice that the preparation and treatment of sacrificial material is carefully regulated (Seiwert 1998: 275). H. Seiwert defines “sacrifice” (Opfer) broadly as a “religious act that consists in the ritual release of a material object”¹⁷⁰. From a formal point of view, *pūjā* too can be grasped in this definition. And indeed, the scholastic Brahmanic tradition defines *pūjā* as a “sacrifice” (*yāga*) because it consists in the “relinquishment” (*tyāga*) of a “material object” (*dravya*) and assigning it to a deity.¹⁷¹ The “*pūjā* offerings” (*upacāra*) then fall under *dravya*, in a general sense denoting “material objects” broadly, and more specifically in ritualistic texts, “sacrificial material”. Texts from various traditions inform us about what is suitable as a *dravya* in ritual, and how it is to be handled and disposed of.

The PuCi, accordingly, contains a range of general regulations as to what qualifies or disqualifies a flower that is to be offered to deities, and how it is properly procured and treated. These rules are prominently located in the first chapter of the text, but are also scattered throughout the other chapters. They share commonalities, which may be reduced to the simple formula: “all material should be in perfect condition and unspoilt” (Bühnemann 1988: 66). A more detailed

Jedenfalls geben sie sich keine Mühe, ihre Leser zu überzeugen: sie schreiben vor” (Kölver 2003: 123).

170 “Eine religiöse Handlung, die in der rituellen Entäußerung eines materiellen Objekts besteht” (Seiwert 1998: 269).

171 E.g.: *pūjānāma devatoddeśena dravyatyāgātmakatvāt yāga eva* (*Pūjāprakāśa* 1913: 1); for further references regarding *pūjā* as *yāga* and the discussion about parallels and (dis)continuities between *pūjā* and Vedic sacrifice, see Lidova (2020), Lubin (2016), Valpey (2020).

investigation, however, should enable us to come up with more specific statements about the Brahmanic conception of *pūjā* flowers. In the following, I will supplement the data from the PuCi by details found in similar text passages; for one, in order to provide a general overview of rules, moreover to find out how representative of its genre the text can be considered and to assess the extent to which its rules on *pūjā* flowers blend into the wider śāstric field.

Common Requirements

Among the common requirements for *pūjā* flowers, scent is the feature most prominently mentioned. A flower should have a nice scent (PuCi 1.29c, 2.32a, 4.5d). It should be neither scentless (1.130c; 2.85c, 93c; 4.77a) nor strongly fragrant (+1.128b, 1.130c; 2.93cd; 4.77a). As stressed repeatedly, any flower that is fragrant may be offered in *pūjā* (1.29c, 59a, 92b; 2.32a, 63a; 3.10a, 16c; 4.5d, 53c, 68c). As I have argued more elaborately elsewhere (A. Zotter 2014), different ideas are associated with the smell and the smelling of flowers in *pūjā*. The close resemblance between smelling and eating is echoed in one of the standard proscriptions regarding *pūjā* flowers: they should not be smelt prior to being offered.¹⁷² A flower smelt is considered *nirmālya*, i.e. already consumed.¹⁷³ Furthermore, there are indications supporting the concept that deities consume flowers by smelling.¹⁷⁴ The scent of a flower may be charged with several other associations, ranging from purity to sensual arousal.

The text not only rules that flowers to be offered should be fragrant, but that they should have a colour and flavour as well as an odour that are pleasant (PuCi 2.33cd, 80d).¹⁷⁵ In this light, the demand for fragrance may more aptly be

172 “The man who offers [something] after having smelled [it], o goddess, attains hell” (*ghrātāvā nivedya deveśi naro narakam āpnuyāt; Śāktānandatarāṅgini* 14.49cd; see also PuRat 2.37a; *Nityotsava* 1948: 168₃₀). According to the *Kālikāpurāṇa* 69.149 (e.g. cited in *Pūjāpañkajabhāskara* 1996: 32) none of the *upacāras* should be smelt.

173 “*Nirmālya* is declared to be of two kinds, that which is already offered and that which is smelled. It is unfit for another ritual; in any event, it is to be abandoned” (*nirmāyaṃ dvividham proktam utsṛṣṭam ghrātam eva ca | na kriyāntarayogyam tat sarvathā tyājyam eva ca*; Mīśra and Mīśra 2004: 112, citing the *Tattvasāgarasaṃhitā*). For more on *nirmālya*, see below.

174 “Deities find pleasure in the odour [of flowers], spirits and demons in the sight [of them], snakes in eating [them], but humans in these three things” (*gandhena devās tuśyanti darśanād yakṣarākṣasāḥ | nāgāḥ samupabhogena tribhir etais tu mānuṣāḥ, Mahābhārata* 13.101.34); for a discussion of the passage containing this verse, see McHugh (2012: 218–243).

175 Note that the verses quoted in the PuCi use the standard Sāṃkhya terminology for the objects of sense perception (*varṇa, rasa, gandha*).

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understood as guaranteeing the offering of a “complete” flower. Comparatively few general statements, though, are made about the visual appearance of flowers. Occasionally it is said that flowers should be beautiful (*śobhana* 1.9c, *manorama* 4.52b). PuCi 2.39a speaks of Viṣṇu viewing the offering of a flower. Other physical demands include the rule that flowers should be without thorns (1.127c) and should not have less than three leaves (1.134a). It will become clear when analyzing the special rules that, despite the stronger emphasis on the olfactory character in the general regulations, flowers are actually much more differentiated as regards their optical qualities. The deities’ likes and dislikes, too, more often seem to be related to visual features.¹⁷⁶

A flower should only be offered when in full bloom. Neither buds, i.e. premature blossoms (PuCi 1.132c, 2.73c, 3.44a), nor flowers that are “wilted” (*mlāna* 1.131a; *śīrṇa* 3.45d) or that have become “dry” (*śuṣka* 2.62a) are appropriate. Flowers are considered “stale” (*paryuṣita* 1.17c, 132a; 2.62c; 3.1c) as soon as they have “stood overnight” (*rātriparyuṣita* 1.128b; 3.45d; 4.91c). Specifications for the proper offering times of the day ensure that flowers are fully unfolded when presented. Flowers that open at dusk or in the night, examples being thorn-apples (*kanaka*) or *kadambas*, should be offered at night, and the jasmine species *mallikā* at midnight (1.86c–87b, 2.83c–84b, 3.41).¹⁷⁷ In addition to the fully blooming stage of development, it is stipulated that flowers should only be employed during their normal flowering season. Flowers “made to bloom artificially” (*kṛtrimavikāsita* +1.134b) and fruits artificially ripened or that ripen at an uncustomary time are prohibited in the worship of deities (3.44c–45b).¹⁷⁸ Positive statements speak of the suitability of “seasonal” flowers (*ṛtukālobbhava* 3.2c).¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, the rule

176 In a single instance, in PuCi 4.94cd, it is said that Sundarī becomes angry at the mere scent of a *tulasī*. This might be seen as stressing that this goddess’s wrath is aroused even at the least notice of a *tulasī*. Elsewhere it is deities delightfully smelling flowers that are referred to; e.g. Śiva is said to smell the scent of his favourite flower species: “Śaṅkara smells the scent of four flower species, of *arka*, *karavīra*, *bilva* and *baka*” (*caturṇām puṣpajātīnām gandham āghrāti śaṅkaraḥ | arkasya karavīrasya bilvasya ca bakasya ca, Pūjāprakāśa* 1913: 212).

177 In contrast to the Sanskrit the Newari text also states this as a general rule, adding to the translation of PuCi 1.86cd (the special rule for *kanakas* and *kadambas*): “flowers that bloom after daylight has ceased are to be offered at night” (*nebhāla visenali hoo svāna cānhasa chāya*); and to that of 3.41 (the special rule for *kadambas* and *mallikā*): “all flowers that bloom at dusk are to be offered at night” (*saṃdhyākālāsa hoko svāna cānhasa chāya*).

178 Inauspiciousness seems to be attributed to flowers and fruits that peak out of season (*akārajāta*). For example, they are considered bad omens in oneiromancy (*Svapnacintāmaṇi* 2.59).

179 According to the ĀC this formulation effectively rules out flowers that bloom out of season, e.g. as a result of *dohada*, a tree’s desire to be touched by a female: “The

that one should offer flowers “as they are available” (*yathālābham*) is understood by the translator into Newari in its temporal dimension.¹⁸⁰

A flower that meets general demands with respect to its natural features and its stage of development must be free from pollution. Flowers that have touched the ground (PuCi +1.128b, 128d, 131c, 133b; 3.46a), that have become dirty (1.131c; 4.15c), that have touched a seat (+1.128b, 128c) or impure body parts (1.133d), or that have been spoilt by insects, worms or hair (1.17d, 131d; 2.73a; 3.1d, 44c, 45c; 4.15d, 16a, 78d, 79a) or physically damaged (1.17c, 132d; 3.1c) are deemed improper and should be sorted out. The term *upahata* (1.127d, +128b; 2.73b; 3.46b) is used as a general term for flowers whose purity has been compromised.

Regulations for the proper procurement of flowers provide one of the rare occasions during which the compiler weighs up different opinions (PuCi 1.17–20). For the worship of Śiva, wild flowers are considered best (+1.20–21), or else those cultivated in one’s own garden (1.11–12, 17c; 3.2a). The author limits the prohibition expressed by some authors against the use of flowers from “someone else’s garden” (*parakīyārama* 1.18c–19b), citing other texts which allow for theft as an alternative means of acquisition in the absence of flowers of one’s own (+1.19b–20b). Purchase is given as another option. This view finds indirect confirmation in the mention of the “garland maker” (*mālākāra* +1.141), who trades in flowers. Elsewhere the text notes a contrary opinion, one that considers the offering of a purchased flower as fruitless (1.130d), without—as other writers of *nibandhas* do¹⁸¹—attempting to harmonize this contradiction. Acquisition by begging or pleading, however, is clearly disapproved of (1.20cd, 2.62d).

Considering the weight Brahmanic reasoning attaches to the maintenance of purity for offerings, these rules for the procurement of flowers might again be aiming at minimizing the risk of pollution. The avoidance of contact with the impure is best secured for flowers grown in one’s own garden. Moreover, such flowers meet all the other common requirements raised in the Śāstras for

specification ‘with those that are produced at their seasonal time’ is in order to establish a prohibition of flowers generated out of season, by *dohada* and the like” (*ṛtukālobbhavair iti viśeṣaṇam anāvartavadohadādījanitapuṣpaṇiṣedhārtham*, ĀC 1983: 147₇₋₈). For more on *dohada*, see p. 131 below.

180 PuCi 1.65a: “... which among these flowers are available at a certain time [of the year]” (*thvate svānasa gvavelasa gvagula svāna data*); 2.27c: “... which among these flowers one gets at a certain time [of the year]” (*thvate svānasa gvavelasa gvaguli lāta*); 2.31d: “flowers according to the time [of the year]” (*svāna samayetina*).

181 In the *Nityotsava* (1948: 168₁₉₋₂₁) the prohibition against buying flowers is restricted to *nityapūjā* and to Brahmins. The author of the *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 269) favours the view that allows purchase. In contemporary *pūjā* practice a compromise can be observed. Thus, some worshippers take care to pay the flower seller only after they have offered the flowers.

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something that is worth giving (*deya*). Only one's own property should be given (Kane 1968–77: II, 849–850), not something that has been acquired by hurting someone or causing loss (*ibid.*: 847). In view of these points, the other methods of procurement may have been considered defective: Though the purity of a stolen flower can be ensured from the time it is plucked to the time it is offered, it has obviously been dishonestly obtained, with its previous owner suffering loss. And while lawfully acquired, a purchased flower appears suspect with regard to its purity, which may have been compromised for having passed through others' hands.

Not only the acquisition but also the further treatment of flowers is subject to restrictions. A rule quoted several times in the PuCi (+1.128b, 1.129c, 2.62c), that flowers are not to be plucked after bathing, seems contrary to Brahmanic ideas of purity. Not unexpectedly, it stimulated other authors' explanations: Usually texts limit the rule to apply only to a bath at midday (*madhyāhnasnāna*).¹⁸² On this point, the *Śāktānandatarāṅginī* cites the prescription to collect flowers in the morning after cleaning one's body; the *Nityakarmapūjāprakāśa*, a prohibition against cutting *tulasī* before bathing.¹⁸³ Such discussions attest to the *nibandha* writers' general tendency to try to iron out contradictions—with sometimes seemingly arbitrary reasoning or by limiting the range of application—rather than dropping parts of the transmitted statements or questioning their truth. The author of the PuCi simply adopts the rule without any further comment. Unlike other texts (mostly younger ones), the PuCi contains no further regulations on plucking flowers.¹⁸⁴

Like plucking, the transport of flowers too is regulated. Flowers should not be wrapped in one's clothes (PuCi 1.133c). While carrying flowers, one should not greet others (+1.128b). Other texts specify that flowers should not be carried with the left hand or be wrapped in the leaves of either an *arka* or castor-oil plant (*eraṇḍa*).¹⁸⁵ Before being offered, flowers should be “purified by sprinkling”

182 *madhyāhnasnānaviśayam evaitat prātaḥ snānāntaraṃ dviṭīye dinabhāge puṣpāvacyasya dakṣeṇa vihitatvāt* (ĀC 1983: 138₁₋₂); see also Mīśra and Mīśra (2004: 107 n. 2), *Śāktānandatarāṅginī* 14.76–78.

183 *prātaḥ snānādikaṃ kṛtvā puṣpāny api samāharet | tatpuṣpair arcayan devīm sa pāpāir mucyate kṣaṇāt* (*Śāktānandatarāṅginī* 14.78); *asnātvā tulasīm chitvā devatāpīṭṭkarmaṇi | tat sarvaṃ niṣphalaṃ yāti pañcagavyena śuddhyati* (Mīśra and Mīśra 2004: 107 n. 2ga).

184 Regulations governing plucking include mantras to be spoken or times at which certain flowers are not to be plucked; e.g. *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 270_{5-8, 14-15}), Mīśra and Mīśra (2004: 107–110), G. Upādhyāya (2004: 75–76).

185 E.g. Dattātreyaṇandanātha (2004: 39), Mīśra and Mīśra (2004: 112), second appendix to the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (1999: 462_{15, 27-28}).

(*prokṣita* PuCi 1.17d, 69c; 3.1), but should not be soaked in water or washed (+1.128b, 1.128c).

Practical guidance for how to offer the flower itself is scant. Flowers should not be offered facing downwards (PuCi 1.85–86b). Some formulations found in the fourth chapter of the PuCi, such as *japtvā* (4.50a corr.) or the use of the term *mantrin* (“one who knows the [proper] mantra”; 4.81b, 85b, 89b), point to the use of liturgical speech, without, however, specifying details. This apparently lay beyond the immediate focus of the text.

Offered Flowers

Once offered, a flower should not be used in further rituals (PuCi 1.131a). It is considered to have been consumed, being called *nirmālya* or *ucchiṣṭa* (4.92ab). *Ucchiṣṭa* (lit. “remainder”) is a term that commonly designates the remains of food offerings in the Vedic fire as well as scraps of human food. Food touched or consumed by another person is considered polluted, and therefore a highly polluting substance. According to the *Dharmaśāstra*, one should neither eat one’s own left-overs nor those of another person.¹⁸⁶ And yet, consuming *ucchiṣṭa* can at times signal submission, respect or even intimacy, and does not result in pollution (Michaels 1998: 202–203). For instance, in the marriage ritual a bride is to eat food that has been tasted by the groom; a student of the Veda should feed on the *ucchiṣṭa* of his preceptor; and a mother may eat the food left over by her child. In like manner, a “householder” (*grhastha*) is to eat the remains of food offerings burnt in fire (Gonda 1980: 188, based on *Mānavagrhyasūtra* 2.3.14.). The most rigorous prescriptions even stipulate that only food first ritually offered is to be consumed by humans (Edholm 1984: 84–85). Some Nepalese Hindus still obey this rule today. In everyday practice many take their meals only after offering small parts of it to deities and ancestors.

In the context of *pūjā*, the term *ucchiṣṭa* is not limited to food offerings (*naivedya*) but extends to all *upacāras*. Though used synonymously with *ucchiṣṭa* in the literature under discussion, the word *nirmālya* carries slightly different connotations. It may be related either to *mālya*, “garland”—maybe hinting at an extension of reference from the remains of flower garlands to other offerings—or to *nirmala*, “spotless”, in which sense it would denote stainlessness or purity.¹⁸⁷

186 E.g. *Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtra* 14.20–21 (cited in Olivelle 2005: 137–138); on *ucchiṣṭa*, see Gonda (1975, 1980: 188–192), Wezler (1978).

187 See Brunner-Lachaux (1968: 274), Nowotny (1957: 154 n. 209). Böhtlingk and Roth (1865: s.v. *nirmālya* 1.) equate *nirmālya* with *nirmala*, on the basis of its use in *Grhyasaṅgraha* 2.85–87. When the volume containing the entry was republished in

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The latter might describe the quality the offerings are said to have achieved by their contact with the deity.¹⁸⁸ Hence, when the offerings are redistributed to the worshippers they are also called *prasāda*,¹⁸⁹ “clarified substance” (see Fig. 5.1).

The special quality attributed to a flower that has become *nirmālya/ucchiṣṭa* is mirrored in the attentiveness and the ritual precautionary measures it is to be treated with. To place and walk around with a *prasāda* flower on one’s head is a widespread practice, and not only in Nepal.¹⁹⁰ Viṣṇu’s *prasāda*, especially food, is greatly extolled (Tripathi 2004: 368; Kane 1968–77: II, 732). In contrast, opinions about the *nirmālya* of Śiva are ambivalent.¹⁹¹ In the Tamil-speaking region and the Śaivasiddhānta tradition, part of the main deity’s *nirmālya* is offered to a minor deity, called Caṇḍa or Caṇḍeśa, who absorbs the rest of the offerings (Edholm 1984; Goodall 2009). Similar practices and deities are known from other Tantric traditions.¹⁹² While the Vaiṣṇava Viṣvaksena and other deities charged with the task of taking care of the remnants of offerings have been analyzed to have “rather little ‘personality’” (Goodall 2009: 391) and to have been “probably all calqued upon Caṇḍeśa” (ibid.: 392), the Mahāvidyā goddess Mātāṅgī, who is

an abridged version in 1882, the entry on *nirmālya* appears to have been reworked (Böhtlingk 1998 s.v.: “1. Adj. (aus einem Kranze ausgeschieden) ausrangirt; unbrauchbar, nicht hingehörig”). This is perhaps due to M. Bloomfield’s (1881: 584) note on *Grhyasaṅgraha* 2.85, in which, on account of the commentaries’ glosses of *nirmālyatā* as *nivīryatā* (“powerlessness, ineffectiveness”), he doubts the relation to *nirmāla*. Obviously, there are diverse conceptions of *nirmālya* found in Sanskrit texts from different ritual traditions that deserve to be studied in more depth and detail.

188 Fuller (1992: 74, 78) speaks of the offering as having been “transmuted” and argues against the view that food offerings and *prasāda* constitute a gift and return gift in the Maussian sense; for a discussion, see Michaels (1998: 269–270).

189 The Sanskrit verb *pra-sad-*, “to settle down”, signifies a becoming bright or clear, as a body of standing water does once all the mud has settled to the bottom. Derivatives of *pra-sad-* are figuratively used, amongst other meanings, to describe a human mind that has become free of thoughts. In this sense, offering material that has become *prasāda* can be understood as having been “clarified” by contact with the divine. The semantic range of *prasāda* is, however, much wider and includes purity, transcendence or grace (Malinar 2009: 22 n. 6); for more on *prasāda*, see Fuller (1992: 74–75).

190 Bühnemann (1988: 181), Edholm (1984: 81), Kane (1968–77: II, 732), Nowotny (1957: 154 n. 210), Tripathi (1978: 301, 2004: 367–368), *Padmapurāṇa* 7.11.133.

191 The widespread prohibition against touching remains from the worship of Śiva (*agrāhyaṃ śivanaivedyaṃ patraṃ puṣpaṃ jalam*, Bühnemann 1988: 182) are discussed by many authors; see e.g. the *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 271). Brunner-Lachaux (1969) has translated one of these discussions in the Śaivasiddhānta tradition and has discussed the issue on a different occasion (Brunner-Lachaux 1968: 266–288).

192 Edholm (1984: 89–91); for *Ucchiṣṭabhairava* in Śrīvidyā practice, see S. Gupta (1979: 156–157).



Fig. 5.1 Offered flowers (*nirmālya*) are returned as *prasāda* to the worshippers who typically carry them visibly at their heads. At the aniconic seat (*pīṭha*) of Bhadrakālī the *nirmālya* of the goddess is provided for take-away; photo: 7 January 2007, Kathmandu.

considered a Caṇḍālīnī and feeds on *ucchiṣṭa*, seems to be a goddess with similar functions who has developed a distinct character and iconography.¹⁹³

Thus different strategies are met with regarding the reuse or the disposal of *nirmālya*. One who treats *nirmālya* carelessly, however, is menaced in texts with serious consequences. These can be dramatically illustrated by mythical precedents, as in the 28th chapter of the *Narasimhapurāṇa*. In this story, Narasiṃha appears to one of his devotees, the *mālākāra* Ravi, in a dream and advises him

193 For Mātāṅgī, see Kinsley (1998: 209–222). According to Rodrigues (2003: 237–238) in the Durgāpūjā as performed in Benares *nirmālya* is consumed by *Nirmālyavāsīnī* or *Ucchiṣṭacāṇḍālīnī*, each of whom is held to be a form of Mātāṅgī. At times the *chvāsahī* (New.) stone, which in a Newar city absorbs ritual waste, is identified as Mātāṅgī (Gutschow and Michaels 2005: 30). The untouchables of Bhaktapur, whose ritual duties include the acceptance of material used and food offered in rituals, use Mātāṅgī as their self-designation (*ibid.*: 60).

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to trap a flower thief with the help of *nirmālya*. The nightly theft of flowers from the well-protected garden poses a threat to the livelihood of the garland maker. As instructed by the deity, Ravi strews flowers used in *pūjā* on the ground and so catches Jayanta, Indra's son, red-handed. Jayanta had assumed the habit of visiting the garden at night and of stealing all flowers in bloom. Having stepped on Narasiṃha's *nirmālya*, he loses the ability to set forth in his aerial chariot. Only after twelve years of penance, during which he is to remove the *ucchiṣṭa* of Brahmins in Kurukṣetra, is his offence atoned for.¹⁹⁴

Exceptional Rules

As there is hardly a rule without any exception, it comes as no surprise that the PuCi specifies flowers to which certain requirements do not apply. For instance, it is said that the leaves of *bilva*, *khadira*, *dhātrī* and *tamāla* are not compromised when torn (PuCi 1.136ab), and that *campaka* and *padma* may be offered as buds (1.135ab), as *sephāli* and *bakula* may be even when they have fallen to the ground (1.134cd). This last concession is well known and commonly taken advantage of in Nepal and elsewhere, at least as far as *sephāli* is concerned. In contrast, the plucking of the "tree of sorrow's" flowers, more well-known in Sanskrit as *pārijāta* or *śephālikā* (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L.), is prohibited (Majupuria and Joshi 1997: 28). P. P. Regmi (1983: 127) reports the belief that plucking a *pārijāta* flower is equivalent to murdering a thousand cows. This proscription can be explained by the fact that the coral jasmine blooms at night and sheds its flowers in the morning (see Fig. 5.2). Thus, when the flowers drop, they are in a state ripe for offering. In practice, the flowers are harvested by spreading a clean cloth underneath their tree or by putting a basket there. The *pārijāta* tree imagined as a sorrowful beauty is a well-known motif in Sanskrit poetry (Emeneau 1944: 344–346) and Hindu mythology. In the latter, for example, the princess Pārijātā falls in love with the sun, is married to but later on abandoned by Sūrya and finally dies of grief. Her ashes sprout into the *pārijāta* tree, whose beautiful and fragrant

194 The same myth with different figures is recounted in connection with the account of how the *Śivamahimnaḥstotra* arose (Chakravarti 1959: 103). There it is Puṣpadanta, king of the Gandharvas, who treads on Śiva's *nirmālya*. In doing so, he loses the ability to rise into the air. In expiation he composes the poem in Śiva's praise. The *Somaśambhupaddhati* counts the stepping on *nirmālya* as a ritual lapse resulting in the "forfeiture of accomplishments" (*laṅghane siddhīhānis ca*, Brunner-Lachaux 1968: 279) and to be expiated by chanting ten thousand Aghoramantras (*nirmālyam laṅghayitvā tu dakṣiṇāyutaṃ japet*, *ibid.*: 271).



Fig. 5.2 *Pārijāta*, the coral jasmine, sheds its flowers in the morning, a property that resonates in myths around the tree. Flower texts prohibit the plucking of *pārijāta* flowers; photo: 16 September 2007, Kathmandu.

flowers are not able to bear the sight of the sun and fall to the ground at the first light of the day.¹⁹⁵

A whole series of special regulations concern the periods during which flowers may be used. Normally, flowers should be plucked and immediately offered. As mentioned above, they should not see the night pass, except when in the house of the garland maker (PuCi +1.141). Practical considerations may have given rise to this special regulation, because the *mālākāras* provide flowers in the early morning and so are normally forced to pluck them on the previous day. To be sure, the common rule is modified with respect to individual species: *karavīra* may be used for one day and one night (1.87d, 141cd); *padma* and *āmalaka* for three days (1.141ab); *tulasī* and *bilva* for five (1.138c–139b); and *buka* for as many as seven days (1.139c–140). It may be concluded that these flowers can be stored

195 Reported by Gandhi (1991: 9–10) from the *Viṣṇupurāna* without further specification; see also S. M. Gupta (2001: 53). Dymock et al. (1995: II, 376) offer a similar account, in which the princess is the daughter of the Nāga king Pārijāta.

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for the said periods of time, but still they become *nirmālya* once offered.¹⁹⁶ The discussion about the *buka* flower, however, discloses that it can be offered again and again within the given interval after due repurification measures are taken.

Only very few of the exception rules known from the pertinent literature are not covered in the PuCi. Some texts state that, against the common rule, the leaf of the *bilva* should be offered face down,¹⁹⁷ others that the flowers of the *palāśa*, *javā*, *bandhūka* and *mandāra* may be offered even though scentless.¹⁹⁸

Concerning exception rules in general, it is remarkable that they all have to do with prominent flowers, either those suitable for all deities or those particularly suited for specific deities. Thus exceptions seem to highlight the special status or importance of certain species. One could speculate that if it is especially the most important *pūjā* flowers that violate general rules, these generalities are likely to have been penned by Brahmanic authors as an attempt to systematize heterogeneous worship traditions and make them conform to Brahmanic concepts of purity and ritual aesthetics. A text such as the PuCi, which stands at the end of a long chain of scholarly treatments of the topic that one would have to trace back to its beginning, is probably not the best object of research to test out this hypothesis on.

An Overall View

The major part of the body of rules given in the text reflects aesthetic values. Olfactory pleasantness and visual beauty are especially emphasized. A flower is appreciated as an object perceptible by multiple senses: it can be seen, tasted, touched and smelt. It stimulates all but the sense of hearing. A flower must be complete and fully developed. It is only to be used in its proper season.

The rules also allude to the fact that flowers are transitory and fragile. A flower once plucked is to be used as an offering within a narrow time frame. Only unused flowers are considered proper gifts, and as such must be protected from contamination. L. Babb (1975: 47–51) has rightly pointed out that purity that is demanded in the Brahmanic context for all aspects of a ritual—such as place,

196 It is said that *tulasī*, *agastya* and *bilva* do not decay by themselves (PuCi 1.136cd), that *tulasī* may be used even if it has stood overnight (1.137) or that *tulasī* and *bilva* are always pure (1.138ab).

197 *patraṃ vā yadi vā puṣpaṃ phalaṃ neṣṭam adhomukham | yathotpannaṃ tathā deyaṃ bilvapatram adhomukham* (second appendix to the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* 1999: 470₃); see also *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 271₅), Miśra and Miśra (2004: 113), E. Upādhyāya (1991: 75).

198 E.g. in the *Nityotsava* (1948: 169₃₋₄) citing the *Svacchandāsāra*.

agents or the material involved—means the absence of pollution: “to become pure is to rid oneself of pollution; it is not to ‘add purity’” (ibid.: 49).¹⁹⁹ Accordingly, the PuCi states that flowers should be sprinkled with water (*prokṣita* 1.17d, 69c; 3.1d), which is one of the classical Dharmaśāstric purification measures.

However, flowers are also sometimes counted among those things that are pure in themselves. According to *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra* 1.9.4 (cited in Olivelle 2005: 152) flowers and fruits that grow on trees are not polluted even if the trees have grown in impure places. Flowers are praised as places where deities reside (PuCi 1.2–4). At times they can even be instrumental in creating purity, as in the *karasuddhi* rite prescribed in guidelines for Tantric *pūjā* (A. Zotter 2014: 195–196), during which a flower is taken, crushed between the hands and smelt:

The fingertips will be pure because of the grasping of the flowers, the two hand-palms become pure because of the rubbing; the back because of the grinding, the utmost point of the nose because of the smelling; and (all) the holy places converge in the tip of the nose, and in the hand. (*Kālikāpurāṇa* 59.54–55, tr. van Kooj)²⁰⁰

The association with purity is especially strong for particular species, such as *kuśa* grass (reckoned amongst the *pavitras*, “purifying agents”, in Vedic ritual), the lotus flower (*padma*, *kamala*) or the sacred basil (*tulasī*), which will all be discussed further below.

As has already been noted in passing, there are commonalities between the regulations for flowers offered in *pūjā* and those found in the Dharmaśāstra tradition for gifts and food. Terminological parallels are not restricted to words such as *ucchiṣṭa*. Like a flower, food that has “stood overnight” (*paryuṣita*) should no longer be consumed.²⁰¹ The phrase “stained by hair or insects” is another standard for both unfit food and unusable flowers.²⁰² The parallelism goes even

199 For a more detailed discussion on purity in Brahmanic thought and ritual, see Malinar (2009).

200 *aṅgulyagrāṇi śuddhāni puṣpāṇām grahaṇād bhavet | taladvayaṃ mardanāt tu viśuddham abhijāyate || nirmañchanāt pañiprṣṭaṃ ghrāṇāt nāsāgram uttamam | tīrthāni ca samāyānti nāsikāgram* (ed. °kāyām) *karaṃ prati*. In the edition used here the verses are counted as *Kālikāpurāṇa* 57.54–55; see also *Gandharvatantra* 9.5–10, *Śāktānandataraiṅiṇi* 17.38–45, *Tārābhaktisudhārṇava* (1940: 149–150). According to most authorities, the flower should be red and cast into the north-eastern direction, while according to others *karasuddhi* is achieved through mantras alone.

201 See *Āpastambadharmasūtra* 1.17.17, *Gautamadharmasūtra* 17.16, *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra* 1.12.14, *Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtra* 14.28 (all cited in Olivelle 2005: 137–138).

202 *keśakīṭavipannāni* PuCi 2.73a, *kīṭakeśādividdhāni* 3.45c; see also PuCi 1.131d, 4.16a. Examples from the Dharmasūtras: *keśakīṭāvapannaṃ* (*Gautamadharmasūtra* 17.9,

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further. The proximity of the concepts relating to human food and offerings in Brahmanic tradition is well known.²⁰³ Thus it is no wonder that typologies developed for food can be carried over to *pūjā* flowers. The early Dharmaśāstra distinguishes two categories of inedible food (Olivelle 2002): plant and animal species that are generally forbidden as food sources are called *abhakṣya*, whereas *abhojya* denotes food that, due to external circumstances, has become unfit to be eaten. Later “[a]s the types of food that one should avoid became the focus of an expert tradition, they were bound to be classified and re-classified” (Olivelle 2002: 352). The category of non-edibles (*abhakṣya*) is usually called *svabhāva-* or *jātīduṣṭa*, “inherently defiled”. Food unfit to be eaten (*abhojya*) is distinguished according to the cause of its contamination, such as time (*kāladuṣṭa*), activities (*kriyāduṣṭa*), contact with polluting substances (*samsargaduṣṭa*), the defectiveness of purification measures (*saṃskāraduṣṭa*) or acceptance from the hands of someone unworthy (*parigrahaduṣṭa*).²⁰⁴

If one were to apply these categories to flowers, scentless or strongly fragrant flowers could be classed as *svabhāva-* or *jātīduṣṭa*; flowers that are still buds, already faded or that have bloomed at an improper time as *kāladuṣṭa*; those that are dirty or spoilt by contact with impurities as *samsargaduṣṭa*; those that are faultily procured or transported as *kriyāduṣṭa*; and those that were not properly sprinkled with water prior to offering as *saṃskāraduṣṭa*. The PuCi itself does not provide an example for the *parigrahaduṣṭa*. Other texts cover the rule that flowers should not be procured by Śūdras, but only by Brahmins,²⁰⁵ which would illustrate the prevention of this class of pollution. As far as I know, the śāstric discourse on *pūjā* flowers never developed such levels of abstraction. That topic is marginal in comparison to those on food or gifts, even if it does blend seamlessly into the larger śāstric discourse.

The PuCi records most of the standard rules for *pūjā* flowers found in the relevant literature and therefore can be considered representative of the genre. The compiler utilized almost all of the general information accessible to him, while

cited in Olivelle 2005: 137; MDh 4.207, 11.160), *keśakītopahataṃ* (*Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtra* 14.22, cited in Olivelle 2005: 137).

203 See e.g. Witzel (1997: 509–511) for a general discussion; Weber-Brosamer (1993) and Wilden (2000) for more particular studies of the Vedic ritual as representing an exchange of food. *Pūjā* has also been explained as nourishment for the deities; see Babb (1975: 31–67) and the discussion by Fuller (1992: 76–78).

204 These categories follow Kane (1968–77: II, 785–786). According to Olivelle’s notes on MDh 4.222 the commentaries on Manu operate with similar terms. The elevenfold system found in Vijñāneśvara’s commentary on *Yājñavalkyadharmasāstra* 3.289 is still more nuanced (Olivelle 2002: 352).

205 *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 269), *Nityotsava* (1948: 168₁₆₋₁₉), second appendix to the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (1999: 464₁₅), Dattātreyānandanātha (2004: 38).

carefully weeding out redundancies. Hence, the absence of one passage that was at the compiler’s disposal in two different source texts—in the *Śivadharmaśāstra* (5.89–90) and, in shorter form, in the *Ācāracintāmaṇi* (1983: 153_{17–18})—calls for explanation. The first mentioned text reads:

nirgandhāny ugragandhāni kusumāni vivarjayet |
gandhavanty apavitrāṇi yāni tāny api vivarjayet ||
gandhahīnam api grāhyaṃ pavitraṃ yat kuśādivat |
sāttvikaṃ tad dhi kusumaṃ pavitraṃ ca tāmasam ||
 (Śivadharmaśāstra 5.89–90)

One should avoid the scentless and the strongly fragrant flowers.

One should also avoid those that are fragrant but polluting (*apavitra*).

[A flower] which is purifying (*pavitra*)—*kuśa* and the like—should be used even if scentless, because this flower is *sāttvika* in character, a polluting one (*apavitra*) is *tāmasa* in character.

Two groups of flowers are distinguished here, the “purifying” (*pavitra*) and the “polluting” (*apavitra*), to which are attributed the basic qualities (*guṇa*) of “goodness” (*sattva*) and “darkness” (*tamas*) respectively. The *pavitra* flowers are exemplified by *kuśa*. A comment in the ĀC mentions *kapittha* and *nīli* as examples of *apavitra* flowers.²⁰⁶

The concept of *pavitra*, “purifying agent”, is of major importance in Brahmanic theories about ritual purity and purification (Malinar 2009: 23–25, 35–36). This status is assigned to certain entities, such as the sun, fire, mantras and Brahmins themselves, all of which purify while they themselves resist pollution. The *kuśa* (or *darbha*)²⁰⁷ grass mentioned in the quotation above is the one prominent example from flora. From late Vedic texts onwards the term *pavitra*²⁰⁸ is used for different instruments made of *kuśa*: the strainers used to sprinkle water; the seat

206 *apavitrāṇi* – *kapitthanīlyādīni* (ĀC 1983: 154₁₅). *Nīli* is the name of the indigo plant, *Indigofera tinctoria* L. (AVS 3: 210–213), which is associated with impurity (Weinberger-Thomas 1999: 24–28). Clothes dyed in indigo are reserved for Śūdras. A Brahmin who wears indigo-coloured clothes, or cultivates, trades in or touches indigo plants, faces loss of his caste status.

207 *Kuśa* and *darbha* are sometimes taken to be identical and sometimes different species; for more details, see appendix A below and Gonda (1985: 52, 97–107). In contemporary Nepalese practice, the two names are universally treated as synonyms.

208 Gonda (1985: 30–32, *kuśa* as *pavitra*; 65–69, *darbha* as *pavitra*). In the *Atharvaveda*, *darbha* is praised as “foremost of the plants, born from the gods, which overpowers all enemies, the killer of the Rākṣasas” (Tüerstig 1985: 98).



Fig. 5.3 In Brahmanic rituals—here in a life-cyclic initiation (*vratibandha*)—the sacrificial patron (*yajamāna*) wears a ring of *kuśa* grass, called *pavitra*, at the ring finger of his prominently acting right hand; photo: 3 February 2006, Rāmacandra Temple at Battīs Putalī, Deopatan.

of the sacrificial patron; or the ring worn by the sacrificial patron (see Fig. 5.3).²⁰⁹ If *kuśa* is not available, texts prescribe substitutes, such as *kāśa* or *dūrvā*.²¹⁰ In the *nibandha* literature (e.g. *Dharmasindhu* 1986: 62) a group of ten *darbhas*, the *daśadarbha*, is mentioned, containing e.g. the grasses *uśīra*, *kāśa* and *dūrvā*, or the cereals barley (*yava*), wheat (*godhūma*) and rice (*vrihi*).

In the quotation under scrutiny, *pavitra* is juxtaposed to *apavitra*. This latter could denote flowers that have the reverse effect. The mention of *kapittha* in the ĀC hints at another group of ritual flora, the *ayajñīya*. In texts on Vedic fire sacrifice, trees are classified into those whose wood is permissible for sacrificial purposes (*yajñīya*) and those that are not (*ayajñīya*). The list of *yajñīya* species—in PuCi 1.28a the term *yajñavṛkṣa* is used—is usually headed by the *palāśa*,

209 Diehl (1956: 68, 88, 94 n. 1), Dubois (1992: 169–170), Gonda (1985: 42, 86), Underhill (1921: 126), *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 63).

210 For grasses in Vedic rituals, see Gonda (1985), F. M. Smith (1987: 267–271).

considered the Brahmin among trees. Moreover, it includes trees such as the *khadira*, *bilva*, *śamī* and *candana*, and the four fig species *udumbara*, *aśvattha*, *nyāgrodha* and *plakṣa*.²¹¹ The class of *ayajñīya* trees, in addition to *kapittha*/*dadittha*, prominently includes species such as *karañja*/*naktamāla*, *kovidāra*, *tilvaka*, *nimba*, *nīpa*, *vibhītaka*, *śālmālī* and *śleṣmātaka*.²¹² In post-Vedic times many of these trees continue to be considered as inauspicious.²¹³

For large parts of the PuCi this division of ritual flora makes good sense. Plants considered fit for sacrifice in the Vedic cosmos almost invariably appear to be prescribed, whereas representatives of the *ayajñīya* list are mostly forbidden. So why does the compiler refrain from adopting the citation? The chance to establish a link to the world of Vedic sacrifice would surely have appeared attractive from the śāstric point of view. But upon closer inspection, the rule clashes with what is subsumed in the PuCi under *pūjā*. Some *ayajñīya* species are prescribed for specific ritual applications: the *nimba* for causing dissension (*vidveśa*) or expulsion (*uccāṭana* PuCi 1.114b); the *śālmālī* for the destruction of enemies (4.39b). Such applications have long traditions. Some of the late Vedic texts already prescribe the use of the wood of *ayajñīya* trees for *kāmya* rituals meant to afflict others.²¹⁴ In the PuCi, however, such plants are not only prescribed for inducing harm, since the *kovidāra* is among the plants permitted for the worship of some of the Tantric goddesses (4.17b, 18c, 57c). Hence, as will be elaborated with examples below, some of the flowers that fall under the *apavitra* category are perfectly permissible for certain *pūjās* and deities. This is why a distinction that excludes some flowers per se must have run counter to the compiler's understanding of *pūjā*. The matter at hand affords evidence of his wish to arrive at a stringent text. He probably did not adopt this general rule because it stood in conflict with some of the special rules, which are discussed in the following.

211 Gonda (1980: 109–111), Kane (1968–77: II, 308), B. K. Smith (1994: 213), Viennot (1954: 39–71).

212 In *Jaiminīyagr̥hyasūtra* 1.1. *vibhītaka*, *tilvaka*, *bādhaka*, *nimba*, *rājavṛkṣa*, *śālmālī*, *aralu*, *dadhitta*, *kovidāra* and *śleṣmātaka* are mentioned. Gopal (1959: 105) refers to the same list from *Gobhīlagr̥hyasūtra* 1.5.15.; F. M. Smith (1987: 272) to similar ones from the *Baudhāyana*- and the *Vaikhānasaśrautasūtra*. Syed (1992: 178) cites the *Vāyupurāṇa* (*Uttarārddha* 13.74–75) according to which the *ayajñīya* trees include *śleṣmātaka*, *naktamāla*, *kapittha*, *śālmālī*, *nīpa*, *vibhītaka* and those inhabited by birds. For further references, see Kane (1968–77: II, 308), B. K. Smith (1994: 235 n. 36).

213 Syed (1992: 8, *vibhītaka*, *śālmālī*; 172, *kapittha*, *kovidāra*; 339–340, *tilvaka*; 516–517, *vibhītaka*; 541–545, *śālmālī*).

214 See Caland's notes on the translation of the *Jaiminīyagr̥hyasūtra* 1.1. For particular examples, see *Ṛgvidhāna* 1.77 (*vibhītaka*) and 2.49 (*vibhītaka*, *nimba*), Bhat (1987: 114–115); for *kāmyapūjās*, see below.

5.2 Special Rules

The special rules covered by the PuCi are mostly simple statements of what flower species are appropriate or inappropriate for a given deity and what results are to be expected by one who follows or violates these instructions. The regulations can be looked at not only as they are arranged in the text, i.e. according to the recipients of the offering, but also according to their applicability to different types of *pūjā*. Like other rituals, *pūjā* is usually broken down into three kinds: *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kāmya* (Bühnemann 1988: 55, 183–184; S. Gupta 1979: 125–126). The compulsory and regular *nityapūjā* is to be performed daily. Special occasions (*nimitta*) see *naimittikapūjā* being carried out. Such occasions are defined by family custom, religious affiliation or temple tradition, and also may depend on the age, gender and marital status of the worshipper. In the end, though, this *pūjā* too is compulsory. In contrast, the *kāmyapūjā*, which is aimed at achieving certain goals, is a non-regular and voluntary act. When it comes to grouping actual instances into one or the other of these theoretically constructed classes, complications inevitably arise. The same *pūjā* may thus be classified differently by different authorities (Bühnemann 1988: 183).

It has been shown above that the compiler of the PuCi does not—by way of, for example, introductory phrases—neatly present each case in terms of the three categories of *pūjā*. Still, he must have presupposed this division, as his explanation of PuCi 1.120 for one betrays. There, basing his argument on the use of “always” (*sadā*), he limits the prohibition against employing certain flowers to *nityapūjā*, as opposed to *kāmyapūjā*, in which the use of some of these flowers is permitted.

Despite the lack of a clear-cut division of the three types of *pūjā* in the text, they can be distinguished analytically. For that purpose, the instructions will be dissected schematically in the following. Like other sacrificial acts, the gift of a flower may be described as a ritual interaction between the donor and recipient of a particular object by means of that object. In the PuCi, the most important components of the special rules are the flowers and the deities, i.e. the sacrificial material and its recipient. The giver is mentioned in many rules, but is rarely characterized. The sacrificial action itself, the offering of flowers, is made discernible through the mention of the occasion for it, and more indirectly by the result it produces. It will be shown in the following that these constituents of the instructions are weighted differently in *nitya*-, *naimittika*- and *kāmyapūjā*. Prior to dealing with the types of *pūjā* separately and discussing how in these three classes the flowers’ physical properties and cultural connotations can be correlated each time with varying components of the rules, I interpose some introductory remarks on the flowers mentioned in the text.

The Flowers

The significance of the flowers mentioned in the PuCi is not limited to the *pūjā* context. In many cases, they belong to plants whose cultural traditions are multifaceted. Flowers serve practical purposes. Almost all of the identifiable plants named have medical properties attributed to them in Āyurveda. Therefore, J. Goody's argument that cultivating flowers often implies "a separation of food (or reproduction) from decor, of the 'functional' from the 'aesthetic'" (Goody 1993: 4) should at least be qualified. On the one hand, it is true that the flowers of fruit-bearing trees, such as the mango or *jambu*, or of other typical crop plants, such as rice, are referred to comparatively seldom in flower texts. On the other hand, flowers such as the *aparājītā* (Mukherjee et al. 2008: 293) or the mountain ebony (*kāñcanāra*, Manandhar 2002: 107), or else other parts of the plant, as the rhizomes of the lotus (Syed 1992: 611), are eaten. Perfumes are produced from flowers (McHugh 2012). Thus a divide between these two types of outcomes of cultivation does not say much about the South Asian culture of flowers. There flowers can be and actually are quite often both, functional *and* aesthetic.

The aesthetic value of flowers finds prominent expression in the fine arts. In Sanskrit poetics, plants are integral, symbolically laden parts of imagined landscapes.²¹⁵ Flower motifs formed meaningful patterns in painting and architecture (S. M. Gupta 1996; Slusser 2010: 128–139). It is especially in these contexts that flowers have developed a life of their own as cultural artifacts, sometimes detached from the actual plants themselves (Čejka 1999).

Contexts that are certainly most relevant for an interpretation of the PuCi are those one would commonly call religious, including practice (i.e. rituals) and doctrinal thought. It has already been mentioned that the ritual use of plant species has been referred to in texts from the Vedic period onwards. For Vedic ritual, first and foremost the wood of trees (Viennot 1954)—burnt in fire sacrifices or used to make utensils—and grasses (Gonda 1985) are important. From early on, Brahmanic mythology has provided ample illustration of the interrelatedness of myths and rituals that is attested in many societies.²¹⁶ It can take concrete forms, as many examples of aetiological tales referred to above and below show.

215 For plants in Sanskrit poetics, the volumes of eponymous anthologies (from 2007 on published as a journal) of the Prague-based study group *Pandanus* deserve special mention; see also Syed (1992).

216 See Segal (2006) for an introduction to theories about the relation between myth and ritual. In the following I understand "mythology" in the loose sense stated by Assmann and Assmann as "the stock of set images and stories allotted to a group" ("den einer Gruppe vorgegebenen Fundus an Bildern und Geschichten", Assmann and Assmann 1998: 178). In addition to stories localized in Sanskrit texts, I will refer to ones reported in secondary literature, such as Dymock et al. (1995), Gandhi (1991),

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On a more general level, there are myths that underline the sacred character of particular species or of plants in general. Early examples are found in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (6.6.3), where it is told how all trees except for the *udumbara* leave the gods and desert them for the Asuras. When finally the gods defeat the Asuras and reassume rule over the trees, they invest the loyal fig tree with the food and sap of all the other trees. In the literature of what is termed classical Hinduism there are whole *māhātmyas* that praise certain plants and extol their ritual efficacy, e.g. the *tulasī*, the *dhātrī*, the *palāśa* or the *bilva*.²¹⁷ Hymns (*stotra*) glorify plants, such as the *bilva* or the *tulasī*.²¹⁸

The genesis of the world's flora is related to divine beings, being regarded as Prajāpati's or Brahmā's hair.²¹⁹ Individual species, too, are assigned a divine origin. The *Vāmanapurāṇa* (18.1–10) lists deities' body parts as plants' places of origin, including Brahmā's navel as that of the lotus, Māheśvara's heart as that of the *dhattūra* plant, or Lakṣmī's hand as that of the *bilva*. Sītā's hair held on to by her son Kuśa when she was swallowed by the earth became *kuśa* grass (S. M. Gupta 2001: 18). *Dūrvā* grass is said to go back to the hair of the deities who churned the milk ocean (ibid.: 17). The *bilva* grew from where Pārvatī's sweat fell (*Skandapurāṇa* 6.250.2–3). Viṣṇu's sweat also became *dūrvā* grass (S. M. Gupta 2001: 17); Pārvatī's and Lakṣmī's tears the *āmalakī* tree.²²⁰ Dhanvantari's tears of joy fell into the pot with the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*) churned from the milk ocean and turned into *tulasī* leaves (*Skandapurāṇa* 2.4.8.32–34). The connection to *amṛta* is especially prominent in myths about *dūrvā* grass (S. M. Gupta 2001: 17). Either *dūrvā* grows where drops of the nectar of immortality land or else the grass already growing there turns immortal. Nepalese authors recount that a crow rubbed its beak on *dūrvā* grass after it had drunk *amṛta*.²²¹ This grass's association

S. M. Gupta (2001), Majupuria and Joshi (1997), or P. P. Regmi (1983), and not only to ones fixed in writing but also to orally transmitted myths.

217 Many such text passages are found in the Purāṇas. The vulgate version of the *Skandapurāṇa* contains *māhātmyas* for, among others, the *tulasī* (2.4.8, 6.249), *dhātrī* (2.4.12) and *palāśa* (6.248).

218 The popular anthology *Bṛhatstotraratnākara* includes a *Bilvāṣṭaka* (2000: 48), a *Tulasīstotra* (ibid.: 280–281) and a *Tulasīkavaca* (ibid.: 279–280). The last of these has been translated by Bühnemann (1986: 43–45).

219 S. M. Gupta (2001: xxii), Nugteren (2005: 6), B. K. Smith (1994: 213), Gandhi's (1991) anthology of plant myths is named accordingly *Brahmā's Hair*. For other accounts of the genesis of plants, see Syed (1992: 2–3).

220 S. M. Gupta (2001: 26) gives the *Bṛhadharmapurāṇa* as her source; see also Majupuria and Joshi (1997: 100).

221 Majupuria and Joshi (1997: 153), P. P. Regmi (1983: 110). The same motifs reoccur with other plants: the *kuṭaja* grew from *amṛta* dripping from the bodies of Rāma's monkey army that were revived by Indra (Dymock et al. 1995: II, 392; without specifying the version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* referred to). This nectar fell on the *nimba* tree (Dymock



Fig. 5.4 Together with other items, a garland of *dūrvā* grass is prepared as one of the gifts handed over by the bride's to the groom's side as "invitation to the self-choice [of the groom by the bride]" (Nep. *svayaṃvarako nimantraṇā*). In both, Puranic myths and ritual practice, this grass is associated with immortality; photo: 22 January 2011, Kathmandu.

with immortality is also popularly acknowledged in contemporary ritual culture in Nepal, where it is often invoked to explain the significance of garlanding the bride and groom with *dūrvā* garlands during marriage rituals (see Fig. 5.4).

Another common motif connecting plants to the sacred sphere is the embodiment of deities as plants. Brahmā was cursed by Pārvaṭī to exist as the *palāśa* tree because he interrupted her love sport with Śiva.²²² Kubera's sons are transformed into *arjuna* trees through Nārada's curse, and later released from their fate by Kṛṣṇa.²²³ The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* recounts how Lakṣmī turns into the *tulasī*

et al. 1995: II, 324) or *kuśa* grass (S. M. Gupta 2001: 19–20). After Garuḍa had drunk *amṛta* he rubbed his beak against a *kadamba* tree (Gandhi 1991: 109).

222 Meyer (1937: I, 50), *Padmapurāṇa* 6.115.22–29.

223 *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 10.9.22–10.10.43, S. M. Gupta (2001: 80), P. P. Regmi (1983: 11, 238).

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plant after being cursed by Gaṇeśa and Gaṅgā.²²⁴ Deities of the “great tradition” become embodied as plants mostly as a form of punishment or in consequence of a curse.

In many local traditions trees are considered as a preferred dwelling place of certain nature spirits (*yakṣas*), along with all kinds of gods, ghosts and demons.²²⁵ More detailed investigation is needed into whether, and if so how, these beliefs, mostly bound to specific locations, influenced Sanskrit myths, and how they were reformulated by Brahmanic scholars. Village deities, above all goddesses, often of the dangerous type, prefer certain trees as their habitual residence, apparently chosen free of any external constraint. The certainly most prominent example is Śītalā, goddess of smallpox, who is worshipped in the *nimba* tree in Northern India and Nepal. In rural Nepal, Vanadurgā is said to reside in the *sāla* tree (Majupuria and Joshi 1997: 125). The third and fourth chapters of the *Nepālamāhātmya* are dedicated to the story of the origin of the goddess Caṇḍeśvarī in a *campaka* tree.

Not every plant whose flower is mentioned in the PuCi has a specific religious meaning attached to it, whether transmitted by word of mouth or in writing, but most of the plants prominent in Hindu myth and ritual are part of the text’s repertoire.²²⁶ Moreover, apart from those names that cannot be identified botanically, the text seems not to name any plant that is exclusively known from the *pūjā* context. The plants can therefore be viewed as material items that have a wide potential for ascriptions of varying meanings from different cultural areas. Those flowers are especially mentioned as gifts appropriate for the gods that are established mediators with, and often part of, the sacred sphere. Certainly one can assume a complex interrelationship among the medical, aesthetic, ritual and mythological significance of plants. It is in this context that the question of the historical development of plants’ characters arises, but this goes beyond the scope of the present study. In the following, the cultural relations in which plants are caught up are presented for the most part without regard to chronology, as mere correlations that potentially make for exegetical contexts.

224 I have dealt with these stories more elaborately elsewhere (Krause 2005: 105, 107) and will take them up again below.

225 Abbott (1932: 315–316), Nugteren (2005: 8–9), White (2006: 55–58). Manna (1993: 51–52) records examples from tribal cultures. For the cult of trees in general, see Nugteren (2005), Viennot (1954: 88–89).

226 The two fig species, *aśvattha* und *nyāgrodha*, are conspicuous by their absence. The religious significance of these trees is attested to in the earliest sources (see Emeneau 1949; A. Zotter 2010: 341–344). Are they rarely mentioned in flower texts because they are reckoned as *vanaspatis*, trees that are flowerless by definition? It is said that “those that bear fruit without having flowered are known as *vanaspatis*” (*apuṣpāḥ phalavanto ye te vanaspatayaḥ smṛtāḥ*, MDh 1.47); on *vanaspatis*, see also Schmidt (1911: 736–737).

Flowers for the Gods (*nityapūjā*)

The largest part of the PuCi covers rules for *nityapūjā*, daily obligatory worship. These rules often consist of simple enumerations of the prescribed (*vihita*)²²⁷ flowers, concluding with the statement that they are to be given to a certain deity or are suited for them. In these cases, no special reward is attached to a gift of flowers. A deity may be pleased or satisfied by such offerings; forefathers may be liberated.²²⁸ No special occasions for worship are mentioned. The time component, if there is any, concerns regularity.²²⁹ The prohibited (*niṣiddha*) flowers, too, are mostly simply enumerated.²³⁰ One should avoid (*[vi]varj-*) these flowers; one should not worship with them (*na arc-*, *na pūj-* etc.).

Among the rules governing prohibited flowers, a difference is observable between the Smārta and the Kaula material. By tendency, the first three chapters of the PuCi feature plain enumerations of *niṣiddha* flowers, or at most a statement that to worship with them is worthless (PuCi 1.130ab, 130d), exceptionally that one will burn in hell if they are offered (1.123cd). By contrast, the consequences threatened in the fourth chapter for the use of inappropriate flowers is harsh punishment in the present life. Only in the minority of cases are general statements found: for example, that such worship is worthless (4.73c) or that one would become someone who has committed a crime (*pātakī*, 4.93c). Otherwise it is stated that the deity becomes angry (4.94cd) or the worshipper is threatened with harm, be it a loss in the family (4.14ab, 15a, 16b), a loss of wealth (4.15b, 93d) or general loss (4.14a, 78d). Offering prohibited flowers brings about death (4.14c, 78b), ailments (4.78c), sorrow, pain, misery or danger (4.14d, 15d, 78b, 79ab).²³¹ It will be shown that this is not the only contrast between the first three chapters and the last chapter of the PuCi.

Motivations

Nityapūjā is to be carried out as part of a ritual routine by, accordingly, a worshipper who is free from any extraneous motivations. The PuCi states that one should offer flowers in devotion (*bhakti*; 1.17b, 30b, 53b, 62a, 69d; 2.21c, 67c; 3.2b, 10d, 13b; 4.53a), trust (*śraddhā*; 3.13b, 28b, 29b) or with a clarified mind (*prasannadhī*;

227 PuCi 1.24–30b, 63b–64, 79–83; 2.2c–3b, 5c–9, 28c–36b, 75–83; 3.2d–7, 11–12b; 4.2–5, 17–23, 52–59b, 65–68.

228 Forms of *prī*, “to be pleased” (1.21a; 2.24b, 38a, 38d, 39b, 45a, 49b, 79b; 3.24d, 35b; 4.22c, 23b), or *tuṣ*, “to be satisfied” (1.103d; 2.80b; 4.59b, 60bd, 61b, 64a), are prominent.

229 Terms attested include *sadā*, *nitya* or *sarvadā*.

230 PuCi 1.118–125b; 2.61–65, 84c–87, 93; 3.42–43; 4.51, 69.

231 All references to PuCi 4.70–79 come with the forewarning that rules for *nitya-* and *kāmyapūjā* are there mixed together, which may be one reason for the unusually concrete phrasing of results.

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4.69b, 84d, 88d). From a broader perspective, these statements can be read as purity rules. Like the material offered, the worshipper should be pure, both physically and mentally. Brahmanic texts of various affiliations argue against a solely mechanical performance of ritual and call for a pure state of mind, devotion or mental concentration as essential requirements for ritual action. The *Paramasaṃhitā* states that ritual action without a pure mind is fruitless.²³² The *Padmapurāṇa* elaborates on the importance of undivided attention, devotion and purity of the mind as prerequisites for worshipping Viṣṇu.²³³ That one should not sacrifice without *śraddhā* is advanced on frequent occasions in the old Indian literature (Köhler 1973: 29–32).²³⁴

To advance beyond these general observations, it will be useful to look at the actual words used more closely. The term *śraddhā* and its relation to *bhakti* has been discussed by such authors as H.-W. Köhler (1973, first published 1948), P. Hacker (1978, first published 1963), and M. Hara (1964).²³⁵ Köhler traces a semantic change of *śraddhā* from a general trust in deities and their powers in the *Ṛgveda* towards trust in sacrifice and its efficacy as well as in the power of Brahmins in the Brāhmaṇa literature. More specifically, he translates *śraddhā* as “Spendefreudigkeit” he renders in English as “propensity to give” (Brick [2015: 55] as “joy in giving”), from which the meaning “devotion” developed. He therefore sees *śraddhā* as a predecessor of *bhakti*, by which it later was increasingly replaced (Köhler 1973: 57). For Hacker (1978), Köhler’s “Spendefreudigkeit” is an effect of *śraddhā* itself, which one has to distinguish from *bhakti*, because no personal relation with a deity is conveyed under the sense of the former. Building on Hacker, Hara considers this as the fundamental difference between the two terms. He sets *śraddhā* and *bhakti* into sharp contrast with each other, the difference being between “impersonal and personal, intellectual and emotional, and Vedic-Brahmanic and Hinduistic” (Hara 1964: 142).

For the PuCi, the semantic difference between the two terms should not be overemphasized. The two terms occur in similar syntactic positions. In verse-filler phrases like *śraddhābhaktisamanvitaḥ* (PuCi 3.13) it may even be questioned whether speculations about their nuances make any sense at all. But if one were to make a distinction, *śraddhā* would relate to the ritual action itself and the

232 *aprasāde hi manasaḥ karmayogo ’pi niṣphalaḥ*; *Paramasaṃhitā* 4.71ab, cited from Bühnemann (1988: 80).

233 E.g. *ananyamānaso bhūtvā bhaktyā viṣṇum yajet budhaḥ* (“A wise man will worship Viṣṇu in devotion with his mind not [diverted] to something else” *Padmapurāṇa* 7.14.10cd).

234 For the association of *śraddhā* and mental purity, see Heim (2004: 46), Köhler (1973: 28).

235 For further discussion and an overview of the current state of research on *śraddhā*, see Brick (2015: 54–58), Heim (2004: 45–53).

trust of the worshipper “that the rite will be effective and that his wishes will be fulfilled” (Bühnemann 1988: 60), whereas *bhakti* would point to the emotional bond between the devotee and the deity. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in the PuCi the occurrences of *bhakti* outnumber those of *śraddhā* by far. Relating this observation to M. Heim’s (2004: 45–53) interpretations of the quantitative ratio between the use of *bhakti* and *śraddhā* as demanded of donors in Dharmasāstric texts on *dāna*, one may see a contrast here. Whereas the more frequent use of *śraddhā* in *dāna* texts bespeaks a greater emphasis on the trust (*śraddhā*) in the institution of religious giving than on a personal relationship between donor and receiver,²³⁶ from findings based on the PuCi one may assume that in Dharmasāstra texts on *pūjā*, *bhakti* (the devotion to a deity) is more central than *śraddhā* in the ritual itself. For a proper study of the frequency of use of *bhakti* versus *śraddhā* and for testing the assumption that *bhakti* is demanded more often than *śraddhā* in *pūjā*, the data from the PuCi alone would be insufficient.

Bhakti, the devotion to a personal deity is fundamental for the understanding of *pūjā*.²³⁷ Both in academic discourse and in the religious traditions themselves, *pūjā* has often been contrasted with Vedic ritualism and its fire sacrifice (*yajña*), said to automatically produce the expected result if performed correctly. A perfect antithesis between mechanically performed *yajña* and devotionally performed *pūjā* can be challenged on different grounds (Colas 2005: 25–26). Synchronically and diachronically, a plethora of notions is attested as defining the relation between the two ritual models. Given the complexity, *pūjā* and *yajña* can be structurally or conceptually fused in various ways.²³⁸ Moreover, *pūjā* in its institutionalized form is practised as a highly formalized and tightly fixed series of ritual acts. Texts like the PuCi were not penned from an anti-ritualistic viewpoint by proponents of *bhakti* ideals, but rather themselves represent a Brahmanic-scholastic and ritualistic perspective on *pūjā*. Furthermore, even within one and the same digest different concepts of *pūjā* may be met with. In the PuCi one comes up against at least two of these, one stemming from the Smārta and one from the Kaula tradition.

The degree to which Smārta Brahmanism, which has been characterized with regard to ritual as a “more relaxed middle ground” (Sanderson 1988: 662) between Śrauta and Tantric practitioners, reacted to or adopted concepts originating in the

236 As Heim continues, this stress on *śraddhā* implies for the donor that he is relieved of any obligation to evaluate the individual qualities of the receiver of the gift. The belonging to a certain group of specialists, be it that of Brahmins or Buddhist monks, thus certifies the worthiness of the receiver.

237 For more on *pūjā* and *bhakti*, see Bühnemann (1988: 81–83), Gail (1969: 79–86), Goody (1993: 327, 336), Valpey (2020).

238 This has been impressively shown by Colas (2006) in his study of concepts of *yajña* in specific textual traditions. C. Zotter (2010: 30–33) shows that *pūjā* “began to be employed as a construction kit for adapting other rituals ... to popular ritual practice” (ibid.: 30).

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bhakti movement is a different question, but in this connection it seems at least remarkable that in the PuCi the term *bhakti* occurs at places where rule-abidance is qualified: *Bhakti* can substitute for a flower gift if flowers or plantal substitutes (leaves, fruits, herbs etc.) are not available (PuCi 1.84; 2.74; 3.8–9). According to PuCi +1.125b–127b and 3.46c–48b, *bhakti* is even held to be the supreme means of worship, which renders a differentiation into prescribed and prohibited flowers obsolete. At first sight, such stipulations seem to lead the whole body of rules ad absurdum. If *bhakti* is the basic requirement for every worship with flowers, can substitute for every flower gift and in the end supersedes all rules, why state rules at all? Brahmanic scholars have resolved this apparent contradiction by setting conditions for the appropriation of *bhakti* as the sole means of worship: It is only in the absence of other plant material that devotion may substitute for flowers; only one who has realized devotion to his deity in the highest degree is free not to follow any rules.²³⁹ In this way, the PuCi remains true to its agenda as a digest that seeks to record all options for the *upacāra* “flower”; and this includes the meticulous cataloguing of all known rules as well as the textual legitimization of the spiritually gifted person whose intimate relationship with a deity transcends all rules.

It is worth noting that these ultimately anti-ritualistic statements relating to *bhakti* are only found in the first three chapters of the PuCi. The mentioning of *śraddhā*, a concept stemming from Vedic ritualism, is also confined to this part of the text. By contrast, the last chapter calls for a clarified mind (*prasannadhī*, 4.69b, 84d, 88d) as a prerequisite for ritual performance. This accords with the general expectations and links to the above-stated findings: In Tantric traditions, such as the Kaula schools treated in the PuCi, the strict compliance with ritual instructions is stressed. The Tantric practitioner is “less an anti-ritualist than a super-ritualist” (Sanderson 1988: 662). Moreover, and as will be elaborated further below, the link to Vedic sacrifice is absent.

Whatever the precise phrasing and the historical background of the terms involved be, it should be emphasized that the PuCi, besides regulating the visible outer performance, also covers demands regarding the worshipper’s mental disposition when performing external actions. Inner purity, trust in the efficacy of the ritual, but above all devotion to the deity worshipped are to accompany and govern ritual action. If one were to relate these findings to theoretical reflections about ritual, one could identify here Humphrey and Laidlaw’s “ritual stance” (1994: 94, 97–98), which sets ritual action apart from everyday

239 The text leading up to PuCi 1.125c states that the exception only concerns the highest *bhaktas* (*paramabhakta*). More generally, “worship with *bhakti*” could be understood as “mental worship.” Often *mānasapūjā* is held to be the province of the highest *bhaktas* (Bühnemann 1988: 91–92; Gail 1969: 83).

action.²⁴⁰ In the *nityapūjā*, at least, the mind of the devotee should be directed to the specific reality of ritual itself, not to the results produced by it.

Results

Nityapūjā is part of the daily ritual routine (*nityakarman*), disregard of which is considered a breach of ritual law and necessitates expiation (*prāyaścitta*), from whose proper performance, however, one cannot expect any special results.²⁴¹ Still, texts promise *bhukti* and *mukti*, worldly pleasures and liberation, for this kind of worship.²⁴² Especially for traditions, such as the Kaula schools, that categorically reject the idea of retribution for action (*karman*), a theological problem may open up here. In other traditions, one argues that karmic consequences are inevitable, as in the *Paramasaṃhitā* (6.47–48b) of the Pāñcarātrins:

Even to one who does not wish for anything, prosperity or wealth is ever on the increase. Even one who wishes to gain an object gains that object for certain by offering worship to the Supreme God giving up that actual purpose. (Cited from Bühnemann 1988: 85)

This, as other statements about the merits of (ritual) action, stresses that the worshipper should remain indifferent towards whatever results may be produced (Gail 1969: 55–56), and indeed give up any that are. In *bhakti* theology, “since the Bhagavadgītā *karmārpaṇa* is the key word when it comes to action leading to liberation”²⁴³. In *pūjāpaddhatis*, *karmasamarpaṇa*, in which the result is relinquished, and the ritual deed in its entirety offered to the deity (Bühnemann 1988: 180), is one of their bedrock concluding elements.

With these remarks in mind, let us turn to what the PuCi says about the merits of performing *nityapūjā*. Even if in many cases no results are specified, at other places the text states that one either enjoys endless fruits (PuCi 1.8d, 59d) or obtains them quickly (4.53b). There is a hundredfold increase of merit (3.16b). One may win conjugal felicity (*saubhāgya*, 4.81a, 4.90c), abundance (4.85a) or perfection (1.77ab). A good existence (1.10, 11, 117d) is promised, or else one is completely liberated from transmigration (2.5b; 4.82cd, 87c). Very prominently, heavenly

240 For Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994: 88–110), who developed their theory from observations of daily worship practices in the Jaina tradition, ritual is a special mode of action, distinguished from everyday action, amongst others, by the fact that the form the ritual takes is independent of the practitioner’s personal intent.

241 Bühnemann (1988: 85), S. Gupta (1979: 125).

242 Bühnemann (1988: 85–86), Goudriaan (1978: 59–60).

243 “*karmārpaṇa* ist seit der Bh[agavad]G[ītā] Stichwort für erlösungswirkendes Handeln” (Gail 1969: 59).

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pleasures are assured. One may gain proximity to deities, reach different heavenly abodes or even attain the highest position.²⁴⁴ The text delivers ornate descriptions of divine chariots (*vimāna*) that carry the worshipper there (1.66–68, 71ab, 73–74). Divine qualities (1.54d; 2.22d, 72d, 78; 4.87d, 89b) and the gods' respect (2.46ab) can be acquired; or the three worlds will come under one's control (4.83c). *Pāpa* (evil, evil-doings) accumulated over long periods may be expunged.²⁴⁵

The benefits gained through *nityapūjā* are compared to each other or to those of other rituals. The result can be improved by employing gradually more suitable flower species (1.45–57; 2.10–23, 66–72), by increasing the period of worship (1.75–78) or by simply increasing the number of flowers (1.8, 14c–16b). Flowers bound into garlands (*mālā*) are said to yield twice the benefit of loose ones (1.13cd). The length of the garland, too, influences the merit (3.17c–21). A certain flower may increase the benefit of a normal *pūjā* by a hundred (2.51ab); or the merit of a flower be equal to that of other gifts to deities, such as silken garments (*paṭṭavastra* 4.45b) or the sacrifice of a he-goat (4.64b).

When the result of flower gifts is weighed up against that of other rituals, the standard comparison is a gift of ten *suvarṇas* (1.7cd, 8ab, 13ab, 45cd; 2.1cd, 4ab, 10c, 66ab), an amount of gold defined in PuCi 1.14ab. This degree of merit is assigned to any flower, even if scentless (1.8). The recipient of the gift of gold is characterized by standard phrases (1.7ab, 2.1ab) known from *dāna* literature. The worthy Brahmin recipient (*pātra*) should possess qualities such as austerity and moral conduct (*tapahśīlaguṇopeta*) and should have mastered the Veda (*vedasya pāraga*).²⁴⁶ Next to gifts of gold, the benefit of presenting flowers to deities is likened to that of gifts of cows²⁴⁷ or of Vedic sacrifices (1.76ab), such as the *aśvamedha* (1.15ab, 3.17b), the *rājasūya* (3.27cd, 30d) or the *vājapeya* (3.26cd, 31c).²⁴⁸

244 PuCi 1.16a, 39d, 54c, 55d, 60d, 61d, 62d, 69d, 71cd, 75d, 76d; 2.22c, 23d, 28b, 37b, 56b, 68b, 72d; 3.13d, 27d, 28d, 29d, 31d, 33cd, 34d. The skeletal phrase is: "... one prospers in N.N.'s world" (N.N.*loke mahīyate*).

245 PuCi 1.60c; 2.28a, 55a; 4.45cd, 80d, 82ab, 83d, 85b, 86d–87b, 89a, 91ab.

246 Such a Brahmin is mentioned, for example, in MDh 7.85; and in *Gautamadharmasūtra* 5.20 (cited in Olivelle 2005: 124). *Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtra* 6.26, 30 (cited in Olivelle 2005: 124) contains a more elaborate description of a good *pātra*. In *dāna* theory, merit depends not only on the giver and the gift, but also on the recipient. It may be boundless if given to a knowledgeable Brahmin. In contrast, a gift to an unworthy recipient is deemed worthless or may even prove harmful for the giver (Kane 1968–77: II, 113–114, 845–846; Heim 2004: 64–67).

247 E.g. a *gosahasradāna* (PuCi 1.75b, 2.41b, 3.28c), a gift of one thousand cows, which is reckoned as one of the *mahādānas* (Kane 1968–77: II, 874–875); or a gift of ten thousand (*gavām ayutadāna*; 1.62c), one hundred thousand (*golakṣa*, 1.61c, 3.34c) or ten million (*gokoṭi*, 2.50b) cows.

248 On these sacrifices, see Kane (1968–77: II, 1228–1239 on *aśvamedha*; 1214–1223 on *rājasūya*; 1206–1212 on *vājapeya*).

The offering of flowers—a ritual practice that is accessible to all, independent of gender or social status,²⁴⁹ and involves a minor material investment only—is here placed on the same level as lavish gifts and other rituals whose performance is restricted to certain groups of people. To donate gold or cows is typically reserved for the rich and powerful. Such *mahādānas* “are first and foremost about royal display and largesse, bestowed primarily by kings upon brahmins” (Heim 2004: 113). The performance of Vedic sacrifices depends on Brahmins, who have undergone special training and an initiation (*dīkṣā*). By contrast, the use of flowers and other plant material has been advanced by the *bhakti* movement as emblematic of the simplicity of worship, as a much-quoted verse from the *Bhagavadgītā* illustrates. Here an item of minor material value²⁵⁰ becomes a much cherished means of expression of one’s devotion:

patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati |
tad ahaṃ bhaktyupahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ ||

Who with devotion offers me a leaf or flower, water, fruit
I will taste from that steadfast self, anything devoutly offered.
(*Bhagavadgītā* 9.26, tr. by Flood and Martin 2012)²⁵¹

Other examples of such outcomes being equated with those of Vedic sacrifices are found in the *dharmanibandhas* on *dānas*, and are seen by M. Heim (2004: 117–118) as confirming R. Inden’s thesis that, after the eighth century, Hindu rulers and the social elites turned to new religious practices, ones that were soon elevated over older forms of rituals:

249 *brāhmaṇāḥ kṣatriyā vaiśyāḥ striyaḥ sūdrāntyajātayaḥ | sampūjya taṃ suraśreṣṭhaṃ bhaktyā siṃhavaṇṇadharam || mucyante cāśubhair dukhair janmakṛtsamudbhavaiḥ (Pūjāprakāśa 1913: 1).*

250 Among topoi in Sanskrit literature it is above all grass that stands for something worthless. One bon mot reads: “For the generous wealth is grass, for the hero dying is grass, for the one who is free from passion a wife is grass, for the indifferent the [whole] world is grass” (*udārasya tṛṇam vittam sūrasya maraṇam tṛṇam | viraktasya tṛṇam bhāryā niḥsṛṅhasya tṛṇam jagat, Subhāṣitamāñjarī 2004: 13).*

251 A similar verse is PuCi 1.117, where a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water or grass are advanced as offerings for Śiva (*patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyam tṛṇam caiva tathā mune | pratyaḥaṃ śambhave dadyāt nāsau durgatim āpnuyāt*). Another example from the *Śivapurāṇa* (7.2.10.72) suggests that this seems to be an almost formulaic expression: *patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati | tasyāhaṃ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati.*



Fig. 5.5 In some Kathmandu households, “cucumber-animals” are sacrificed during the autumnal Durgāpūjā; photo: 1 November 2007.

Gift giving, and along with it, the honoring of an image of the Cosmic Overlord, were ... accorded a dominant, encompassing position, while sacrifice, muted and pushed below the surface, was accorded a subordinate, encompassed position. (Inden 1979: 135)

This new orientation towards *dāna* and *pūjā* is typically seen in connection with the turning away from blood sacrifice.²⁵² Under this line of argumentation, flowers and other plantal offerings are held to take the place of sacrificial animals. Without a doubt, such substitutions are common. Very prominently in the Durgāpūjā celebrations, for moral or material considerations, it is coconuts and cucurbits that are ritually “decapitated” (see Fig. 5.5). The claim asserted in PuCi 4.64ab, according to which Nīlasarasvatī is as appeased by a garland of red *bandhūka* flowers as she is by the sacrifice of a he-goat is further exemplification of this.

252 Goody (1993: 327–328), Heim (2004: 116–118), Inden (1979: 132).

And yet, the relation of worshipping with flowers to sacrificing animals is more complex than the former just being a substitute for the latter. Specifically with regard to Nepal, different models of hierarchization of blood sacrifice and plantal offerings can be found, depending on the deity worshipped and the mode of worship. Thus, in the inner sanctum of the Paśupatinātha temple no blood may be spilt,²⁵³ whereas in the temples of the deities residing around him it regularly is. With other deities, though, the relation may be the opposite. Especially with the tantrically worshipped female deities, who reside in the innermost recesses of a royal palace, meat offerings and blood sacrifices are a must.²⁵⁴ Sometimes non-plantal offerings are even considered more important than plantal ones. Hence, in front of the Bhāt Bhatainī temple in Kathmandu, a man who sold duck eggs to temple visitors, explained to me jokingly: “This goddess’s flowers are eggs” (Nep. *yo devīko phul phul ho*). Flower offerings and blood sacrifices are, moreover, at least with regard to Nepal, usually not regarded as competing but rather as complementing options. This may be the place to add that its vegetarian character (incidentally ascribed to *pūjā* in the secondary literature²⁵⁵) is by no means apt as a marker that sets *pūjā* off against other rituals.

But back to equating the benefits of offering flowers with those of performing Vedic rituals: This may be understood not only as a challenge to the world of Vedic rituals, but also as a strategy of legitimization. A comparison made to stress the meritoriousness of ritual practices only makes sense if the ritual compared with is held in esteem. In this sense, such equating establishes a link to the world of Śrauta rituals. The Purāṇas and Dharmaśāstras were thereby able to place *pūjā* onto the continuous line of transmission that ultimately goes back to the Veda. This impression is further reinforced by the fact that in the fourth chapter of the PuCi, dealing with the Kaula traditions, no such comparisons are made. These Tantric traditions consciously distanced themselves from Śrauta and Smārta

253 The shrine of Kīrtimukhabhairava, who accepts blood offerings on behalf of Paśupatinātha, forms an exception to this rule (Michaels 1994: 80, 178).

254 It is to be noted that even these goddesses do not accept blood offering in all of their forms and worship places; e.g. the Navadurgā receive blood at their aniconic seats (*pīṭha*) beyond the city limits and when incarnated in their human dancers, but not in their *dyahchems*, “god-houses” (Pradhan 1986: 280). Likewise, when the Mallas’ royal goddess, commonly referred to as Taleju, receives blood sacrifices on the occasion of Navarātra, the blood is spilled on temple doors or blood-receiving deities positioned there, but is not to touch the deity’s icon(s) directly.

255 As in Flood (1998: 208) or Michaels (1998: 266). Even beyond Nepal food offerings (*naivedya*) in *pūjā* can contain meat; see e.g. Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi (1978: 87, 108). The food habits of deities mirror those of their devotees. For example, the *Rāmāyaṇa* holds: “The food on which a human subsists his deities [also subsist on]” (*yadannaḥ puruṣo bhavati tadannāḥ tasya devatāḥ*, *Ayodhyākaṇḍa* 103.30, cited after Kane 1968–77: II, 733 n. 1746).

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ritualism.²⁵⁶ From their perspective, Vedic rituals did not provide worthwhile reference points. The only comparisons made are non-Vedic, namely those with the gift of a silken garment and the sacrifice of a he-goat.

In the main, the benefits advanced for flower offerings, as for *nityapūjā* more broadly (Bühnemann 1988: 84), are all worded in very general terms. On the positive side the results include prosperity, good future, faith or the expiation of wrong-doings; on the negative side, the opposite. Only very rarely are specific benefits mentioned that otherwise typically occur in the sections on *kāmyapūjā*: wishes may be fulfilled (PuCi 3.13c, 4.59d, 4.62b) or one may gain *ājñāsiddhi* (4.63a).

In the text's comparisons with other types of ritual, flower gifts are consistently likened to the foremost standard examples: Gold and cows (together with knowledge and land) are reckoned in the Dharmasāstra as the best gifts (Kane 1968–77: II, 847, 857–869). Among the Brahmin recipients, those who have mastered the Veda rank first. The *aśvamedha*, *rājasūya* and *vājapeya* are very elaborate sacrifices, and consequently only rarely performed. According to Kane (1968–77: II, 1237) by the time of the *Atharvaveda* they were already regarded as having fallen out of use (*utsanna*). They lived on, however, as prestigious relics side by side with which the gift of flowers and other *upacāras* to deities or religious gifts (*dāna*) were praised.²⁵⁷

The merits are not only phrased in general terms, they are also unspecific and appear interchangeably. No connection can be drawn between the character of a flower and the benefit assigned to it, unlike in the case of *dānas*, for example.²⁵⁸ Exceptions include the *aśoka* flower, by verbal analogy, freeing the devotee from sorrow (*viśoka*) for as long as the sun and the moon exist (PuCi 2.47c–48b). That *śamī* helps to overcome fear on the way to the god of death, Yama (2.52ab), can betray the name's derivation from the root *śam* (“calm”). That the offering of a garland of *kuśa* flowers carries one to *pitṛloka*, “the world of the forefathers” (3.29), may be connected with the importance that *kuśa* grass has in death and ancestor rituals.²⁵⁹ But apart from these rare exceptions, it seems not at all im-

256 Not all Tantric schools stand opposed to the Vedic tradition. Śrīvidyā, for example, which nowadays is very popular among Brahmin practitioners, heavily draws on Vedic concepts. Accordingly, especially in its younger literature, a hybridization of its rituals is discernible (Hanneder 1997).

257 Some random examples of *upacāras*: *Pūjāprakāśa* (1913: 4–8, *tattaddevatārādhane phalāni*; 40–41, *gandha* for Viṣṇu; 201, *gandha* for Śiva etc.).

258 The format for rewards of *dānas* is often “quite mechanical and predictable—one who gives a dwelling to a monk in one life resides in a gem-studded palace in the next” (Heim 2004: 40).

259 For the role of *kuśa* in *śrāddha*, see Gonda (1985: 37–38). In Nepal, as probably elsewhere, there is the practice of cremating a figure made of *kuśa* in cases where the corpse is missing. If someone dies within the Yamapañcaka, the five lunar days

portant *which* of the “best-of” results are associated with which flower, but rather that they *are* associated with specific flowers or groups of flowers. I therefore propose to read them as rhetorical devices serving to underline positive assignments of certain flowers to certain deities.

This linkage is further reinforced by the use of numerals. Both when calculating the number of flowers to be offered²⁶⁰ and when comparing results,²⁶¹ symbolic numbers, such as five, eight or ten (in multiples of 1,000, 10,000, 100,000 and 10,000,000 too), are employed. The same holds true of time periods.²⁶² It is auspicious numerals that appear above all (see Lienhard 2007). Multiplying is a way to underline the auspiciousness of numbers. Already in the Vedic literature one thousand is “often said to be totality (*sarvam*)” (Gonda 1980: 41). In addition to completeness and wholeness, multiplying numbers many times over may be meant to suggest the unimaginable or even infinite extent of numbers and time periods.

In summary, *pūjā* being likened to paradigmatic examples of other types of ritual, the use of numbers, and the general, interchangeable nature of benefits indicate that the mentioning of such benefits of regular worship has, above all, a rhetorical function. If this is so, the problem raised at the beginning, that *nityapūjā* should theoretically produce no special result, is at least alleviated. Rather than taking these statements at face value, the specified benefits can more aptly be regarded as subordinate to the relation that is central to *nityapūjā*: Through such specification attention is directed at those flowers that qualify to a special degree as offerings to certain deities.

Flowers and Deities

Many flowers are named in the PuCi’s sections on *nityapūjā*, too many to, when dealing with the assignment of particular species to particular deities, take up each and every instance. Instead, I will discuss typical instances, namely flowers frequently mentioned in the text or those popularly known from other sources. With these as examples, I argue that the ritual allocations are not arbitrary. Floral characteristics being ritually highlighted, that is, formalized within rules

between the dark 13th and the bright 2nd of Kārttika, even five such figures are to be cremated to avert further death within the grieving family (P. P. Regmi 1983: 57).

260 PuCi +1.14b, 14c–16b, 3.32a.

261 PuCi 1.7cd, 8, 13ab, 15ab, 45–53, 61c, 62c, 75b; 2.1cd, 4ab, 10c, 12–21b, 41b, 50b, 51a, 66ab, 68c–71b; 3.28c, 34c.

262 Seven (PuCi 2.40ab), 30, 100, 1,000, or ten million births (2.55ab; 4.80cd, 82ab, 86d, 91ab); 1,000 (2.45ab), 3,000, 30,000 (2.37cd), tens of thousands of millions of years (3.33); thousands (2.59ab), tens of hundreds of thousands (2.60cd), 800 million (1.10), or tens of thousands of millions of periods /aeons (1.54ab, 2.22ab, 72ab).

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governing *pūjā*, is but one of many aspects of the conventional view of plants that have developed around certain names and species. This approach looks at the efficacy ascribed to flowers in a specific ritual context, but largely ignores the question of how the cultural surroundings of the text that may provide *reasoning* for rules for offering flowers relates to the historical *reasons* that gave rise to these rules.

Table 5.1 Flowers unanimously prescribed for all deities in the PuCi in comparison with lists of such flowers in the *Dh(arma)S(indhu)* 1986: 270_{15–16}) and *N(ityotsava)* 1948: 169_{20–24}; cited from the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*. The number of positive assignments of each name, including its lexical synonyms, is added in parentheses. Names marked with one asterisk are not mentioned in PuCi 4; those with two are proscribed there for the *ūrdhvāmnāya*.

| PuCi | DhS | N | PuCi | DhS | N |
|----------------------------------|-----|---|-----------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| <i>padma</i> (42) ²⁶³ | | x | <i>nāgakeśara</i> (14) | | <i>nāga</i> |
| <i>utpala</i> (40) | x | x | <i>bakula</i> (14) ²⁶⁴ | x | x |
| <i>campaka</i> (31) | x | x | * <i>śamī</i> (14) | x | x |
| <i>karavīra</i> (29) | x | x | <i>tagara</i> (13) ²⁶⁵ | | |
| <i>bilva</i> (28) ²⁶⁶ | x | x | <i>punnāga</i> (13) | | x |
| <i>jātī</i> (23) | x | x | <i>damana(ka)</i> (12) | | |
| ** <i>mallikā</i> (23) | x | x | ** <i>palāśa</i> (12) | | |
| <i>aśoka</i> (18) | x | x | * <i>kubjaka</i> (9) | | |
| <i>pāṭala</i> (16) | | | <i>kuruṅṭha(ka)</i> (9) | | |
| <i>kadamba</i> (15) | | | * <i>kuśa</i> (9) | x | x |
| <i>karnikāra</i> (15) | | | <i>dūrvā</i> (8) ²⁶⁷ | | |
| <i>droṇa</i> (14) | | | | | <i>kañku</i> (gloss: <i>kuṭaja</i>) |

263 The lotus (*kamala*) is once forbidden for Kamalā (see p. 119 below).

264 *Bakula* is not mentioned in the section on Śiva.

265 *Tagara* is forbidden for the sun (PuCi 2.87d). The comment, however, states that this proscription only applies to a particular kind, the *vanatagara*.

266 *Bilva* is only forbidden for Viṣṇu in his form as Kṛṣṇa (2.61cd) and in the *paścimāmnāya* (4.14ab); it is once prescribed (2.78c) and once proscribed (2.86d) for the sun.

267 *Dūrvā* is on the one hand prescribed (3.6d) for Durgā, and on the other forbidden (2.86c, 87c; 3.42c).

Fig. 5.6 and 5.7
 The lotus (Fig. 5.6) and the water lily (Fig. 5.7) are regarded as flowers par excellence and symbols of beauty and purity. In flower texts they are unreservedly prescribed as suited offerings for all deities; photos: 12 August 2009, Heidelberg and 13 February 2007, Vindhyavāsini Temple, Vindhyachal.



In the PuCi, several flowers are assigned to all or almost all deities. Those most frequently mentioned are listed in Table 5.1. Some of them are attested in the first three chapters only, and of these a few are specifically proscribed in the fourth chapter's section on the *ūrdhvāmnāya*. As this table shows, the PuCi covers almost all flowers that are listed as suitable for all deities in other *nibandhas*, even if it does not treat them as an independent category as other texts do. P. Duda (2006: 289–290) deals with *aśoka*, *karavīra*, *campaka*, *padma* and *bilva* as specimens of this category.

These unreservedly prescribed flowers can roughly be classed into two groups. On the one hand, there are stock flowers that are not only visually beautiful and scented, but have, moreover, been cultivated in South Asian flower cultures for a long time. The lotus (*padma/kamala*, see Fig. 5.6) and water lilies (*utpala/kahlāra*, see Fig. 5.7) may be instanced as typical representatives of this group. In the PuCi,

these aquatic plants are by far the ones most frequently mentioned. They have aptly been called the “symbol(s) of Hindu religious history itself”.²⁶⁸ Botanically speaking, they belong to two distinct genera (Hřibek 2008, Slocum 2005). As W. Rau (1954) and after him J. Hanneder (2002, 2007) have shown, Sanskrit authors usually distinguish them, while western scholars, unfamiliar with the obviously different physical features of the two genera, more often have treated them imprecisely or have mistaken one for the other. One of the key features the Indian lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera* Gaertn.), but none of the water lilies, possesses is its high water repellence—nowadays popularized as the “lotus effect” and imitated in bionic engineering—or, to put it less technically, the wondrous fact that dirt and water simply drip off the plant, which itself grows from muddy water. In South Asia, the lotus is seen as an embodiment of purity, beauty and (spiritual) perfection. Deities (and with them the whole world) are born from the species. Their (as also beautiful women’s) bodily features are compared to the lotus. In Hindu iconography, the lotus serves as the seat of deities and, like variously coloured water lilies, as their attributes. The list of applications of these prominent flowers could be expanded at will. Like the jasmins *jāti* and *mallikā*, or the flowers of the *aśoka*, *kadamba*, *karavīra*, *karṇikāra*, *campaka*, *tagara*, *nāgakeśara*, *pāṭala*, *punnāga* and *bakula*, the lotus and the water lilies are popular motifs in the fine arts.²⁶⁹ For example, the five flower arrows of Kāma, god of love, are variously made of *campaka*, *jāti*, *pāṭala*, *bakula* and *mallikā*,²⁷⁰ or of *aravinda* (the lotus), *aśoka*, *cūta* (the mango), *navamallikā* and blue *utpala*.²⁷¹

Besides these actual flowers, another group of plant species can be detected among the ones suited for all deities. They may be called the “evergreens of South Asian ritual flora”, significant from Vedic times onwards. This group includes the *palāśa*, *bilva* and *śamī* trees along with the *kuśa* and *dūrvā* grasses. This further reinforces the impression that the plant traditions of Classical Hinduism build on Śrauta ritual. Further representatives of Vedic ritual flora, such as *udumbara* (2), *uśīra* (1), *kāśa* (4), *khadīra* (4) are mentioned in the PuCi less frequently, but they nonetheless feature almost exclusively as positive assignments. Two points are remarkable about these plants with Vedic roots. Firstly, with the exception of *palāśa*, they are not offered in *pūjā* as real flowers, but in the form of grass or leaves. Thus the continuity of Vedic ritual materiality obviously was accompanied

268 “Symbol[e] der hinduistischen Religionsgeschichte selber” (Schreiner 1998: 11). As his examples betray, Schreiner treats lotuses and water lilies promiscuously as lotuses. This explains the beautiful (even if botanically imprecise) title of his book: *Im Mondschein öffnet sich der Lotus* (“The Lotus Opens at Moonlight”).

269 See the respective entries in Syed (1992).

270 *Vāmanapurāṇa* 6.98–104, Syed (1992: 279).

271 *aravindam aśokaṃ ca cūtaṃ ca navamallikā | nilotpalaṃ ca pañcaite pañcabāṇasya sāyakāḥ* (Apte 1998: s.v. *pañcabāṇa*).

by a broadening of the *pūjā*'s concept of "flower" (*puṣpa*) to also include other plant material apart from blossoms proper. Secondly, it is striking that most of the species with a Vedic past life are not mentioned, or sometimes are even prohibited, in the fourth chapter of the PuCi, i.e. in the Kaula material.

Concerning the suitability of flowers, an opposition between Smārta and Kaula traditions can also be noted for the species exclusively prohibited. As concerns the *nityapūjā*,²⁷² most of the flowers in this category stem from the above-mentioned *ayajñīya* trees, which are excluded from solemn Vedic sacrifice, including *kapittha* (PuCi 1.124a), *karañja* (1.119b, 124c), *nimba* (1.124c), *vaibhītaka* (1.119a, 122d; 2.64b) and *śālmālī* (2.63d, 65b). Such prohibitions are all found, notably, in the first two chapters of the text. *Kovidāra* (and its synonyms *kāñcanāra/kāñcana/kāñcī* and *girija*), too, is prohibited in the Smārta part of the PuCi (2.63d, 65a, 84c; 3.42b). For the *uttarāmnāya* (4.17b, 18c) and Dakṣiṇakālī (4.57c), however, this flower is mentioned among the suitable ones.

The incongruity in the evaluation of plants in the two ritual traditions is further underpinned by the fact that some prominent Vedic *ayajñīya* trees, such as the *akṣa/vibhītaka*, *karañja*, *nimba* and *śleṣmātaka*, are counted among the Tantric *kulavṛkṣas*.²⁷³ In Tantric texts, the worship of this group of trees is highly praised, their cutting prohibited, and according to the *Saubhāgyaratnākara* (2000: 397₂₁) they are regarded as the abode of the Kulayoginīs. It will be a matter of further enquiry whether Tantric traditions consciously distanced themselves from the Vedic tradition by creating a positive identity for trees despised by Brahmanic orthopraxy, or whether it was the Śrauta ritualists who tried to avoid plants which were popular in non-Vedic cycles of practitioners and later on entered the textual tradition of the Tantrics.

Another species, *guñjā*, occurs in the PuCi with negative ascriptions only, namely with regard to Śiva (1.125b) and the sun (2.84c). This plant seems to be associated with pollution and with Mātāṅgī, a goddess who feeds on *ucchiṣṭa*. In one of her *dhyānas*, this goddess is described as wearing a garland of *guñjā* seeds (Kinsley 1998: 209). The *Puraścaryārṇava* prescribes *guñjā* as a suitable offering for her.²⁷⁴

272 For *nimba* and *śālmālī* there are applications mentioned in *kāmyapūjā* (see pp. 131–132).

273 Lists of the *kulavṛkṣas* vary. In addition to *aśvattha*, *kadamba*, *karañja*, *nimba*, *bilva*, *vaṭa* and *śleṣmātaka*, covered by all three lists at my disposal, the *Saubhāgyaratnākara* (2000: 398) mentions *akṣa* and *udumbara*; Rāmeśvara's commentary on *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* 10.65 *āmra* and *udumbara*; and TBhS (1940: 125) *kharjura*, *tāla*, *śāla* and *sākhoṭa*. In the light of the above opposition, trees that have a positive identity in both Vedic and Tantric ritualism seem noteworthy, namely the fig species (*aśvattha*, *udumbara*, *vaṭa*) and the *bilva*.

274 *guñjayā tu viśeṣeṇa mātāṅgī varadā bhavet* (*Puraścaryārṇava* 1985: 237₁₅, quoted from an unspecified *nibandha*).

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As with the flowers suited or unsuited for all deities, stable patterns are recognizable for ones for particular deities, too. Some of the assignments are well known, and are the topic of popular Puranic myths. As an example, the close association Śiva has with the *bilva* may be quoted, being mentioned five times in the PuCi.²⁷⁵ Many Purāṇas contain the famous story of the Bhīl hunter who pleases Śiva by unwittingly observing “Śiva’s Great Night” (*mahāśivarātri*): he spends a sleepless night up in a *bilva* tree without food. To pass the time, he plucks leaves, which happen to fall on a *liṅga* hidden under the tree.²⁷⁶

Other myths connect Lakṣmī’s devotion to Śiva with this goddess’s embodiment as a *bilva*, a tree also known as *śrīvṛkṣa* or *śrīphala*. In these stories, it is often the goddess’s ascetic heat (*tapas*) that gives rise to the *bilva* fruit. The association of *bilva* and *tapas* can be traced back to the late Vedic *Śrīsūkta*, in which Lakṣmī and Śrī still appear as two distinct goddesses:

ādityavarṇe tapaso ’dhijāto vanaspatis tava vṛkṣo ’tha bilvaḥ |
tasya phalāni tapasā nudantu māyāntarā yāś ca bāhyā alakṣmīḥ ||

O sun-coloured one, from *tapas* arose your tree, the *bilva*. Its fruits shall drive away, through *tapas*, the illusions and the misfortunes (*alakṣmī*) that are within and without. (*Śrīsūkta* 6)

The motif is elaborated further in the Purāṇas. The most extensive account I am aware of is given in the *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa* (chapters 9–11). There, to prove her devotion to Viṣṇu and his basic identity with Śiva, Lakṣmī regularly worships Śiva with a thousand lotus flowers. When, one day, she finds her daily offering short of two flowers, the goddess, remembering Viṣṇu having compared her breasts to lotuses, substitutes her breasts for the missing flowers. Śiva stops her after she has cut her right breast, and transforms the cut body part into the *bilva* tree, declaring this tree to be his favourite.²⁷⁷ According to the *Yogītantra* (5.29–37) Lakṣmī herself becomes the *bilva* after she, jealous of Viṣṇu’s affection for Sarasvatī, has worshipped Śiva for a long time. As Śiva does not appear, the goddess takes roots as a tree, worships Śiva with her own leaves and is finally granted the boon of eternal abode next to Viṣṇu’s breast.

Like their botanical preferences, the deities’ dislikes, too, are topics of myths. A prominent example is the prohibition of offering *ketakī* to Śiva.²⁷⁸ One aetiology

275 PuCi 1.28b, 47cd, 60, 79a, 103 (especially highlighted in the last case).

276 See Michaels (1994: 241–249) for the different Puranic versions of this myth.

277 A shorter version of the myth is found in the *Bilvamāhātmya* 6–11 (printed in *Bilvo-paniṣad* 1908: 7–16); *Bilvāṣṭaka* 6 alludes to it.

278 PuCi 1.118a, 120b, 121c, 124a.

for this rule can be found in a story digressing off from some versions of the *jyotirlinga* myth.²⁷⁹ Śiva appears as a pillar of light to Brahmā and Viṣṇu, who are engaged in quarrelling about who is the greater of the two. When Śiva orders the two rivals to trace the ends of his manifestation in the form of a pillar of light, Brahmā summons flowers as false witnesses, claiming to have found them on top of the *jyotirlinga* . As a punishment, Śiva curses Brahmā, and the flowers as well, to be banned from worship. According to the versions of the *Śivapurāna* and *Skandapurāna* , it is the *ketakī* flower alone that bears false witness,²⁸⁰ while according to the Nepalese *Himavatkhanda* (75.78–88) the *bandhūka* and *javā* flowers too (in the PuCi both are prohibited from worshipping Śiva) are cursed by the god. The *ketakī* plant as a false witness also appears in a collection of Puranic stories.²⁸¹ Sītā summons a river, a cow, fire and the *ketakī* flower to testify to her performance of an ancestor ritual (*śrāddha*) in the absence of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, but is contradicted by these witnesses. Therefore she curses them, with the flower to be excluded from worshipping Śiva. Still another story has Śiva lose a dice game against Pārvatī, whereafter he withdraws to the woods. When the goddess later on disturbs his meditation, Śiva curses the *ketakī* flowers she is wearing in her hair (Dymock et al. 1995: III, 536; S. M. Gupta 2001: 62).

Thus stories about the same rule can take different forms. Likewise, stories that are similar may differ in the figures and plants involved. This has already been illustrated with stories picturing the consequences of stepping over deities' *nirmālya* (see pp. 77–78 above) and with the one just mentioned of offering a thousand lotus flowers. And even as Lakṣmī substituted lotus-like body parts for missing flowers, so too did Viṣṇu tear out an eye to prove his devotion to Śiva.²⁸² The same story is told about Rāma's lotus-like eye and is regarded as the mythical precedent for awakening and worshipping Durgā during the autumnal Navarātra (Rodrigues 2003: 306–307).

On a more general level, too, the rules for *nityapūjā* mentioned in the PuCi accord with popular mythology. The *kadamba* tree's close association with Kṛṣṇa (S. M. Gupta 1996: 22–25, 2001: 5; Syed 1992: viii, 151) is reflected in PuCi 2.38c–39b, where Viṣṇu is called Mādhava and Keśava and a striking number of words are spent on his rejoicing at the sight of the *kadamba* flower. As expected, flowers of plants regarded as embodiments of Viṣṇu's wife Lakṣmī are identified as offerings

279 For this myth in general, see Doniger (1973: 123–124), Kramrisch (1981: 158–160).

280 See Gail (2010: 249–254) for a comparison of these two versions, together with a translation. The *Skandapurāna* 's version is retold in Eck (1993: 105–107).

281 This story is given in Chaturvedi's (2006: 35–37) story collection from the *Śivapurāna* , but I could not trace it in the text of the *Purāna* itself.

282 *Śivamahimnaṣṭotra* 19, S. M. Gupta (2001: 49), Meyer (1937: II, 82), Weinberger-Thomas (1999: 35).

5 The Body of Rules

to Viṣṇu. Commonly known examples include the lotus (*padma*), the *tulasī*²⁸³ and the *bilva*.

Plants and deities are not only linked by narration; often both in and beyond such stories physical or cultural characteristics are foregrounded that chime with their use in ritual. The establishing of a nexus between certain features of material items and their ritual efficacy is attested in almost all ritual culture including in the Brahmanic tradition, where this is seen early on.²⁸⁴ Such analogies can also be discerned, in particular, with regard to the use of flowers in *nityapūjā*.

There is a clear analogy in colour if the white water lily (*kumuda*) is prescribed for the white moon (PuCi 2.88b), or the red hibiscus (*javā*) for the red planets Mars and Sun (2.68c, 81d, 88c).²⁸⁵ The red *karavīra* is another flower specially praised as a gift for the Sun (2.66, 71–2, 75c, 81c, 88a). Above all, however, red flowers are suitable for goddesses. Some Tantric texts state a general rule to that effect.²⁸⁶ The most pertinent examples from the PuCi for particular red flower species suited for goddesses are *javā* and *bandhūka*, mentioned ten and eight times respectively.²⁸⁷ For Viṣṇu, red flowers in general are prohibited (PuCi 2.61b) and, as just said, both *javā* and *bandhūka* are proscribed for Śiva. The redness of these two flowers is commonly emphasized in hymns (*stotra*) in praise of goddesses and their meditation verses (*dhyānaśloka*).²⁸⁸ Colour is

283 Hazra (1958: 255, 276, 288, 308, 339; 1975: 57, 90, 114–117, 124, 125) invariably takes the mentioning of *tulasī* as indicating a late Puranic passage. Unfortunately, he never reveals when the name first occurs. His earliest datings of texts that refer to the *tulasī* include the *Bṛhannāradyapurāṇa*, dated by him to not before the last quarter of the 7th century (ibid.: 339), and the *Kṛīyayogasāra*, to not before 700 CE (ibid.: 276).

284 There is the well-known example from the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (13.4.4.5–10) in which the arrangement of the 21 sacrificial posts is described, likening the characteristics of the kinds of timber of the posts to the different constituents of Prajāpati's body.

285 For colours conventionally associated with the planetary deities, see Kropf (2005: 212).

286 E.g. *sarveṣāṃ puṣpajātīnāṃ raktaṃ śastaṃ varānane | devipṛītikaraṃ prājñe sarva-kāmaphalapradam* (*Śāktānandatarāṅginī* 14.22; see also Abbott 1932: 281).

287 *Javā*: PuCi 3.12a, 15c, 22c; 4.20a, 45, 55c, 63b, 71d, 80–81b, 88–89b; *bandhūka*: 3.5d; 4.3c, 19d, 64ab, 65b, 71c, 83, 88–89b.

288 Tripurāsundarī's outward appearance resembles the hibiscus flower: *japāpuṣpa-nibhākṛti* is the 198th name in the *Lalitāsahasranāma*; in the *Tripurasundarīstotra* she is called *japākusumabhāsūrā* (*Bṛhatstotraratnākara* 2000: 118); her tongue is like the hibiscus (*Saundaryalaharī* 64b); see also *Vāmakeśvaratantra* 1.113c, 126d. According to Bühnemann's (2001a) study of the *Prapañcasāra* und *Śāradātīlaka*, *javā* is associated with such deities as Bhuvaneśvarī/Ambikā (ibid.: II, 38), Sūrya-Bhuvaneśvarī (ibid.: 59), Gāyatrī (ibid.: 105), Śāradā (ibid.: 181) and Agni (ibid.: 176). The colour of *bandhūka* is referred to in connection with Gaurī (ibid.: 114), Ardhhanarīśvara (ibid.: 182) and Sūrya. Tripurā, too, is said to have the lustre of a *bandhūka* (TBhS 1940: 176₁₁).

charged with meaning.²⁸⁹ In Brahmanic literature, red is often ill-omened and associated with danger. Red flowers “are especially offered to noxious or evil beings” (Gonda 1980: 122). In the *Gr̥hyasūtras*’ prescriptions for *sarpabali*, *palāśa* flowers are offered to the snakes.²⁹⁰ PuCi 1.5cd prescribes red flowers for the Rākṣasas. In oneiromancy, climbing a tree bearing red flowers, such as *kiṃśuka*, *aśoka*, *asana*, *pāribhadra* or *śālmali*, means that one will soon ascend the funeral pyre (*Svapnacintāmaṇi* 2.38).²⁹¹ And yet, red is also associated positively with fertility, womanhood and auspiciousness. Nepalese women are to wear red for any auspicious ritual. The *saubhāgyavatī*, a married woman whose husband is alive, is marked by her red parting in the hair, whereas for a widow it is a taboo to wear red. Red is, moreover, associated with blood, or with the *guṇa* of passion (*rajas*). This range of meanings makes it understandable why the Sun and Mars, in astrology both related to the warrior (*kṣatriya*) class and both (if Mars more than Sun) said to be invested with anger (*krodha*) or greed (*lobha*) (Kropf 2005: 109), are to be worshipped with red flowers. Likewise, it is comprehensible why Viṣṇu, protector of the cosmic order and enemy of the demons, and who only consumes vegetarian offerings, should despise red flowers, and why the goddesses treated in the PuCi, mainly forms of the warrior goddess Durgā, should take special delight in red flowers.

Analogies between deities and their favourite flowers can also be noted with regard to shape. This can be illustrated with the *aparājītā* (*Clitoria ternatea* L.) flower, prominently touted as a gift for goddesses in the PuCi and elsewhere. The characteristic form this flower has speaks for itself (see Fig. 5.8) and gave rise to the Latin name of its genus, *Clitoria* (Genaust 2005: 163). In Sanskrit, it is also called *yonipuṣpa*.²⁹² Another of its names is *yantrapuṣpa*, apparently prominent in sources reflecting Bengalese traditions. For this denomination, too, the shape of the flower seems to be central. According to B. D. Basu, “from *Clitoria ternatea*, a yoni or Yantra flower, the *Yantratva* is extended” (1999: 123). P. Ghosha

289 For the conventional associations of colours in South Asia, see Abbott (1932: 276–283), Goudriaan (1978: 163–210), Weinberger-Thomas (1999: 24–28).

290 See Gonda (1980: 122) and Gopal (1959: 105, 406), quoting *Hiranyakeśigr̥hyasūtra* 2.16.5, *Āpastambagr̥hyasūtra* 7.18.6, 7, 11.

291 Negelein, the editor of the *Svapnacintāmaṇi*, reads: *kiṃśukaṃ aśoka-masanaṃ | śālmaliṅvṛkṣaṃ ca pārijātataruṃ*. It is, however, preferable to read “*aśokam asanaṃ*”, as the *asana* is a red-blooming plant (see Syed 1992: 116). And more appropriate than *pārijāta*°, the white flowering coral jasmin, is Negelein’s variant reading *pāribhadra*°. Identified as *Erythrina variegata* L., it too is a red flower (on different identifications of *pāribhadra*, see its entry in appendix A). On the ominous character of red, see also Negelein’s remarks on this verse.

292 For a discussion of PuCi 4.47–50, where the *aparājītā* functions as a substitute in ritually performing *maithuna*, see pp. 133–136 below.



Fig. 5.8 In flower texts the *aparājītā* (*Clitoria ternatea* L.) flower is advanced as ideal gift for goddesses. Its characteristic form gave rise to the Latin name of its genus, *Clitoria* (Genaust 2005: 163). One of its Sanskrit names is *yonipuṣpa*; photo: 21 March 2006, Allahabad.

(1871: xxvii n. 17) counts *karavīra*, *javā*, *padma*, *baka* and *bakula* as *yantrapuṣpas*.²⁹³ The shape of a plant is also referred to when the intimate connection between *bilva* (see Fig. 5.9) and Śiva is stressed. In the *Bilvāṣṭaka*, the leaf with its characteristic three leaflets is likened to Śiva's three eyes.²⁹⁴ Likewise, a comparison with Śiva's trident (*triśūla*) is often made by modern-day worshippers.

Another type of conformity between deities and their associated plants exists on the linguistic level. Thus, common denominations of the *buka*, such as *śivamalikā*, *mahāpāśupata* or *śivaśekhara*, may go back to its close ritual relation to Śiva, stressed often and insistently in the PuCi (1.24a, 48cd, 63d, 75–78, 82b, 139c–140) and elsewhere. It also comes as no surprise that texts praise the *arka* (*Calotropis*

293 Bhattacharya (2000: 105) mentions e.g. hibiscus (= *javā*), lotus (= *padma*), blue *aparājītā*, *Adhatoda vasica* (= *aṭarūṣa*) and *Nerium* (= *karavīra*).

294 Moreover, the trifoliate leaf is related to the three *guṇas* and the three kinds of weapons the god carries (*tridalaṃ triguṇākāraṃ trinetraṃ ca tridhāyudhaṃ*); see also Duda (2005: 117).



Fig. 5.9 One of the most popular offerings to Śiva is the *bilva* leaf. The leaf with its characteristic three leaflets is likened to Śiva's three eyes or is compared with Śiva's trident (*trishūla*); photo: 25 February 2007, Varanasi.

gigantea [L.] Aiton und *Calotropis procera* [Aiton] Aiton) as the best offering for the Sun. The homonymy is savoured in PuCi 2.67c–68b:

One who worships the Sun (Arka) with *arka* flowers, being concentrated and with devotion, rejoices with Arka, resembling Arka in brilliance.

The close association between the *arka* and the Sun is, however, not limited to the name; it is a well-established cultural fact. The cuneiform leaves of the plant (see Fig. 5.10) are likened to the rays of the Sun, and are called *arkaparṇa* accordingly (Dymock et al. 1995: II, 429). In the *arkavivāha* form of marriage, celebrated in Nepal till today, a man about to be married for the third time is first married to an *arka* plant, regarded as the Sun's daughter.²⁹⁵

295 Thus, in ritual instructions for an *arkavivāha*, the *kanyādānasamkalpa* specifies the descent of the *arka* plant as being—within the *kāśyapagotra* (reckoned as the standard *gotra* of all plants, animals and other beings without an inherited *gotra*, including



Fig. 5.10 The *arka* plant is closely associated with the Sun (*arka*). Amongst others, its cuneiform leaves are likened to the rays of the latter; photo: 13 February 2007, Varanasi.

With regard to its positive association with Śiva (PuCi 1.24b, 45, 64a), another characteristic of the *arka* plant may be adverted to, namely its toxicity, for which it is notorious (see Syed 1992: 352). Other plants very popular for worshipping Śiva are the different kinds of thorn-apple, called *dhattura/dhustūra* in Sanskrit (PuCi 1.24b, 49ab, 58d, 61, 80c, 86cd; see Fig. 5.11).²⁹⁶ The thorn-apple species belong to the nightshades and are well-known intoxicants, as their name *unmatta* (lit. “intoxicated”) betrays. Indian ascetics smoke their seeds. There are historical reports about thieves drugging their victims with it (Dymock et al. 1995: II, 590–592). In addition to its pharmacological properties, the plant’s peculiarity of blooming at night makes it a suitable gift for Śiva, Lord of ascetics, intoxicated god and drinker of poison. Like the deity, his favourite plants *arka* and *dhustūra* are at home on wasteland, cremation grounds and other inhospitable terrain.

foreigners)—the great-granddaughter of Āditya, the granddaughter of Sāvitr̥ and the daughter of Arka (e.g. *Dharmasindhu* 1986: 222; *Saṃskāradīpaka* 2001: II, 175).

296 The name of the botanical genus is derived from the Sanskrit via New Indo-Aryan and Portuguese (Genaust 2005: s.v. *Datura*).



Fig. 5.11 The thorn-apple (*dhatura/dhustūra*), popularly employed for worshipping Śiva and planted near his temples, belongs to the nightshades and opens its flowers at night; photo: 25 February 2007, Varanasi.

Other plants can be added in: the *bṛhatī*—in the PuCi (1.24c, 49cd, 56ab, 62; 3.14) only prescribed for Śiva and Durgā—is a nightshade, too; (*śveta*)-*mandāra*, proscribed in the text for some of the other deities, is a special kind of *arka*.²⁹⁷

As the example of the *arka* shows, various characteristics may give rise to the different associations a plant evokes. In other cases, however, a single association may dominate the cultural character of a plant, while still connected with an assortment of different ritual functions. Thus, the *tulasī*, the holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum* L.), is primarily associated with purity and purification. In many Hindu households and temples, *tulasī* is grown on a special platform (Skt. *tulasīvr̥ndāvana*, Nep. *tulasīmaṭha*, see Fig. 5.12) and water dripping from its leaves is drunk daily as a purifying measure. A *Tulasīmāhātmya* of the *Skandapurāṇa* (2.4.8.11) explains that once water comes into contact with a *tulasī* it purifies from evil (*pāpa*), and

297 Proscribed for Viṣṇu (PuCi 2.63c), the forefathers (2.92d) and some types of goddesses (3.43c). For the distinction between *śvetamandāra* as *Calotropis* species and *mandāra* as *Erythrina variegata* L., see appendix A: s.v. *mandāra*.



Fig. 5.12 In many households and temples, *tulasī*, the sacred basil, is grown on a special platform (*tulasīvr̥ndāvana*, Nep. *tulasīmaṭha*). Its marriage to Viṣṇu is performed annually on Haribodhini Ekādaśī when Viṣṇu awakes from his four-months sleep during the *caturmāsa* period; photo: 2 November 2006, *tulasīvivāha* in a household in Kathmandu.

that *pāpa* does not stick to one who smears his body with *tulasī* (ibid.: 2.4.8.15). If pure soil (Nep. *cokho māṭo*) is needed in rituals, as when preparing the altar for a fire sacrifice, it is common practice in Nepal to take it from the foot of a *tulasī* plant. In death and ancestor rituals, too, the purifying qualities of the plant are foregrounded. Thus, *tulasī* leaves are placed on the tongue or the head of dying people. *Piṇḍas* fed to the forefathers are worshipped with it. The PuCi twice prescribes the use of *tulasī* in *śrāddha* (2.90c, 92b).

In the Puranic myths about the origin of *tulasī*, for example in *Brahmavai-vartapurāṇa* (*Prakṛtikhaṇḍa* 6), Viṣṇu alleviates Sarasvatī's curse on Lakṣmī to become a plant, promising her that she will become a specially sanctified plant with the power to purify the three worlds (*trailokyapāvanī*).²⁹⁸ The girl *Tulasī*, who is to become the *tulasī* plant, must remain faithful to her husband, the demon Śāṅkhacūḍā, whose invincibility depends on her purity. *Tulasī* is tricked into adultery by Viṣṇu appearing disguised as her husband. Here *tulasī* embodies the cultural ideal of a wife devoted to her husband (*pativrata*). Her intimate relations with Viṣṇu are stressed time and again. Accordingly, the PuCi (2.27ab, 56c–60), like other texts, extols *tulasī* as the best gift for Viṣṇu.²⁹⁹

In many cases, however, more than one feature of a flower invites comparison with a deity it is appropriate for. *Dhustūra* and *arka* have already provided good examples of complex relationships. Looking at the white water lily, called *kumuda*, it is not only the colour that likens it to the moon. Poets relate the fact that it blooms at night to the moonlight (Syed 1992: 636, 638; Schreiner 1998: 15). The bee that leaves the closing lotus in the evening to seek the opening water lily is commonly met with in Sanskrit texts (e.g. *Nepālamāhātmya* 9.69). The association between the flower and the moon is so close that the term for the moon's glow, *kaumudī*, is derived from the name of the water lily. The positive relation of *javā* and the goddesses, stressed in the PuCi at several places, is also multifaceted. The hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L.) is probably the best-known flower for worshipping goddesses, especially of the Kālī type.³⁰⁰ Poster images of Tārā show her with hibiscus garlands (see Fig. 5.13). Its long style is commonly compared to the goddess's lolling tongue (Goody 1993: 342). In Newari, the *javā* is nowadays called *hiphosvām*, "blood flower", and is presented to goddesses that crave blood

298 For variants of this myth, see Dhal (1981).

299 More elaborate praise of the efficacy of *tulasī* in worshipping Viṣṇu is found e.g. in the *Puṣparatnākara* (4.120–136) and the *Puṣpasāra* (NGMPP H 340/2, fols. 5a₅–6b₄); see also *Pūjāprakāśa* (1913: 42–48).

300 See e.g. Bhattacharya (2000: 105), Nugteren (2005: 321). It needs to be investigated further whether the close relation between Kālī and *javā* is of an East Indian origin (e.g. Bengal, Orissa) and spread from there with the popularization of the cults of (Bhadra)Kālī and Tārā. In any event, the second well-known name of the hibiscus, *oḍrapuṣpa*, points to East India.



Fig. 5.13 In contemporary poster art the goddess Tārā is often depicted as wearing a garland of hibiscus flowers (*javā*); poster art.

sacrifice. In a Puranic story related by M. Gandhi (1991: 171), Durgā is requested by the other gods to take her wild form as Kālī. The hibiscus flower donates its redness so that the goddess is able to show anger in her eyes. As a boon for this devotional act, the flower is raised as the goddess's favourite. If, as mentioned above, the appearance or the tongue of the young and beautiful goddess Tripurasundarī is likened to the *javā* flower, the connotation of beauty is added to those of wildness and untamed femininity.

In addition to certain characteristics of the flowers that can be connected to the receivers of flower gifts, there also seem to be interdependencies within the actual rules for *nityapūjā*: Two groups of revered beings are often juxtaposed: the gods (*deva*) and the forefathers (*pitṛ*). While the former are associated with periods of increasing light, such as the northward course of the sun, the bright half of the month or the forenoon, the latter correlate with periods of diminishing light. Accordingly, some rules on the use flowers in ancestor rituals (*śrāddha*) are opposite

to those on worshipping gods. Flowers blooming outside their proper season or artificially ripened are unfit for the gods, but cherished by the forefathers (PuCi 1.6). Colourful flowers are to be given to the gods, but to the forefathers only white ones (2.93c), here probably to be understood as the absence of colour.³⁰¹ Likewise, the rules on *nityapūjā* may mirror the rivalry between Śiva and Viṣṇu. Is the flower of the *atimukta* pronounced unfit for Śiva (PuCi 1.118a, 125b) because it is, as its popular name *mādhavī* betrays, regarded as the embodiment of Viṣṇu's wife? Poets compare this creeper, winding around a tree in intimate embrace, with a woman devoted to her husband (S. M. Gupta 2001: 38–39; Syed 1992: 34–35). For *tulasī*, another famous *pativrata*, the text does not contain a proscription on its use in worshipping Śiva, nor is there a positive assignment. The gift of *tulasī* may immediately evoke Viṣṇu's presence, so that it may simply be considered out of place to worship Śiva with it. Other plants prominently assigned to Viṣṇu—including *ketakī*, *kunda* and *yūthikā*—are prohibited for Śiva;³⁰² and, in turn, Śiva's favourites *arka* and *dhustūra* are not to be presented to Viṣṇu.³⁰³ Like *tulasī* with Śiva, *buka* is not mentioned in connection with Viṣṇu.

If one looks groupwise at the flowers assigned to different receivers, certain shared characteristics may be isolated. P. Duda (2006) has already shown that there is an opposition between flowers suited for Viṣṇu and Śiva. His examples include the toxic *arka* and *dhattūra* (in PuCi *dhustūra*). As plants growing in the wild, they comport with Śiva's character. In contrast, the jasmines and *ketakī*, referred to by Duda as examples for Vaiṣṇava plants, are scented garden flowers whose physical and literary images fit Viṣṇu's character. These findings are confirmed by the PuCi. There are many assignments of *ketakī* to Viṣṇu, and indeed of all jasmine species—*jātī* in the first place, but also *mallikā*, *mālatī*, *kunda* and *yūthikā*. In this connection it seems remarkable that *ketakī* is prohibited for Narasiṃha, Viṣṇu's wild form. For Śiva, in addition to the wild-growing *arka* and *dhustūra*, wild flowers in general are explicitly prescribed (PuCi 1.17–18b, 21 with comments). For female deities, too, a characteristic group of flowers stands out. *Javā* and *bandhūka* are red. They are prohibited for Śiva, and red flowers are not in general to be given to Viṣṇu. Although they are unscented and therefore violate a basic rule for *pūjā* flowers, they are recommended for all goddesses. Like the *aparājītā*, these flowers are conspicuous by reason of their forms. One may say that with their colour, shape and accompanying associations they aptly represent femininity.

301 For white as absence of colour, see Goudriaan (1978: 165–166).

302 On Śiva and *ketakī*, see PuCi 1.118a, 120d, 121c, 124a and p. 107 above; *kunda*: PuCi 1.118b, 120a; 2.87a; 3.43a; *yūthikā*: 1.118b, 120b, 121b.

303 Viṣṇu and *arka*: PuCi 2.63c, 65c; *dhustūra*: 2.63c, 65a, 87b; 3.43b.

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Besides flowers suitable for all goddesses, there are also flowers whose assignments are ambiguous in the text; e.g. for *āmalakī* (suited for Pārvatī [PuCi 4.61ab] vs. prohibited in the *ūrdhvāmnāya* [4.93a]); *tulasī* (suited for Sāvitrī, Bhavānī, Durgā and Sarasvatī [4.61c–62b] vs. prohibited for Mahālakṣmī [3.42a], the *uttarāmnāya* [4.51a], Dakṣiṇakālī [4.52c, 54b], Nilasarasvatī [4.69] and the *ūrdhvāmnāya* [4.93b–95]); *dhustūra* (suited for Dhūmāvātī [4.60ab] vs. prohibited in the *paścimāmnāya* [4.15a] and *uttarāmnāya* [4.51b]); and *bilva* (suited for Durgā [3.35ab] and the *uttarāmnāya* [4.22c–23] vs. prohibited in the *paścimāmnāya* [4.14ab]).

The text itself hints at how to distinguish goddesses. In the comment on PuCi 3.43 the prohibition of *arka* and *mandāra* is restricted to goddesses like Satī and Sāvitrī, who are set apart from goddesses of the Durgā type—probably on account of their domination by male deities.³⁰⁴ The distinction between dominated and dominant goddesses, labelled at times with the more catchy words “mild” and “wild”, is not, however, very helpful for the main part of the PuCi. As laid out in chapter 3.3, the text mainly treats flowers for Durgā and the *āmnāya* deities, exoterically represented by Durgā.³⁰⁵ The prohibition of the *Calotropis* species *arka* and *mandāra*—loved by Śiva and despised by Viṣṇu—should not apply to any of these deities.³⁰⁶ If one had to distinguish types of goddesses, for the PuCi it would be more apt to draw a line between exoteric and esoteric forms. Indeed, some of the ambiguous assignments straddle this line. Thus, *āmalakī* (*Phyllanthus emblica* L.) is a suitable gift for Pārvatī, who, according to Puranic myths, is the source of that tree (see p. 88 above), while for the esoteric goddess Tripurasundarī it is prohibited. The same dichotomy can be seen in relation to *tulasī*, suitable for exoteric goddesses (Sāvitrī, Bhavānī, Durgā, Sarasvatī) and prohibited for most of the *āmnāya* deities.

The discussion of the prohibition of offering *tulasī* to Tripurasundarī in the PuCi (4.93c till +4.95), however, reveals that not only the deity, but also its worshipper can influence the appropriateness of certain flowers. According to an opinion quoted in the author’s comment on PuCi 4.95, the prohibition of *tulasī* applies only to practitioners of the *divya*- and *vīrabhāva*. The three dispositions “cattle” (*paśu*), “hero” (*vīra*) and “divine” (*divya*) rank Tantric practitioners (*sādhaka*)

304 *mandārārkau niṣedhau durgetaradevīparam ity ācāracintāmaṇau | atra durgetaradevyas satīsāvitrīyādayaḥ* (PuCi +3.43).

305 As said, in addition to these deities, the text once (PuCi 4.61c–62b) mentions Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī, whose worship is, however, not otherwise treated. Goddesses such as Lakṣmī do not occur in the PuCi.

306 The prohibition of the *arka* leaf in the *uttarāmnāya* (PuCi 4.51c) contradicts this, but it is qualified by the mention of *arka* (4.31c) and *mandāra* (4.17c) as suitable in the *uttarāmnāya*.

hierarchically, depending on their progress on the way to salvation. The three groups are assigned different modes of increasingly antinomian ritual practice:

paśu is related to the rules of conduct (*ācāra*) of Veda, Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas; vīra is related to *dakṣiṇa*- and *vāmācāra*, and divya is related to *siddhānta* and *kaulācāra* (Hoens 1979: 73).³⁰⁷

Some Tantric texts prohibit Vaiṣṇava practice for the higher classes of *sādhakas*. In the *Tārābhaktisudhārṇava* (TBhS) the statement “One should avoid Vaiṣṇava ritual practice, one should avoid the *tulasī* leaf” is related to the *vīrabhāva*.³⁰⁸ Likewise N.N. Bhattacharyya (1999: 316), based on further textual sources, writes: “followers of Vāmācāra ... must give up Vedic rituals, and must not utter the name of Viṣṇu or touch a *tulasī* leaf”. As these statements betray, the use of the *tulasī* leaf can, *pars pro toto*, represent the whole of Vaiṣṇava ritual conduct.

The fact that the rejection of certain flowers demarcates Kaula practice against other systems of ritual can possibly aid in interpreting PuCi 4.92c–93, where *āmalakī*, *kāśa*, *tamāla* and *palāśa* are prohibited together with *tulasī*. *Palāśa* and *kāśa* are prominent representatives of Vedic ritual flora. Especially the proscription of *palāśa*, the Brahmin among trees and foremost of the sacrificial trees,³⁰⁹ may emblematically refer to Vedic ritual practice as *tulasī* does to Vaiṣṇava ritual. The prohibition of offering the leaves of *āmalakī* and *tamāla* concerns plants which, according to the Smārta part of the text, may be used under all circumstances, even if destroyed (PuCi 1.135c–136b).

For the text passages on regular worship (*nityapūjā*) it can conclusively be noted that there are correlations between the gifts and the receivers of the gifts, thus connecting the flowers to the central component of this kind of *pūjā*. Analogous characteristics of flower and deity usually correspond to positive assignments, and contrasting features to negative ones. At least in one place, however, the converse seems to be at work. PuCi 3.42cd states that *dūrvā* grass, which texts often compare to Durgā,³¹⁰ should not be offered to Durgā, or the lotus (*kamala*)

307 See also Bhattacharyya (1999: 293–294).

308 *varjayed vaiṣṇavaṃ kalpaṃ varjayet tulasīdalam* (TBhS 1940: 152₂₃); *sādhakās tri-vidhā divyavīrapaśubhedāt | tatra paśuparatayā tantracūḍāmanyādivākyāni haripū-jāṅgatāpratipādakāni | vīraparatayā caikavīrākālpādivākyāni haripūjāniśedhakāni niyojyānti siddhāntarahasyam* (ibid.: 153₂₁₋₂₃).

309 For *palāśa* as the foremost sacrificial tree, see p. 89 above; for its being Brahṃā, see pp. 84–85 above; for its association with the *brahman* and Brahmins in general, see Gonda (1980: 109–110, 1985: 67), B. K. Smith (1994: 217–220).

310 Durgā is called *dūrvānibhā* in the *Prapañcasāra*; Vanadurgā *navadūrvāsadr̥śī* (Bühne-mann 2001a, II: 51, 54–55).

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to Kamalā. The especially clear collocation of *kamala* and Kamalā hints at the fact that an analogy here comes paired with a negative ascription.

Apart from the overall principle of analogy, tentative groups of flowers can be established. There are ones suited for all and others unfit for any of the deities. Certain deities have particular tastes that fit their character. Thus, Śiva cherishes wild and toxic flowers, Viṣṇu nicely scented garden plants. The goddesses stand united in their affinity with red flowers and those of eye-catching appearance. The criterion of scent seems to be of minor importance here. There are groups of flowers associated with individual gods, but one can also shift the point of view around. Each flower to be offered to a deity has specific characteristics that, one may speculate, highlight the corresponding qualities of the deities worshipped with them. Thus, presenting the lotus to Śiva may be taken as a visualization of his spiritual perfection, while the *bilva* may evoke his ascetic qualities, or the *dhustūra* the *unmatta* side of him. As was shown with examples from the fourth chapter, not only the deity worshipped may influence the choice of appropriate flowers; the worshipper and the mode of worship are also factors to be considered. Finally, despite all interpretative possibilities exemplified here, it should be stressed again that only a limited subset of the rules stated in texts appears to be susceptible of elaborate exegesis. There are many supernumeraries besides the celebrities of the world of plants. Moreover, some of the ambiguities in the fourth chapter remain puzzling. Thus, the fact that the night-blooming intoxicant *dhustūra* is prohibited in the *uttarāmnāya* (PuCi 4.51), headed by the dark and wild Kālī, defies the principle of analogy. Moreover, there is no apparent reason why *bilva* should be prohibited in the *pāścimāmnāya* (4.14).

Flowers in the Annual Cycle (*naimittikapūjā*)

Among the three types of *pūjā*, the PuCi contains the least material on the occasional (*naimittika*) ones. Only in a single case are these rules explicitly rubricized (*atha naimittike*; PuCi –4.24). In the passage in question, flowers are enumerated according to their suitability to the different months. Similar monthly series are found in PuCi 1.30c–44 and 3.35c–40. Furthermore, specifications of months and seasons are contained in PuCi 2.41–60, but not in each verse. Therefore it remains unclear whether the injunctions to present flowers on certain occasions relate only to the verses in which they are stated (i.e. 2.41c–44b, 46c–47b, 52c–53b), or whether, by applying the śāstric principle of extending a rule once mentioned to all that follows (*anuvṛtti*), they are valid for the following verses, too (i.e. 2.44c–46b, 47c–52b, and 53c–60). Some of these latter verses, however, contain time designations indicated above as typical for *nityapūjā*, such as *nityam* (2.58a), *sarvadā* (2.49d) or *pūjākāle* (2.50d). Moreover, the praise of *tulasī* at the end of the

quote (2.56c–60) clearly evinces the character of rules for *nityapūjā*. Therefore, I will here only refer to those verses in which specific months or seasons are stated. Apart from seasonal occasions, no other *nimittas* are referenced in the text.³¹¹

Specifications of the mental dispositions or motivations of the giver of flowers are rare in these rules on *naimittikapūjā*. If anything at all, it is devotion (*bhakti*) that is demanded (2.43a, 47a), as it is for *nityapūjā*. Concerning the results, too, the material is comparable to what pertains to *nityapūjā*. The same interchangeable standard merits include positive effects for this- or other-worldly existence, and bear comparison with the merits of other rituals.³¹² Only occasionally is the fulfilment of wishes promised (3.36a, 37d, 38d), and again the result of offering an *aśoka* bud (*aśokasya kalikā*) is clad in a pun: the annihilation of (the effects of) the *kali* age (*kalikāvināsinī* 4.29cd).

Apart from this last mentioned example, no correlation between the characteristics of flowers and their results can be diagnosed. The basis for any such conjunctions must be sought elsewhere. A month-by-month arrangement of the details of the *naimittika* rules (see Table 5.2) reveals that certain flowers are mentioned more frequently in particular months or seasons. Thus, *pāṭalā* is suited for Viṣṇu and Durgā in spring, *campaka* again for both, and for the *uttarāmnāya*, in the rainy season, and *padma* for Śiva and Durgā in Jyeṣṭha. *Kunda* is prescribed in Māgha, not only in both series relating to goddesses, but also in the commentary on PuCi 1.120, which explicitly states that *kunda* is to be offered to Śiva in the month of Māgha, although a general prohibition in his regard otherwise applies. These consonances along with the fact that the monthly series quoted in the PuCi for Durgā, in its original textual embedding,³¹³ refers to Śiva, reinforce the impression that the deity to be worshipped only plays a subordinate role when deciding on appropriate flowers in *naimittikapūjā*.

311 There are references to worship on the eighth (PuCi 4.5, 62cd) and fourteenth days of each fortnight (4.62cd). *Pūjās* on these *parva* days are reckoned as being especially important in Tantric post-initiatory practice, but still are classified as part of the regular and obligatory rites (Sanderson 1995: 29–30). There are, however, often ambiguities in distinguishing *nitya*- and *naimittikapūjās*.

312 One may gain (a great) result (PuCi 3.36d, 37b; 4.28b), profit (3.38ab), good fortune (4.28cd), success in (4.29b) or the understanding of everything (3.40cd), the highest existence (1.33, 44), no further rebirth (2.53ab). One becomes an aspirer to liberation (2.47b), reaches a heavenly world (1.33, 38, 39), has a direct encounter with Śiva (1.37), shares a seat with Indra (1.41d) or travels in a divine chariot (1.35, 36, 40). Evil is burned away (2.43b, 55b). The results are equivalent to those of a *bahusuvāṇaka* (1.42d) or an *aśvamedha* sacrifice (1.43d), and to those from offering all gifts (3.40d), a gift of a thousand cows (1.34d) or one of a hundred brown cows (2.42a, 44a). Note that a brown cow (*kapilā*) is reckoned as the best cow to present as a gift (Kane 1968–55: I, 878–879).

313 In the *Devīpurāṇa* as well as in the ĀC, on which the PuCi is probably based here (see pp. 36–37 above).

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Table 5.2 Assignments of gods and flowers in individual months and seasons. In the text, all series start with the month of Vaiśākha and end with Caitra, except for the one for Śiva, which starts in Āṣāḍha.

| | | Śiva (1.31c–44) | Durgā (3.35c–40) | uttarāmnāya (4.24–29) | Viṣṇu (2.41c–47b) |
|-----------------|------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| spring | Caitra | <i>darbha</i> | <i>śatapatra</i> | <i>aśoka</i> | <i>mallikā, pāṭalā, damana</i> |
| | Vaiśākha | <i>śukla- mandāra</i> | <i>pāṭalā</i> | <i>bakula</i> | |
| summer | Jyeṣṭha | <i>padma</i> | <i>padma</i> | <i>nāgakeśara</i> | |
| | Āṣāḍha | <i>†puṣpa- sakuṇḍikā</i> | <i>bilva, kahlāra</i> | <i>karavīra</i> | |
| rainy season | Śrāvaṇa | <i>karavīra</i> | <i>navamālikā</i> | <i>campaka, utpala, padma</i> | <i>campaka</i> |
| | Bhādrapada | <i>apāmārga</i> | <i>kadamba, campaka</i> | <i>lodhra</i> | |
| autumn | Āśvina | <i>arka</i> | <i>pañkaja, mālatī</i> | <i>bandhūka</i> | |
| | Kārttika | <i>jātī</i> | <i>śatapatrikā</i> | <i>agastya</i> | |
| winter | Mārgaśīrṣa | <i>buka</i> | <i>nīlotpala</i> | <i>bilvapatra</i> | |
| | Pauṣa | <i>dhustūra</i> | <i>kubjaka</i> | <i>dūrvā</i> | |
| cold season | Māgha | <i>bilva</i> | <i>kunda</i> | <i>kunda</i> | |
| | Phālguna | <i>droṇa</i> | <i>marubaka</i> | <i>mādhavī</i> | |

There is, however, a remarkable agreement when comparing the flowers prescribed in certain seasons as gifts in *pūjā* with literary conventions on plants drawn on by Sanskrit poets. *Aśoka*, *damana* and *bakula*, which figure in the literary image of spring (Feller 1995: 51, 56; Syed 1992: 34, 77), are to be presented in this season. The appearance of *kadamba* flowers announces the end of the hot season and is one of the perennial objects in literary descriptions of the rainy season (Feller 1995: 41, 45; Syed 1992: 150). Accordingly, PuCi 3.37 prescribes the offering of *kadambas* in Bhādrapada. Likewise, the mentioning of *bandhūka* and *jātī* in autumn and of *marubaka* and *kunda* in the cold season are poetological standards (Feller 1995: 45, 49, 55, 57). For some flowers, the ritual and literary time frames differ slightly. Thus, while the *campaka* is often found in descriptions of summer (Feller 1995: 52, 56), the PuCi recommends offering it in the rainy season.

Pāṭalas are prescribed in the PuCi in spring instead of summer (Feller 1995: 53), and *mādhaviś* not in spring (Feller 1995: 51), but one month earlier.

Apart from such general associations between flowers and seasons, there are some plants for which ritual significance is attested in more specific periods. As already stated, the PuCi recommends the use of the white jasmine *kunda* (*Jasminum multiflorum* [Burm.f.] Andrews) in the month of Māgha for goddesses and Śiva. Tellingly, this plant is known as *māghya* (Skt.), and there is ample testimony for the ritual use of *kunda* in this month: The fourth of the bright half of Māgha is known as *kundacaturthī*, on which the flowers are offered to Śiva or a goddess.³¹⁴ In Nepal, the month of Māgha is famously associated with the *svasthānīvrata*.³¹⁵ In the *pūjās* of this *vrata* directed at the goddess Svasthānī, Śiva and Viṣṇu (as Mādhava Nārāyaṇa) *kunda* is indispensable.³¹⁶

Quite unsurprisingly, it is the spring (*vasanta*), the season of blossoms, which features especially many rituals centred on flowers. PuCi 4.29cd prescribes the use of *aśoka* buds in Caitra. The mentioning of buds—according to the general rules, prohibited in worship (see p. 72 above)—and the unusually concrete phrasing of the result could allude to rituals involving the eating of *aśoka* buds in order to drive away sorrow (*śoka*), as reported from different localities for the bright half of Caitra. The sixth of the fortnight is called *Aśokaśaṣṭhī* in Northern India. Women worship a goddess and drink water containing six *aśoka* flowers.³¹⁷ In a related myth, a wise man raises an orphan girl and marries her to a prince. As a farewell gift, he presents her with *aśoka* seeds she sows on her way to the palace in order to be able to find the way back to her foster father in times of distress. When later on her whole family dies she returns to the old man at the end of the *aśoka* alley. Her foster father advises her to perform the *Aśokaśaṣṭhī* rituals. After the *pūjā* and by means of water she receives from the hands of the wise man, the woman is able to resurrect her family. The *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 34), too, recommends the swallowing of *aśoka* buds, if on the eighth instead

314 See *Varṣakṛtyadīpaka* (2002: 111) by the Nepalese *paṇḍit* Nityānanda Panta Parvatīya, Kane (1968–77: V, 287) with reference to the *Kṛtyakalpataru* and the *Caturvar-gacintāmaṇi*, Kiehlhorn (1897: 186). Meyer (1937: II, 196) gives *varadācaturthī*, *gaurī-caturthī* or *umācaturthī* as alternative names of this *pūjā* and holds that, depending on the source, Śiva, Gaurī or Śrī are worshipped. According to Kiehlhorn and the *Varṣakṛtyadīpaka*, worship is directed at Śiva.

315 For short descriptions of the *svasthānīvrata*, see Anderson (1988: 225–30) and Bennett (2005: 274–306); for in-depth studies, Birkenholtz (2018) and Iltis (1985).

316 On the last day of the *vrata* 108 *kunda* flowers are offered, amongst other counted gifts (Bennett 2005: 277; Iltis 1985: 653, 760; P. P. Regmi 1983: 150). In Nepali, *kunda* is called *belī*, in Newari *dvāphosvām*.

317 See Filchner and Marāthe (1953: 42–43), B. A. Gupta (1997: 204–205), Nugteren (2005: 106, 307), Underhill (1921: 104).

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of the sixth of the fortnight. The respective mantra again verbalizes the relief from sorrow.³¹⁸ Underhill (1921: 128–129) records this latter day as *Aśokāṣṭamī* and reports that women, in order to evade widowhood, embrace the *aśoka* tree and eat its leaves in remembrance of Sītā’s desperate prayers under an *aśoka* during her confinement on Lanka.³¹⁹ I have so far been unable to find anyone in the Kathmandu Valley aware of a similar custom, but at least the contemporary Nepalese almanacs (*pañcāṅga*) register the eating of *aśoka* buds for the fifth of the fortnight under discussion.³²⁰

Very well known in Nepal, however, is the use of *damana(ka)* in spring. It is part of the annual ritual routine of major temples in the Kathmandu Valley to sow *damana* (known as *damanāropaṇa* or *°ārohaṇa*) and worship the deities with its flowers.³²¹ A large number of pertinent *pūjā* manuals have been transmitted in Nepalese manuscripts.³²² Rituals with *damana* in spring are also known from elsewhere. Many texts of pan-Indian distribution—Tantric texts as well as Dharmasāstric *nibandhas* and *Purāṇas*—treat some form of *damanapūjā*, *damanāropaṇa* or *damanabhāñjikā* (“splitting of *damana*”), or else simply a *damanotsava* (“*damana* festival”), usually held in the bright fortnight of Caitra and centred on various deities, such as Śiva, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, a goddess or Gaṇeśa.³²³ Meyer (1937: I, 38–53) argues that these festivities all go back to a spring worship of the Indian cupid Kāma, to whom Puranic mythology traces the origin of the *damana* plant. Thus, it is told that the *damanaka* sprang from Kāma’s ashes after he had been burned by

318 “I, who am burned by sorrow, swallow (lit. “drink”) you, *aśoka*, who is dear to men, who grows in the ‘sweet month’ (i.e. Caitra). Make me always free from sorrow!” (*tvām aśoka narābhiṣṭa madhumāsasamudbhava || pibāmi śokasaṃtāpto mām aśokam sadā kuru*, *Dharmasindhu* 1986: 34).

319 Sītā’s suffering in the *aśoka* grove is treated in the *Sundarakāṇḍa* (chs. 14–19) of Vālmiki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*.

320 For this day, the *Sūryapañcāṅga* lists the “eating of *aśoka* buds” in Sanskrit (*aśokakalikāprāśanaṃ*) in the year V.S. 2062 (Ḍhuṅgela 2005), in the following year in Nepali (*aśokako phāulā khāne*, Ḍhuṅgela 2006).

321 Personal communication, Binod Raj Sharma, 4 March 2007. In the ritual routine of the Taleju temple at Kathmandu, *damanārohaṇa* is scheduled for the eighth of the dark fortnight of Caitra (NGMPP K 12/50, <https://nepalica.hadw-bw.de/nepal/catitems/viewitem/1422>, I am currently preparing an edition of this document). The *Sūryapañcāṅga* (Ḍhuṅgela 2005, 2006) lists the worship of Paśupati with *damana* for the eighth of the bright half of Vaiśākha.

322 An initial search in the NGMPP database yielded more than 150 hits.

323 See e.g. TBhS (1940: 280–286), *Devībhāgavata* 7.38.45, *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 33–35), *Padmapurāṇa* 6.84, MKS 12.64c–67b, *Somaśambhupaddhati* (1968: II, 198–221), *Skandapurāṇa* 2.2.45, S. Gupta (1979: 158), Meyer (1937: I, 38–53); for a study of the emergence of the *Damanotsava* within the Mantramārga, see now Goodall (2019).

Śiva and watered with Rati's tears.³²⁴ But there are also other versions of this aetiological story. The *Skandapurāna* (2.2.45) tells of a demon named Damanakāsura from whose ashes the plant arose. The Śaivasiddhāntin *Somaśambhupaddhati* (1968: II, 198–221) relates *damana* to Bhairava, who was generated from Śiva's wrath and killed a demon.

As the PuCi is confined to simple assignments of gods and flowers, the question of whether an allusion to any specific ritual around a plant is intended—when e.g. PuCi 2.43cd calls for worshipping Viṣṇu with *damana* in spring—is difficult to answer. Besides the above-mentioned rule to employ *aśoka* buds in Caitra, a possible reference to a ritual context might be seen in the comment after PuCi 1.120. There, in connection with an exceptional rule quoted for the use of *kunda* for Śiva in the month of Māgha, a *pūjā* lasting for a year (*varṣavyāpi°*) is referred to. This could more plausibly pertain either to a daily *pūjā* or one to be carried out on a specific *tithi* for a whole year,³²⁵ rather than one of the mentioned festivals.

Despite all vagueness surrounding whatever direct ritual background there might be to the textual prescriptions for *naimittikapūjā*, it seems evident that some plants, either in poetical or ritual worlds, occupy a fixed setting in time corresponding to their flowering season. As the examples illustrate, only the restriction of the plants to certain seasons or months is constant, whereas ritual procedures, associations with deities, or myths differ. Therefore I conclude that flowers mentioned in rules on *naimittikapūjā* are linked above all to the cycle of vegetation and only secondarily to the deities.³²⁶ The monthly series for Śiva (PuCi 1.31c–44) may be regarded as an exception to this observation, as it features mainly flowers that are also especially suited for *śaiva nityapūjā*. For the other series, however, the temporary assignments can be held to be the primary key to interpreting rules. Admittedly, such interlinks cannot be demonstrated for each rule. Besides some more or less stable connections between plants and seasons, the material for *naimittikapūjā* in the PuCi is not only the one least extensive among the three types of *pūjā*, it is also the least descriptive.

324 Meyer (1937: I, 43); see also the *damanāropanaprayoga* in the *Dharmasindhu* (1986: 35).

325 Such a type of *pūjā* is e.g. prescribed in the *Matsyapurāna* (62.22–24). The so-called Gaurīṭṭiyavrata is to be performed for one year each third day (*ṭṭiya*) of all lunar fortnights, starting in Bhādrapada, Vaiśākha or Mārgaśīrṣa. On each *ṭṭiya* the goddess Gaurī is to be worshipped with specific flowers (in Māgha with *kunda*).

326 *Bilva*, a leaf available regardless of season, is accordingly prescribed in summer (Āṣāḍha), in winter (Mārgaśīrṣa) and in the cold season (Māgha).

Flowers and Wishes (*kāmyapūjā*)

Kāmyapūjā, the worship with a specific desire in mind and carried out on one's own initiative, enjoys a poor reputation.³²⁷ Texts warn of engaging in it and refer to its dangers. For those aspiring to liberation (*mumukṣu*) all spiritual efforts are doomed to fail once they turn to it.³²⁸

Rules on this kind of *pūjā* are only found in the first and the last chapter of the PuCi. Again, as has been noted for the *naimittikapūjā*, the pertinent material is not always neatly separated from the exposition of *nityapūjā*. The passage PuCi 1.88–117 stated as pertaining to *kāmya* ritual (*atha kāmye*; –1.88) contains a general statement on worshipping Śiva as its last verse, and one line (1.103cd) on Śiva cherishing the *bilva* leaf. Both have been treated above under *nityapūjā*. Moreover, the occurrence of the term *nitya* in this passage (1.98d, 101c, 109a, d, 111d, 112c) can cause confusion. As it is used here in association with clear *kāmya* terminology, it is perhaps more apt to be understood as referring to the fact that either particular flowers regularly produce a certain result or that the *pūjās* have to be repeated daily. Indeed *kāmyapūjās* usually require huge investments of time and material. From the fourth chapter, the sections PuCi 4.6–13 on the *paścimāmnāya* and 4.32c–44³²⁹ on the *uttarāmnāya* clearly concern *kāmyapūjā*. In PuCi 4.70–79 on the *ūrdhvāmnāya*, however, regulations pertaining to both *nitya*- and *kāmyapūjā* appear. On the one hand, flowers liked (4.71d, 76d) or disliked (4.73b, 77cd) by the deity are enumerated. On the other hand, wishes and typical *kāmya* applications are mentioned (e.g. 4.70d, 4.74a).³³⁰ Other statements, such as “dark *aparājītā* [brings about] death” (4.77c), may even be interpreted both ways. Referring to *nityapūjā*, it would mean that the use of the flower is prohibited, with death threatening one who disobeys this rule. If taken as a *kāmya* injunction, the dark *aparājītā* becomes a means of causing death to an adversary. As the same verse pinpoints flowers to be avoided during *cakrapūjā*, the former interpretation

327 Bühnemann (1988: 86), S. Gupta (1979: 159), Goudriaan (1978: 253).

328 *kāmyaprayogakartṛṅṅāṃ paraloko na vidyate | prayogasiddhir evaiṣāṃ phalam anyan na vidyate || ekasya hi vidhānasya na kutrāpi phaladvayam | deveṣi dr̥syate yasmān niṣkāmo devatām bhajet* (TBhS 1940: 354, also cited in Goudriaan 1978: 456). Śaivite traditions prescribe separate initiations and post-initiatory practice for the two incompatible aspirations: that of liberation (*mumukṣu*) and that of worldly pleasures (*bubhukṣu*) (Sanderson 1995: 24).

329 The subsequent quote from the *Bhāvacūḍāmaṇi* (PuCi 4.45–50) contains rules on *nityapūjā* (4.45–46), which, however, are combined with the description of a special ritual (4.47–50).

330 The last line marks out this quotation from the *Vāmakeśvaratantra* as a generalized assessment of *pūjā* flowers: “Knowing the greatness of flowers to be thus, one should offer [them] to the glorious Tripurā” (PuCi 4.79cd). This might be the reason for the treatment of two types of *pūjā* in one place.

seems more likely at first sight. But given the consistently positive connotations of the *aparājītā* flower for goddess worship and, moreover, a parallel in the *Kubjikopaniṣad* (chapter 24), in which a killing ritual (*māraṇa*) involving a dark *aparājītā* is described, the latter interpretation is more likely in this particular context. Because of such ambiguities, I will only refer to examples from this passage in which typical *kāmya* terminology is used.

The PuCi's rules on this third type of *pūjā* do indeed feature a set of terms pertinent to *kāmya* ritual, namely the applications collectively known as the “six works” (*ṣaṭkarman*).³³¹ Concrete lists of these six vary in systematic textual treatments. T. Goudriaan (1978: 259) lists the nine most common terms, which are all attested in the PuCi. A ritual aiming at the removal of disorders, such as ailments etc., is called “pacification” (*śānti* PuCi 1.116a; 4.8a). A rite for “prosperity” (*puṣṭi/pauṣṭika* 1.101a, 116b; 4.8a, 72b) aims at any kind of enhancement. By “attraction” (*ākaraṣaṇa/ākṛṣṭi* 1.114c, 4.10b, 12d) one can acquire a desired object. “Confusion” (*mohana* 4.44a) deprives another of the control of their senses. “Subjugation” (*vaśya/vaśikāra* 1.97d, 1.102, 109c; 4.8c, 4.11a, 12c, 43a, 70b) makes another obey one's will. “Immobilization” (*stambhana* 4.6b, 70d) can block any activity. “Dissension” (*vidveṣa/dveṣa* 1.110a, 114a; 4.44c) creates aversion between friends. “Expulsion” (*uccāṭana* 1.114a, 4.6c, 4.43a) effects the removal from a certain place. “Killing” (*māraṇa* 4.11b, 4.44d) takes life. These categories cannot always be sharply delineated and may overlap (Goudriaan 1978: 255). *Mohana* and *ākaraṣaṇa* are close to *vaśikaraṇa* (ibid.: 304, 310, 371–372). Thus, winning the affection of a woman, as mentioned in PuCi 1.97b, 4.41 and 4.44a, may be ensured by confusing her senses, by attraction or by subjugation. Likewise, *uccāṭana* and *vidveṣa* are often mentioned in the same breath (Goudriaan 1978: 352). *Abhicāra*, “malevolent injury” (PuCi 1.116c, 4.44c), is mostly referred to as a generic term for those rites of the group that cause harm.³³² In older texts,

331 The term *ṣaṭkarman* also denotes the six Brahmin duties, i.e. learning (*adhyayana*) and teaching (*adhyāpana*), performing sacrifice for oneself (*yajana*) and for others (*yājana*), giving gifts (*dāna*) and accepting them (*pratigraha*) (Apte 1998: s.v.). On the Tantric *ṣaṭkarman*, see Bühnemann (2001b), Goudriaan (1978: 251–412), Türstig (1985). In secondary literature these are usually called rites of “magic” or “sorcery”. I will refrain from using the term magic, as it is supercharged with various undertones stemming from Western theological and anthropological discourses. Often a value judgement is implicit, either mystifying a certain rite or, more often, treating others' ritual actions pejoratively. Moreover, “magic” often implies “religion” as its antithesis. For a commendable discussion of magic as one of the critical categories in the study of religion, see Otto and Stausberg (2013).

332 According to S. Gupta (1979: 159) all *kāmya* applications except for *śānti* are called *abhicāra* or *krūrakarman*. Texts attest to different opinions on this point (Goudriaan 1978: 365). Legal texts treat *abhicāra* as a minor offence (*upapātaka*), for which MDh

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a simpler classification of desire-driven rituals into *śānti*, *puṣṭi* and *abhicāra* is found (Goudriaan 1978: 95, 265).

The rules governing *kāmyapūjā* in the PuCi are either prescriptions of flowers for performing one of these *ṣaṭkarman* applications or points to note in pursuit of other specific aims. To a small extent these results overlap with those already known from the passages on *nitya*- und *naimittikapūjā*. Thus, one may gain the highest goal (PuCi 4.42b) or liberation (1.89d, 4.6a).³³³ Evil (*pāpa*) can be expunged (4.9d, 12b). One obtains great prosperity (4.40b), (good) fortune (*śrī* 1.89c, 4.41d), conjugal felicity (*saubhāgya* 1.93c, 4.9a) or happiness (1.105a, 106a, 112c; 4.9b). Sorrow vanishes (4.38c). A deity becomes ready to grant boons (1.89a). Much more frequent than for the other two types of *pūjā* is the assurance that all wishes can be fulfilled (1.91a, 91c, 93a, 103a, 105b, 106b, d, 111a, d). Results exclusively stated in the *kāmyapūjā* rules include enjoyment (1.90a, 4.6a); rule over people / kingship (1.90cd; 4.33d, 40a); fame (4.7d, 35a); intellectual qualities (4.33c, 34c, 36d) such as knowledge (1.95c), mastery of speech (4.32d) or poetship (4.36b); mastery of *mantras* (*mantrasiddhi* 1.92a, 4.42a); health (1.97a, 99a, 106c, 109a, 113a; 4.36c); increase of the vital power (1.107b, 112b; 4.6d, 36a, 40c), strength (1.112b; 4.7b) or beauty (4.37d). Profit in general (1.93c; 4.7a) or an increase in wealth (1.89b, 1.97c, 105c, 106c; 4.10c, 34b, 34d, 39a), land (4.34a), food (4.39c), grain (4.39a) or domesticated animals, such as dairy cattle, horses and elephants (1.105d, 107c; 4.37b, 41b), can be effected. Likewise, the birth of a son (1.96; 4.8b, 4.38b) or a girl [as a bride or daughter?] (1.94), the winning of a wife (4.41) or a lover (1.97b, 4.44a) lie within one's grasp. Through flowers one can become cherished (4.35) or gain respect (4.38d, 40d). One can cause pleasure (1.107a) or joy (4.43b, 75c). Calamities can be eliminated (1.115b), obstacles be prevented (4.13c), and those bound can be released from their bonds (1.99d). Victory (1.101b, 104, 113c, 114d; 4.41d, 43b) and similar aims, such as evoking fear in one's enemies (4.11d) or destroying them (1.100c, 108, 110c; 4.35cd, 39b), can be achieved. Enemies or rulers can be subdued (1.98, 4.33a).

Results achievable by *kāmyapūjās* not only differ in substance from the other kinds of *pūjā*; it is remarkable that in the text they also are expressed with a different set of syntactical forms. More often than in the other parts, in which verbal constructions dominate, in the *kāmya* passages flower names in the nominative or the instrumental case are simply put side by side with their results in the nominative or accusative case. Characteristic in this part of the text, and exclusively

9.290 declares a fine and 11.198 a penance (Türstig 1985: 93). For different connotations of the term, see Türstig (1985).

333 The mentioning of *mokṣa* goes against the above-quoted opinion that *kāmya* rituals and aspiration to liberation are mutually exclusive. Maybe these passages are more aptly to be understood as statements on the all-round efficacy of certain flowers (here *bilva* and *jāti*) including the whole spectrum of worship from *nitya*- to *kāmyapūjās*.

used in it, are result constructions.³³⁴ Locatives are used to denote the divine receivers and ritual applications.³³⁵

Parallels can be drawn between the *kāmya* rules given in the PuCi and the known literature on the “six rites”, especially as regards colour classifications. Classificatory passages in the PuCi (see Table 5.3) largely chime with colour assignments found elsewhere for the *ṣaṭkarman*. They accord with the more general scheme of attributing colours to the three *guṇas*; white to the quality of “goodness” (*sattva*), red to “passion” (*rajas*) and black to “darkness” (*tamas*).³³⁶ In extensions of this basic scheme, yellow usually forms the fourth colour, and is associated with hate, on the one hand, and with protection on the other (Goudriaan 1978: 176). In the PuCi, white is prescribed for thorough applications of *sattvagūṇa*, and dark for ones of *tāmasic* character, including *dveṣa*, *māraṇa* and, more generally, *abhicāra*. As in other texts, *vaśya* is assigned to red, and *puṣṭi* to yellow.³³⁷ There are, however, some ambiguities. Thus, for victory or conquering enemies, yellow, red or dark flowers are prescribed; for *vaśya*, red and blue ones. According to the PuCi, *uccāṭana* is achieved with the aid of red flowers, whereas other texts prescribe dark ones. Such variance is not an unusual feature of śāstric literature, and may be taken as additional evidence for the fact that we do not have here a fixed and fully coherent system.

Table 5.3 Classificatory assignments of colours to *ṣaṭkarman* applications and *kāmya* results (PuCi 1.100–102, 116; 4.42c–44).³³⁸

| Colour | Applications or results |
|-----------------------|---|
| White | “pacification” (<i>śānti</i> 1.116a), desires of the <i>sāttvika</i> type (4.42cd) |
| Yellow | “prosperity” (<i>puṣṭi</i> 1.101a, <i>pauṣṭika</i> 116b), “confusion” (<i>mohana</i> 4.44ab), victory (1.101b), winning a lover (4.44ab) |
| Red | “subjugation” (<i>vaśya</i> 1.102c, <i>vaśīkāra</i> 4.43c), “expulsion” (<i>uccāṭana</i> 4.43c), joy (4.43b), conquering adversaries (4.43b) |
| Dark (black and blue) | “subjugation” (<i>vaśya</i> 1.102c), “dissension” (<i>dveṣa</i> 4.44cd), “killing” (<i>māraṇa</i> 4.44cd), “malevolent injury” (<i>abhicāra</i> 1.116c, 4.44cd), conquering enemies (1.100) |

334 In these cases the results are usually put in the dative case (1.93d, 100c, 101b, 110c; 4.43b) or in compounds with the dative °*kāmāya* as a second member (1.96a, 98c, 105cd, 107c, 113c). Further, constructions with *artha-* in the dative or locative occur (1.95a, 97d, 101a, 102b, 104a, 109c, 113a, 114a, 116a; 4.7a).

335 PuCi 1.108b, 110a, 114c, 116c; 4.6b, c, 11a, b, 42c, 43a, b, 44a, c, d.

336 Gonda (1980: 46–47), Bühnemann (2001b: 449), Goudriaan (1978: 167–168).

337 Bühnemann (2001b: 448), Goudriaan (1978: 186–187, 339, 399), Türstig (1985: 102).

338 Additionally, PuCi 1.100ab stipulates that unscented flowers are to be used to destroy enemies, and 1.102ab that one should offer flowers that grow in water for “subjugation” (*vaśya*).

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Therefore it is not surprising that there is no consistent accordance between these general classificatory statements on colours and the colours of the individual flower species actually prescribed in the rules pertaining to *kāmyapūjā*. Still, at least some examples tally. Thus, the white water lily (PuCi 4.6d) and the lotus (4.36a) are said to enhance vital power. Not only is this application with an unambiguously positive aim paired with white flowers; it is paired specifically with the classical plant symbols for purity and perfection (see pp. 103–104 above). The lotus is, moreover, recommended for “pacification” and “prosperity” (4.8a, 72b). Fame, to be effected by a white *pāṭalikā* (4.7cd) or the white jasmine *kunda* (4.35a), may also fall into the category of *sāttvika* aims, but I cannot offer any supporting evidence to underpin this assumption. For *puṣṭi* rites, texts usually prescribe yellow offerings. This accords with PuCi 4.7a, where the yellow jasmine (*hemajātī*) is linked to gain, and with 4.34b, where the *campaka* flower leads to the acquisition of gold. Yellow is also the default colour for “immobilization” (Goudriaan 1978: 339), this in line with PuCi 4.6b and 4.7ocd, where the same two yellow flowers as before are prescribed for *stambhana*. The colour scheme is likewise upheld by having the red flowers of *bandhūka* (4.8c), *karavīra* (4.8d) or *utpala* (4.11a) being instrumental for “subjugation”, or the blue or black *utpala* for “killing” (4.11b). Other cases, however, go against the system. *Jātī*, a white or yellow jasmine, is prescribed for “subjugation” (4.33ab). A white *girikarṇikā* effects victory (1.113d). The fiery red flowers of the *palāśa* are prescribed in applications where one would rather expect white or yellow flowers, namely to enhance vital power (1.107b) or to obtain cattle (4.41ab). In these cases, one certainly has to look for other principles that may underlie the assignment of flowers.

Quite often it is the names of plants that resonate with their particular ritual purpose in *kāmya* applications. This principle is well known from Brahmanic ritual texts from the late Vedic literature onwards and was termed “Gleichklangzauber” (“assonance magic”) by I. Scheftelowitz (1924). Thus, the wood of the *śamī* tree is employed “probably because its name suggests ‘appeasement’ (*śam-*)” (Gonda 1980: 111), the name *khadira* “makes it fit to devour (*khād-*) enemies” (ibid.). The name *aśoka* harbours a pun, not only in the rules for all three types of *pūjā*, as given in the PuCi (2.47c–48b; 4.29cd, 38c),³³⁹ but, as indicated in the previous chapter, in literature, myth and ritual in general it is intimately connected with the liberation from sorrow (*śoka*). *Kāmya* applications from the PuCi provide further examples for verbal analogies. *Jayantī*, the “winning one”, causes victory (1.113c, 4.41d), the “subduing” *damana(ka)* helps to destroy enemies (1.104, 108)

339 The pun in 4.29cd hinges not on the flower’s name but on the claim that the offering of its bud (*kalikā*) destroys the effects of the *kali* age (*kalikālavinaśinī*).

or expunges evil (4.12a). The use of *bandhūka* to ingratiate oneself to kinsmen (*bandhu* 4.35b) is verbally as evident as that of *bālī* to increase strength (*bala* 4.7b). The feminine gender *jātī* has overtones of “birth” (*jāti*) and “daughter” (*jātā*), and so helps to fulfil the wish for a girl (as a daughter or as a bride?, PuCi 1.94). The precept to use a white *girikarṇikā* for achieving victory (1.113d), which seems to infringe the colour scheme, becomes comprehensible once one knows that *girikarṇikā* is another name for the white flowering *aparājītā*, nominally the “invincible”.

Apart from their colour or name, the wider cultural associations of plants can be invoked to interpret the rules governing *kāmyapūjā*. The Bengal quince, *bilva* (*Aegle marmelos* [L.] Corrêa), is considered a form of Śrī, affluence and prosperity (see p. 106 above). Accordingly, *bilva* can liberate from poverty (PuCi 1.103b).³⁴⁰ The flowers of a *palāśa* are red, but still the positive association of the tree with Brahmanical qualities (see p. 119) may be pointed to as arguments to justify its employment to enhance vital power (1.107b) or to obtain cattle (4.41ab). *Tulasī*, closely associated with purity and purification (see pp. 113–115), helps to expunge evil (4.12a). The feathery flower of the mimosa *śirīṣa* stands for delicacy and fragility (Syed 1992: 579). Poets compare it to the body of a beautiful woman. In *kāmyapūjā* it can be employed to obtain a woman (PuCi 4.41c). The shape of the *aparājītā* flower (*Clitoria ternatea* L.) is intimately connected with femininity (see pp. 109–110). It is thus only logical to use it in ritual to become “beautiful in every limb” (PuCi 4.37cd). That the *asōka* flower effects the meeting with a loved one (1.97b) resonates with the poetical imagery that the sight of this tree invokes joy in happy lovers (Syed 1992: 77). Moreover, in Sanskrit literature, *asōka* is one of the plants that feel *dohada*, the longing for the touch of a woman, by which the tree may burst into flowers, no matter what the season.³⁴¹

Other clues for interpreting the *kāmya* rules reside in the plants’ own ritual significance. Hence flowers of *ayajñīya* trees (see pp. 84–85) are prominently prescribed for harmful applications: e.g. *nimba* flowers in order to cause “expulsion”

340 The association of *bilva* with wealth or food is very old (see B. K. Smith 1994: 220–221). This not only finds expression in the PuCi or in the fact that the *bilva* tree is considered an embodiment of Śrī. Goudriaan (1978: 305) cites from the *Sāmavidhānabrāhmaṇa* (3.1.2) that gold can be obtained by offering *bilva* leaves to a fire. According to the *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* (2.1) the sacrificial post (*yūpa*) is to be made of *bilva* wood if the purpose is to obtain food (*anna*) or prosperity (*puṣṭi*). According to the *Tantrasārasaṅgraha* (cited in Goudriaan 1978: 407), too, *bilva* protects against poverty.

341 Concerning the *dohada* felt by trees, see Hara (2003: 474–478), Nugteren (2005: 98–103), Schmidt (1911: 729–730). Originally, *dohada* refers to the longing of a pregnant woman for a certain object. As regards trees, the *asōka* wants to be kicked by a beautiful woman, and the *bakula* wants to be showered with wine from the mouth of one in order to blossom.

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or “dissension” (PuCi 1.114ab), or *sālmali* flowers to make enemies perish (4.39b).³⁴² Similar effects are apparently generated if one incurs the deity’s displeasure by offering the wrong flowers. This may at least be regarded as the logic behind the stipulation in PuCi 1.110 that, while in a state of anger oneself,³⁴³ one should offer Śiva *yūthikā* and *ketakī*—two flowers prohibited for him in *nityapūjā*—to bring about dissension among and the destruction of enemies, respectively.

As in *nitya-* and *naimittikpūjā*, in *kāmyapūjā*, too, the characteristics of flowers, such as their names, colours or cultural associations, can be related to their ritual use. Whereas in the other two types of *pūjā* the correspondence was between the flowers’ features and the receivers and the time of offering respectively, in *kāmyapūjā* the flowers’ qualities accord with the desired results. Apart from the example in which Śiva is to be offered flowers despised by him in order to cause harm, it hardly seems to matter to what deity the *pūjā* is directed. This confirms Goudriaan’s findings on *kāmya* applications: “any effect is attainable by the worship of any god. There is not much evidence of a specialization of the gods in a particular kind of effectivity” (1978: 90). Moreover, in this part of the PuCi rules remain that are unspecific (often it is said that all wishes can be fulfilled) or even incomprehensible. Having dealt hitherto with the exegetical possibilities, I will now turn to these residual obscurities.

5.3 Limits and Edges

So far, those portions of the PuCi have been discussed that invite interpretation and can be related to broader contexts. The treatment of the text is not complete, however, without turning to its “dark edges”, where comprehension is limited in one way or another. Some of the gaps and voids have already been indicated in previous chapters. There are passages that are open to different interpretations, and others that are hard or even impossible to understand. After all, the text is not free from contradictions.

342 Gonda (1980: 111) mentions similar fields of application for the *nimba* and *vibhītaka*; see also Goudriaan (1978: 367, 369) for the use of *nimba* in *vidveṣa*. The *Paraśu-rāmakalpasūtra* (9.24) prescribes offering flowers of *ayajñīya* trees (e.g. *nimba*, *śleṣmātaka* and *vibhītaka*) in a fire sacrifice (*homa*) in order to destroy enemies.

343 Some texts prescribe mental states of the worshipper corresponding to the results aimed at by the *kāmya* application. In rites aiming at harm, the worshipper should show anger, e.g. by biting his lips (Goudriaan 1978: 290).

Esoteric Contents

The PuCi covers both exoteric and esoteric traditions. Concerning the esoteric parts, there are indications that the author took precautions to conceal decisive information and layers of meaning from an uninitiated readership. This first becomes evident with the fact that neither the rubrication of the fourth chapter nor the author's comments there disclose the names of the deities towards whom worship should be directed. Though one may gather from some of the verses (e.g. 4.71, 79, 81, 94) that Tripurasundarī is to be worshipped in the *ūrdhvāmnāya*, one is left asking who is to be addressed in the *paścimāmnāya* and *uttarāmnāya*. In this respect the PuCi diverges from its successor, the *Puṣpamāhātmya*, the independent elaboration of the PuCi's fourth (esoteric) chapter, in that in the latter Kubjikā, Guhyakālī and Siddhilakṣmī are named as addressees in the liturgical formulas (*vākyas*) for the two *āmnāyas* crucial for Nepalese elite religion (see Table 4.1 above). This itself may only be a mild indication that information was consciously suppressed in the PuCi, but there are other points that reinforce the impression that a certain vagueness may have been intended by the compiler.

This applies to a special degree to the passage PuCi 4.47–50. As has been mentioned in passing, these verses fall outside the above-treated schema of *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kāmya* rules. In these verses, flowers are more than just *upacāras*:

aparākundamadhye tu kulasthānaṃ manoharam |
hayārikusume deva svayam asti sadāśivaḥ || 4.47 ||
tanmadhye laghum ādhāya puṣpamadhye tu candanam |
raktakuṅkumārāgaṃ vā kṛtvā tatra śivātmakam || 4.48 ||
yojayec chivaśaktyoś ca aikyaṃ sambhāvayan dhīyā |
kṣaṇaṃ vicintya tatraiva sañcintya paramēśvarīm || 4.49 ||
japtvā tad eva kuṅḍoṭthaṃ dravyaṃ paramadurlabham |
amṛtād adhikaṃ jñeyam etad dravyaṃ tu sādhakaiḥ || 4.50 ||

Inside the *aparā* flower is the beautiful site of the *kula*.

In the *hayāri* flower, O god, Sadāśiva himself resides.

If one places *laghu* in its middle (i.e. in the middle of the *aparā* flower?), and *candana* in the middle of the [*hayāri*?] flower, or one puts there (i.e. into both flowers?) the red *kuṅkuma*'s redness, which partakes of Śivā's nature,

one should join [the two flowers] while meditating on the union of Śiva and Śakti, pausing for a moment to meditate, deeply concentrating on the Highest Mistress.

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By repeatedly reciting [the proper mantra, this turns into] the extremely rare substance that arises from *kuṇḍa*.

This substance is considered by *sādhakas* to be superior to the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*).

The translation into Newari reads:

*apalhātisvānayā dathusa kunda dase coṅa amaki raktacandana tayāva |
kaneholasvānasa śivaliṅga dase coṅa amaki keśarī ṅhyachi thaṅāva ||
4.47–48 || apalhātisvānaṃ kaneholasvānaṃ śivaśaktyātmaka dhaka bhā-
lape a'ikya dhaka bhālapāva paramēśvariyā cintanā yāṅāva chāya || 4.49 ||*

Having put *raktacandana* into the middle of the *apalhāti* flower, in which [Śakti's] *kunda* is located, and having filled with *keśarī* the *kanehola* flower, in which Śiva's *liṅga* is located, one meditates on the fact that *apalhātisvāna* and *kaneholasvāna* possess the nature of *śiva* and *śakti*. One should offer [them], meditating on [their] union [and] thinking of Parameśvarī.

Although of all ritual instructions throughout the text these lines contain the most concrete ones, they remain enigmatic in the absence of additional knowledge. This starts with the use of technical terms. If one did not know that *kula* in PuCi 4.47b refers to Śakti, the goddess,³⁴⁴ and the “substance arising from *kuṇḍa*” (4.50a) to a mixture of semen and menstrual discharge,³⁴⁵ it would be difficult to conclude that in the ritual in question the divine couple is being represented by flowers, which are to be smeared with certain substances and joined while uttering a mantra and meditating on the couple's union. This produces a highly priced substance originating from the union of male and female sexual fluids. Despite certain details, the translation into Newari largely agrees with the root text.³⁴⁶

344 As opposed to *akula*, Śiva. For the various meanings the term *kula* can assume in Tantric texts, see Brunner-Lachaux et al. (2000–*: s.v.), Finn (1986: 54–57).

345 For *kuṇḍoṭtham* (also *kuṇḍodbhava*, *kuṇḍagolaka*), see Bhattacharyya (1999: 136), Brunner-Lachaux et al. (2000–*: s.v. *kuṇḍagola*), Finn (1986: 87 n. 71), White (2006: 78–79). The terms *kuṇḍodbhava* or *kuṇḍagolaka* seem to be far more widely used than *kuṇḍoṭtha* (*Bhāvacūḍāmaṇi*, *Kaulāvalinirṇaya*). In non-Tantric language usage, *kuṇḍagolaka* denotes illegitimate sons: *kuṇḍa* such a son born of a woman whose husband is alive; *golaka*, of a widow (Apte 1998: s.v.).

346 The terms used in the Newari text, *kunda* (for Skt. *kuṇḍa*, “ritual pit”?) with regard to the female and *śivaliṅga* to the male flower, may simultaneously be calling up a non-iconic image of Śiva (usually conceived of as consisting of a *liṅga* and *yoni*) and the human sexual organs. This text fails to mention the substance produced in the ritual, and the substances it instructs to put into the flowers differ.

Even if the passage can be comprehended thus far, neither in the PuCi nor in the other Nepalese flower texts that contain these lines³⁴⁷ are there any hints regarding the ritual context. The compiler who, at other places, readily adopts explicatory comments from his source texts, does not do so for this passage (probably taken from the *Tārābhaktisudhārṇava* [1940: 178₁₋₇]). In the TBhS, as in another parallel version,³⁴⁸ the verses are quoted in connection with the performance of the *pañcatattva* or *pañcamakāra*, the ritual use of five items starting with the *akṣara ma-*, i.e. *madya* (intoxicant drink), *māṃsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (lit.: “seal”)³⁴⁹ and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse). Both texts prescribe substitutes for Brahmins who are anxious or doubtful.³⁵⁰ Among them, the performance of

347 In the *Puṣpamāhātmya* [I], the passage is transferred from the section on *kāmya-* to the one on *nāimittikapūjā*. NGMPP A 1104/15 (pp. 18–20) contains a Nepali text apparently based on PuCi 4.46–50, but without quoting the Sanskrit text. There too, it is only said that Parameśvarī is very pleased by such a *pūjā* and that the *pūjā* is successful: “White *aparājītā* [is also known as] white *abharatisvān*, *yonipuṣpa* [and] *varāhkrāntā*. Śīvara (i.e. Śiva) has said: ‘The glory resulting from offering this flower is boundless; I cannot express how much merit [it yields].’ There is no other flower which is as dear [to the goddess] as the *aparājītā*. It is a flower which is very dear to the goddess. In an earlier age, the goddess dwelled in the leaf of the *aparājītā* for 100—one hundred—years; taking the form of a *yonī*, she came out of the *aparājītā*. Glorious Śīva, in the form of *liṅga*, dwelled in the *karavīra*. Just as there is the union of Śīva and Śakti, one should also perform *pūjā* uniting [both flowers], with white sandalwood paste (*śrīkhaṇḍa*) inside the *karavīra* and red sandalwood paste (*raktacandana*) inside the *aparājītā*. [At such a *pūjā*] Parameśvarī becomes very happy. That *pūjā* yields a good result.” (*seto aparājītā tuyu abharatisvān yonipuṣpa varāhkrāntā || || yas phūla caḍhāyāko mahimā apāra cha yetti puṇya huncha bhanna sakinna bhanyā śīvara vākya cha || aparājītā jattiko piyāro arū phūla chaina devikā bahutai prīya phūla cha || pūrvakālamā aparājītākā patramā 100 ekasaya varṣasamma devī basyākī thiin jonirūpa bhai aparājītābāṭa niskī liṅgarūpa karavīrakā phūlamā śrī śivaji basyākā thiyā śivako ra śaktiko saṃyoga bhayāko hunāle karavīramā śrīkhaṇḍa seto aparājītāmā raktacandana pani saṃyoga garī pūjā garnu parameśvarī bahutai khusim hunchin tyo pūjā suphala huncha*).

348 *aparāpuṣpagarbhe tu kulasthānaṃ manoharam | sarvasukhaṃ bhavet tat tu mahākāmakalātmakam | hayārikusume nityam svayam asti sadāśivaḥ || tanmukhe dravyam ādhāya puṣpamadhye tu candanam | raktakuṅkumārāgaṃ vā bhinnam tattvam śivātmakam || yojayec chivaśaktiyo tu aikyaṃ sambhāvayan dhīyā | kṣaṇam vicintya tatraiva sampūjya parameśvarīm || japtvā tad eva kuṇḍotham dravyam paramadurlabham | antarād adhikam jñeyam etad dravyam sudurlabham* (*Kaulāvalinirṇaya* 5.123c–125); see also White (2006: 115).

349 In this context, *mudrā* is often understood as denoting either roasted grains or ritual gestures. The female sexual organ, too, can be denoted by *mudrā*, which, however creates problems in differentiating *mudrā* from *maithuna*. For a discussion of this, see White (2001: 82–84); on substitutes for the *pañcamakāra* ibid. (253–257).

350 *pañcamānukalpo bhāvacūḍamaṇau – yadi vipro bhavet trastaḥ kulapūjāparāyaṇaḥ | tadānena vidhānena kuryāt kulasamudbhavam* (TBhS 1940: 177₂₈₋₃₀); *dvijānām anukalpaṃ tu na sākṣāc ca vikalpinām* (*Kaulāvalinirṇaya* 5.112b).

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maithuna can be replaced by using *aparājītā* and *karavīra* in the way described above. This seems to be a well-known option, which is commonly practised even today, at least among Nepalese Tantrics and North Indian right-hand followers of the Śrīvidyā tradition. Rameśvara (ad *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* 10.63) also recommends the use of red *karavīra* and dark *aparājītā* as substitutes.³⁵¹ The *Purāścaryārṇava* (1985: 863₁₄₋₁₉) cites the *Siddhāntasaṅgraha* in this regard. Though the PuCi makes it clear that the two flowers represent the male and female principles as being united in ritual, it does not state that they provide an option to get around the physical performance of *maithuna*.

A further layer of interpretation opens up if one considers the different possibilities of understanding the terms denoting the substances to be placed into the flowers prior to joining them; *candana* into the “male” *karavīra*, and *laghu* into the “female” *aparājītā*. Both substances are employed in *pūjās* as *gandhas*, *upacāras* used to anoint divine images.³⁵² *Candana* is offered as a scented white paste made from sandalwood (*Santalum album* L.). *Laghu*, or *aguru*, is made from agarwood, the dark, strongly scented heartwood that develops inside *Aquilaria* trees infected by a certain mould.³⁵³ Thus the colours of the scented ointments fit the genders ascribed to the flowers and may be understood as plantal substitutes for the male and female sexual fluids. In descriptions of the *advaitācāra* of the *vīra* mode, the terms can, however, also denote the bodily fluids themselves: *candana* is a common term for semen (Sanderson 2005: 111), while *laghu* is glossed in the TBhS as *ārtava*, menstrual blood.³⁵⁴

351 *raktaṃ tu karavīraṃ vai tathā kṛṣṇaparājītā | etat proktaṃ liṅgayonyoḥ puṣpaṃ tatra tu yojayet.*

352 Alternatively, this offering is called *anulepana* or else, after its most common representative, *candana*.

353 For the botanical identification of *aguru* in South Asia, see AVS (1: 171–175); for a larger perspective on agarwood, see Jung (2013). In an alternative interpretation of *laghu*, the *Śivakoṣa* (verse 97) gives *uśīra*, a grass also mentioned in lists of *gandhas* (see Brunner et al. 2000–*: s.v. *gandha*).

354 The whole commentary passage reads: “*Laghu* [means] menstrual blood. ‘Or a red flower’ [identifies an alternative] if menstrual blood is not available. ‘In the middle of the flower’ [means] in the middle of the *karavīra* flower. *Candana* [means] white sandal. In the *Bhairavītantra* [it is said]: If menstrual blood (*svayambhūkusuma*) is not available one should place *raktacandana*. It is to be kept in mind that all this only applies to the *vīra*-practitioner.” (*laghum ārtavam | raktaṃ vā kusumam ity ārtavālābhe | puṣpamadye karavīrapuṣpamadye | candanam śvetacandanam | bhairavītantra – svayambhūkusumābhāve raktacandanakaṃ kṣīpet | idaṃ sarvaṃ vīramātraparam iti bodhyam*, TBhS 1940: 178₈₋₁₁). Note that the TBhS reads “*raktaṃ vā kusumam dattvā dhyātvātmānaṃ śivātmakam*,” where the PuCi has “*raktakuṅkumarāgaṃ vā kṛtvā tatra śivātmakam*”. I have not found any other source for the interpretation of *laghu* as menstrual blood. Although the combined application of *candana* and *aguru* is sometimes mentioned in *vīra* rituals (e.g. *gatvā*

Such ambiguities about terms for certain plant species, parts or products are commonplace, especially in texts of the Kaula schools, where analogies of flowers and women or femininity in general are made frequently, as stressed by White:

The identification of the body of a woman (or a goddess) with a flower or tree, her anatomy with plant and flower anatomy, human reproduction with plant reproduction, and female sexual emissions with plant or flower essences are developed at every level in these traditions. (White 2006: 115)

The resultant ambiguousness also applies to the generic terms *puṣpa* and *kusuma*. Both Sanskrit words for “blossom” may be used in the sense of “(menstrual) blood”.³⁵⁵ Tantric texts even provide typologies of these special “flowers”, tracing them back to women of different ages and social or marital status; *svayambhūkusuma*, *vajrapuṣpa* and *raktacandana* being the most frequently recurring terms.³⁵⁶ Some passages of the PuCi invite corresponding interpretations. In PuCi 4.53d and 68d it is stated that one should worship with *kulas*. For an explanation, the author refers the reader to his preceptor (*kulair iti gurugamyam* PuCi +4.68), thus limiting access to knowledge to the circle of initiates. *Kula* could here denote “woman’s flower”.³⁵⁷ In a comment on a similar verse, the TBhS identifies *kulas* with *vajrapuṣpa* etc.³⁵⁸ *Vajrapuṣpa*, the “adamantine flower”, though, is an ambiguous term, for which, at another place in the TBhS, two meanings, “menstrual blood” or the “hibiscus flower”, are given.³⁵⁹ This ambiguity is reflected in PuCi and its translation into Newari. Verses 4.53c–54 read:

vīrendranīlayaṃ candanāgurucarcitaḥ | madirānandacaitanyo pañcaratnasamācitaḥ,
Jayadrathayāmala, Ṣaṭka 3, 15.8, cited after Sanderson 2007: 90), an interpretation as in TBhS is not attested (personal communication A. Sanderson, February 2012).

355 Moreover, Abhinavagupta in his *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa* uses *kusuma* to denote the mixture of the two sexual fluids (Sanderson 2005: 111).

356 There is no consistent interpretation of these terms. In the TBhS, *vajrapuṣpa* and *svayambhūkusuma* are used as synonyms, the blood of a 16-year-old virgin being considered the best (TBhS 1940: 182_{6–10}). In the classification cited by N. N. Bhattacharyya (1999: 136) from the *Muṇḍamālā*, the blood of a virgin, there called *raktacandana*, is again considered as most valuable. The blood of a Caṇḍālī, to be used as a substitute for it, is there called *trīśūlapuṣpa* or *vajrapuṣpa*. According to one of Finn’s (1986: 87) informants, *vajrapuṣpa* denotes the first menstruation of a woman after losing her virginity, *svayambhū* denotes menarche and *sarvakālodbhavapuṣpa* regular menses. White (2003: 78–79) summarizes further classifications; see also *Tantracintāmaṇi* (17.433–435b).

357 For the use of English “the flowers” to refer to menstruation at least since the 13th century and its cognates in other European languages, see Green (2005: 51–53); for seventeenth century England, see also Crawford (1981: 49–51).

358 *kulair vajrapuṣpādyaiḥ* (TBhS 1940: 179₇).

359 *vajrapuṣpaṃ ārtavaṃ javākusumaṃ vā* (TBhS 1940: 127₂₃).

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sugandhaiḥ śvetalohityaiḥ kusumair arcayet kulaiḥ |
bilvair marubakādyaiś ca tulasīvarjitaiḥ śubhaiḥ |
droṇapuṣpair viśeṣeṇa vajrapuṣpeṇa miśritaiḥ ||

One should worship [the goddess] with sweet-scented white and red flowers, with *kulas*, *bilvas*, *marubakas* etc., with auspicious [flowers], except for *tulasī*, [and] especially with *droṇa* flowers mixed with *vajrapuṣpa*.

The statement that the *droṇa* flowers should be “mixed” with *vajrapuṣpa*, along with the occurrence of *kula* in the same passage, especially feeds the assumption that *vajrapuṣpa* may here denote menstrual blood. In the Newari text, however, *vajrapuṣpa* is taken to mean hibiscus (Skt. *javā*, New. *jitapholasvāna*), thus according with the alternative interpretation given in the TBhS.

In the Kaula traditions, the ritual use of flowers is intimately connected with the central concept of the unification of the male and female principles, be it in a symbolic or concrete form. Flowers and plantal ointments can be employed to meet the requirements of performing *maithuna*. Similarly, the term *puṣpa* is not limited to flowers, the reproductive organs of plants, but can also denote women’s monthly discharge, a characteristic feature of humans’ ability to reproduce. Substitutions are possible in both directions and depend on the mode of the particular ritual practice. In the PuCi, this layered interpretation is not addressed directly. Explanatory comments are not introduced from the source texts but simply dropped, or the reader is related to the authority of a mentor for exegesis. Especially since it is clear that the author had access to all this information in his sources and since the skilful arrangement of references to the respective *āmnāyas* attests to his knowledge about the local esoteric realities, I am inclined to conclude that esoteric contents are presented here consciously, in the typical Nepalese manner, as “advertised secrets”.³⁶⁰ The concept of “advertised secret” was introduced by R. Levi (1992: 335–338) in his study of Bhaktapur. Levi uses it to denote the concealment of esoteric contents within different social groups while openly admitting their presence:

the fact of secrecy itself, the knowledge that a group has its required initiations and hidden rituals, gives outsiders a conviction and a confidence that proper, effective, and powerful actions are being done within a unit to produce the efficacy of their contribution to the public city. This means it is essential to know that there *are* secrets (ibid.: 336).

360 Bledsoe (2001), White (2006: 123), C. Zotter (2016) and others have adopted this concept.

In case of the PuCi, by setting aside the decisive interpretative tools amidst fleeting allusions to the fact that there is more to be known, the compiler ensures a publicly presentable face for the text when treating layers of ritual that are both exoteric and esoteric. If not too farfetched, further, one may suspect that these minimal allusions to the text's rootedness in the living religion of initiates enhance its authoritativeness in the local context.

Contradictions

While the last section dealt with verses for which comprehension was limited, and possibly even hampered on purpose, the present one looks at contradictory rules. It should not surprise us that a text compiled from different sources channels conflicting voices. The more interesting question is how the compiler deals with these inconsistencies. His choice of quotes betrays awareness of possible contradictions and as argued in chapter 3.2 bears marks of attempts to avoid them. Still, some conflicts remain.

Only in two cases does the compiler express his own view on points for which he quotes opposing views: on the question of the proper procurement of flowers (PuCi 1.17 to +1.20, see p. 73) and on whether the *ketakī* is prescribed or prohibited for Narasiṃha (+2.63b, see pp. 151–152). Following the verse PuCi 2.87, the presentation of different opinions is captured in a short remark:

niṣiddhavihitam iti kecit

According to some [authorities, *tagara* is sometimes] prohibited and [sometimes] prescribed.

More often than an attempt to quote or discuss alternatives, however, a strategy of harmonizing contradictions through a hierarchization or qualification of rules is what occurs. It has been argued above that exceptions from the general requirements are made for certain flowers, notably for the most popular ones. General proscriptions are likewise qualified. The injunctions not to use flowers with less than three leaves (PuCi +1.134) and not to employ red flowers for Viṣṇu (+2.62) are limited to “only concern flowers that have not been mentioned [among the suitable ones]” (*anuktapuṣpaparam*). Hinting at inconsistencies that would otherwise arise, some prohibitions are restricted to specific deities: *bilva* is only prohibited for Viṣṇu in his form as Kṛṣṇa (+2.62), *mandāra* and *arka* only for goddesses other than Durgā (+3.43). In the discussion on the prohibition of *tulasī* for goddess worship starting in PuCi 4.95 (see pp. 118–119 above), the interdiction is limited to a certain mode of worship. Furthermore, a proscription can be confined to

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one type of *pūjā*. In PuCi +1.120 the prohibition of a number of species for Śiva is limited to the *nityapūjā*. With this short note, a whole series of inconsistencies is cleared up. Thus, *girikarṇikā*, *kunda*, *ketakī*, *javā*, *nimba*, *yūthikā*, *śāla* and *sīriṣa* are all prohibited there—in *nityapūjā*, it is tacitly understood—but are still prescribed in the *kāmya* section on Śiva. Moreover, qualifying the general statement in 1.138ab that *tulasī* and *bilva* are always pure with the clarification that “always” (*sarvadā*) here means up to five days (+1.138b) achieves compatibility with the following verse, which states that one should doubt the purity of *bilva* and all water flowers after five days (1.138c–139b).

Not all contradictions are elucidated by the compiler, however. Some of the remaining ones are certainly only seemingly contradictory. If, for example, the most urgent requirement for a flower is its scent (see p. 71), and still PuCi 1.8ab states a general effect relating to flowers even if scentless, this can easily be recognized as a rhetorical device. The influence of flowers as a whole is here characterized as excellent (so that even a scentless flower yields an effect) before the text goes on to promote the offering of scented flowers (PuCi 1.9–10). To praise certain flowers in superlatives must likewise be called rhetorical. Thus, at one place a blue water lily (1.52cd), and at others a thorn-apple flower (1.58) or a *bilva* leaf (1.103cd), are recommended as the best gifts for Śiva.

Some divergent statements, however, are neither reconciled by the compiler, nor can they be put down to rhetoric. The fact that the purchase of flowers is allowed in PuCi 1.20b but prohibited in 1.130d has already been mentioned. Likewise, there are opposing assignments for certain flowers. Thus, *karṇikāra* (2.6d, 2.31b, 2.34b) and *mallikā* (2.2c, 5c, 7b, 19cd, 29d, 42c–43b) are repeatedly prescribed for Viṣṇu—*mallikā* even being among the flowers most often assigned to Viṣṇu. In PuCi 2.65, however, both flowers are prohibited. Though the interdiction on offering *dhustūra* to Viṣṇu is stated more than once (2.63c, 65a, 87b; 3.43b), PuCi 2.35c mentions the thorn-apple (here: *kanaka*) as suitable. Moreover, there are clashing rules on *jāti* for Śiva (1.26b, 1.37, 1.55cd, 1.63b, 1.94 vs. 1.121c),³⁶¹ on *āmlāta-ka* (2.82b vs. 2.85c) and *bilva* (2.78c vs. 2.86d) for the sun, and on *dūrvā* for Durgā (3.6d vs. 2.86c, 87c; 3.42c).

These inconsistencies further underline the general character of the text, in which references are collected encyclopaedically and as comprehensively as possible, and this involves incorporating diverging opinions on certain assignments of flowers and deities. More remarkable than these more or less expected findings is, however, that a compilation of text passages of heterogeneous origin leads to only these few contradictions. About the efforts of the author to resolve

361 Understanding the compound *ketakījātīpuṣpaṃ* (PuCi 1.121c) as “flower of a *ketakī* species” would solve the problem. The translator, however, takes *jāti* as the name of a flower (*ketakīsvāna*, *jīlasvāna*).

inconsistencies, one should add that discrepancies that were already treated as such in the source texts are the ones mainly resolved.³⁶²

“Blind Spots”

The PuCi also contains irregularities of another sort. It has been repeatedly noted that not all flower names and assignments mentioned in the text invite interpretation. Many flowers are named but once, often with a rather unspecific assignment. For many Sanskrit names, the botanical identity cannot be fixed unambiguously, and for some not at all.³⁶³ Names like *jyotsnākārī* (PuCi 1.111c), *devapatrika* (1.80b) or *śatavarga* (4.19c) are too unspecific to connect them to a certain species, as their absence in consulted botanical handbooks indicates. Names like *kendrā* (PuCi 1.121b), *grāmasiṣī* (or better *grāmasiṣīkhī* ?, 1.82d), *ḍimbhaka* (1.113a), *pūtamālī* (4.77d), *prāṇa* (4.88a), *proṣitā* (1.122a), *babhrūka* (4.72d), *muhu* (4.73c), *śaṅku* (1.25a) or *sarbarī* (4.15b) do not even make sense as flower names. The reading in PuCi 4.78c, *jhaḍī* (or *ṛḍī* ?) *vyādhipradās* , remains enigmatic. All of these cruxes were very probably already part of the autograph. By consulting the source texts quoted in the PuCi, for some example I was able to reconstruct how such “pseudo-names” came into being. Thus, *śaṅku* (1.25a) goes back to *kuśa* (*Uttarottara* 3.4a), *sarbarī* (PuCi 4.15b) to *barbarī* (*Manthānabhairavatantra* , *Yoga-khaṇḍa* 22.6b) and *prāṇa* (PuCi 4.88a) to *bāṇa* (*Jñānārṇavatantra* 17.115a).

Even if, from a philologist’s perspective, these “names” can plainly be dismissed as textual corruptions, some of which can be “rectified”, I accept them as “original” parts of the text. In addition to being more faithful to the text as composed, such acceptance of cruxes, I propose, helps understanding the situation of both its compiler and audience. The compiler of a *nibandha* relies on earlier texts accessible to him, not critical editions but single textual witnesses whose quality he cannot influence. Almost inevitably, then, incomprehensible verses or parts thereof enter a compilation and are passed on to later texts, unless the author deliberately diverges from his source material. When considering possible interference with the transmission, the compiler finds himself in a double bind, especially if the text largely consists of names. On one side, aware as he is of the general nature of textual transmission, he may rely on his own instincts to reconstruct a meaningful passage. As an example, a manuscript of the PuCi

362 Exceptions are the short comments +1.133, +1.138b and +2.62. As shown in chapter 3.2 above, all longer discussions are based on earlier authors’ comments.

363 For general problems in identifying Sanskrit plant names, see the introduction to the flower list (appendix A). Names whose botanical identity is contested or which can denote different species are discussed in their corresponding entries in that list.

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offspring PuMāh may be quoted, where the *pāda* PuCi 4.78c *jhaḍivādhīpradās*, devoid of meaning, is “rectified” to *jhiṅṭhī vyādhīpradā*.³⁶⁴ On the other side, the *nibandhakāra* has to take into account that he may face names that are unknown only to him. As already explained above, it is characteristic of śāstric thinking to consider knowledge to be in a process of steady decline. In this logic, it appears more consequential to leave incomprehensible plant names in the text, risking otherwise a loss of knowledge, than to discard and replace them with better known ones. Thus a text like the PuCi almost necessarily must contain some of these “blind spots”. This incomprehensible residue may, however, serve a function. On the one hand, it may contribute to the text’s aura of authoritativeness, containing seemingly “archaic” wisdom, which was still known to earlier authors but has become incomprehensible for contemporary readers. On the other, such gaps in knowledge can be deployed creatively when translating the text into vernaculars. Examples of this will be discussed in the course of the following chapter.

5.4 Translation and Application

A Sanskrit text treating realia deserves being interpreted with an ear to the ground. Seeking out local interpretative patterns is all the more relevant for a text dealing with plants, because the biodiversity within South Asia causes regionally different identifications of Sanskrit plant names that circulate all over the subcontinent.³⁶⁵ As, moreover, rules for ritual practice are codified in the PuCi, the question of the practical context seems inevitable.

The manuscripts of the PuCi themselves hint at how they were possibly used. That the text was not only frequently copied but apparently also consulted is attested to in manuscript B, where missing folios were replaced by a later scribe, or in those copies, including A, A₂, B₁ and C₁, that contain notes or interlinear glosses in Newari. Moreover, there are separate glossaries based on the Sanskrit flower texts covering vernacular equivalents of the Sanskrit plant names (see pp. 55–56). Above all, however, it is the full rendering of the PuCi into Newari which provides the most direct information on how the text was viewed and used within the local context. In the following, first I will investigate the translation techniques employed; then I will explore possible links between text and practice.

364 NGMPP A 334/17. Most of the other manuscripts of the PuMāh, however, read *ṛḍi*°, in accordance with the PuCi. For the dependence of the PuMāh on the PuCi, see pp. 58–60 above.

365 For more on problems in identifying botanical equivalents of Sanskrit plant names, see appendix A.

The Newari Rendering³⁶⁶

The Newari text of the PuCi is not a verbatim translation from the Sanskrit. On the one hand, the text is further simplified and standardized in terms of grammar and vocabulary. On the other, it features explanations that go beyond the root text. These are, however, too sporadic for the text to qualify as a commentary. Therefore, I prefer to speak of a “rendering” rather than of a translation or commentary.

The centrepiece of this rendering is formed by the plant names. Mostly these are compounds with one of the two Newari words for “flower/blossom”, i.e. *-svāna* or *-bu*, as second members. Sometimes both words are used together at the same time.³⁶⁷ These terms can also be combined with the genitives of the names.³⁶⁸ The same compositional patterns are attested for leaves (with *-hala* as the second member³⁶⁹) and for trees (with *-si* or *-simā*³⁷⁰). For *śāli*, the rice plant, *-vā*, the word for rice, is used as the second element, the name being rendered as *śālivāyā bu*. Occasionally names contain the classifier for flowers (*-phola*) as a morpheme.³⁷¹

The Newari names are, in the majority of cases, taken over directly or derived, with the standard phonetic changes, from the Sanskrit. Sometimes these names relate to a Sanskrit equivalent not mentioned in the text. For example, *balāpukabu* does not go back to *bāṇa*, as this plant is called in the PuCi, but to Sanskrit *bāṇapuṅkha*. This indicates that the names are found not only in the PuCi (even if some of them may have been specially “invented” when translating it), but also in a broader lexical pool. The names in the corpus can have phonetic correspondences in New Indo-Aryan. Thus, the trees that are called *khadira* and *śālmālī* in

366 I have discussed some of the topics and examples treated in this chapter in more detail elsewhere, additionally taking into account some of the other Nepalese flower texts (A. Zotter 2016).

367 Examples include *balāpukabusvāna* (2.7b), *hāmlabusvāna* (2.7c), *sisibusvāna* (1.107a, 1.118c, 2.30c, 4.5a). Composita (or parts thereof) consisting of two synonyms, usually a loanword and a proper Newari word, are a characteristic feature of Newari (Jørgensen 1941: §14c).

368 In these cases, *svāna* tends to be combined with names that are themselves compounds (e.g. PuCi 1.25 *samīlasiyā svāna*, 1.36 *alakapātayā svāna*, 2.7 *atalukhasimāyā svāna*, rarely: 3.4 *sisiyā svāna*); *bu* with simple names (e.g. PuCi 1.51, 3.7 *kuśayā bu*, 1.115 *nāluṅyā bu*, 1.121 *sisiyā bu*, 4.2 *mugayā bu*; more rarely: 1.125 *khayamugalasimāyā bu*, 4.3, 9 *sālivāyā bu*, 4.39 *simalasiyā bu*).

369 E.g. *ambarahala* for *āmalakī*, *bhimarājayā hala* for *bhṛṅgarāja*.

370 E.g. *samīlasi* for *śāmī*, *simalasi* for *śālmālī*, *khayamugalasimāyā bu* for *guñjā*.

371 *jītapholasvāna*, *tapholasvāna*, *sitapholasvāna*. The classifier may also be responsible for the variant spelling *uphola(svāna)* (besides *uphala*⁹) for Sanskrit *utpala*.

5 The Body of Rules

Sanskrit and known in Nepali as *khayara* and *simala*, are rendered as *khayalasi* and *simalasi*. Only rarely are independent Newari names found.³⁷²

The different translational techniques applied can tentatively be correlated with the degree of the plants' popularity. Both the Newari names featuring phonetic changes to the Sanskrit³⁷³ and the independent Newari names are normally those of well-known plants, i.e. those that are mentioned in the text frequently, that have prominent assignments and a clear botanical identity. These two types have stable translations (with the usual orthographic variance), ones, moreover, confirmed by the Newari glosses on the *Amarakoṣa* (henceforth NLAK)³⁷⁴ or on the *Puṣpasāra*. Most of the names neologized by simply adding *-svāna* or *-bu*, are lesser known, corrupt or uncommon ones, each occurring only a single time in the text.³⁷⁵ That this is a purely mechanical operation is evident in cases such as *sāndinisvāna* for *māndinī* (PuCi 1.124b) or *cālabu* for *vālaka* (2.76c), where reading errors of the initial *akṣaras* have crept in. Other difficult names are simply left untranslated in the Newari.³⁷⁶ Some unidentifiable plants cited more than once, such as *pāvanti/ī*, *bālī*, *māruta* or *vicakila*, are now left untranslated and now rendered mechanically. There are, however, also cases where very well-known plant names remain untranslated³⁷⁷ or have identical names in Sanskrit and

372 Examples: *utpala* – *avalasvāna*, *kiṃśuka/palāśa* – *lāhābu* (related to Skt. *lakṣataru*?), *kunda* – *bhoyusvāna*, *javā* – *jītapholasvāna*, *guñjā* – *khayamugala*, *durvā* – *situ*, *droṇa* – *pātakābu*, *nāgakeśara* – *rūpasvāna*, *punnāga* – *chasibu*, *bandhūka* – *sitapholasvāna*, *śirīṣa* – *jhalecāmarasvāna*, *sind(h)uvāra(ka)* – *bosighālisvāna*.

373 Examples for names derived from Sanskrit: *arkapatra* – *alakapāta*, *aparājītā* – *apalhātīsvāna*, *aśoka* – *asvayasvāna*, *āmala* – *ambarahala*, *utpala* – *uphala/ūpholasvāna*, *udumbara* – *dumbarasvāna*, *karavīra* – *kaneholasvāna*, *campaka* – *capasvāna*, *jātī* – *jīlasvāna*, *damana(ka)* – *dhavanasvāna*, *tagara* – *tagarāyasvāna*, *dhustūra(ka)* – *dudharasvāna*, *padma* – *palesvāna*, *bakula* – *bahulasvāna*, *bilvapatra* – *byālapāta*, *bhṛṅgarāja* – *bhimarāja*, *bāṇa* – *balāpukabu* (for Skt. *bāṇapuñkha*) *mallikā* – *malīsvāna*, *śamī* – *samīlasi*, *śālmālī* – *simalasi*, *śālī* *sālivāya bu*.

374 These glosses used to be accessible as an online database under: <https://newari.net/>. The lexicon provided data from eleven copies of the standard lexicographical work, ranging from the late 14th to the early 18th century.

375 Thus, *aśvakarṇa* is rendered as *asvakarṇasvāna*, *kiṅkirāta* as *kiṅkilātasvāna* or *kiṅjīrātasvāna*, *ḍimbhaka* as *ḍimbhakasvāna*, *babhrūka* as *babhrūkasvāna*, *grāmasīṣī* as *grāmasikhesiṃ*, *kendrā* as *kendrasvāna*, *gaṅgāpatrika* as *gaṅgāpatrika*, *devapatrika* as *devapatrika*, *vātaka* as *vātakasvāna*, *vāruṇī* as *vārunīsvāna*, and *śaṅku* as *śaṅkusvāna*.

376 I.e. *aṅkoṭa*, *aśana*, *karajendra*, *kovidāraka*, *girija*, *giriśālīnī*, *cārupuṭa*, *jyotsnākarī*, *ṭirīṭaka*, *pūtāmālī*, *prāṇa*, *bhāntika*, *vanaja*, *vijaya*, *śātāhvā*, *sumanā*.

377 *Arka* in one of 13 instances, *utpala* in three of 50, *kadamba* in three of twelve, *karavīra* in three of 29, *kunda* in one of 24, *ketakī* in two of 19, *campaka* in one of 31, *tulasī* in three of 20, *trisandhyā* in one of seven, *dhustūra* in one of 19, *padma* in two of 42, *pāṭala* in one of 16, *bakula* and *bandhūka* in one of 13, *bilva* in two of 32, *buka* in one of nine, *mandāra* in one of 14, *marubaka* in one of ten, *mallikā* in three of 26, *mālātī* in two of 16, *yūthī* in two of 17, *śamī* in one of 13.

Newari.³⁷⁸ It is to be noted that these latter, however, occur less frequently as compounds. Moreover, certain scribes seem to prefer peculiar variant spellings for some of their names. Thus, in one manuscript we mostly read *turaśī* for *tulasī*, in another *tulasī*, and this not only concerns the Newari but also the Sanskrit text. A further proof of the fact that the popularity of names correlates with their passage across language borders is found in flower lists (e.g. NGMPP A 944/13), where names like *tulasī* or *apāmārga* are not translated at all, the vernacular column simply stating “renowned” (*prasiddha*, also abbreviated *pra*^o). Hence flower names can be either so popular that they are adopted in the vernacular, or they can be so unfamiliar that there is no Newari equivalent and they are blended mechanically into vernacular forms, if not left out altogether.

After this rough overview, I will now discuss examples that constitute remarkable anomalies to these general tendencies. Regarding the Newari equivalents of some names, there are discrepancies both within the PuCi and compared with other texts. Thus, *aṭarūṣa(ka)* is rendered as *atarūṣa* (PuCi 1.79c) or *atalukhasimāyā svāna* (2.7d, 2.77b), while the synonym *vāsaka* appears once as *chogajulasvāna* (1.112a) and once as *vāsakasvāna* (4.51c), and the synonym *siṃhāsya* as *sighātakabu* (2.82c). The NLAk, however, gives *ārhasa/āḍasa* as the Newari name for *aṭarūṣa*. Likewise, there is some haziness regarding the rendering of *śīriṣa*. *Jhalecāmarasvāna*, the name also listed in the NLAk, is only attested for four of eight mentionings. PuCi 4.17a reads *samīrase*, and 4.41c *samīlase*. The synonyms *bhaṇḍī* (1.114c) and *bhaṇḍīka* (1.122b) are not recognized as such, being rendered mechanically as *bhaḍīsvāna* and *bhandik-asvāna*. Similarly, *akṣa* (*akṣasvāna* 1.122d) and its synonym *bibhītaka*³⁷⁹ (*baibhītīsvāna* 1.122d; *baibhītīkīsvāna* 2.64b) are treated mechanically, whereas the NLAk quotes the Newari name *biharaḍa/behalaḍasim* for this plant. The non-recognition of synonyms and the mechanical renderings of names for which Newari names exist may indicate the translator’s carelessness or even his lack of lexicographical or botanical knowledge. The limits of his expertise are also revealed in cases where names are put together on account of phonetic similarities. If *dhātakī* (*Woodfordia fruticosa* [L.] Kurz) is translated as *ambarasvāna*, it was probably mistaken for *dhātrī*, a well-known synonym of *āmalakī* (*Phyllanthus emblica* L.). Similarly, *sindūrī* is translated like *sind(h)uvāra(ka)* is and *āmlātaka* in one of two cases (2.85c) like *amlāna*. Even if explainable, the translations of *kṛṣṇala* (2.84c), a synonym of *guñjā*, as “black” (*hāku*), of *vāsantī* (2.82a) as “scented flower” (*nasāka svāna*), or

378 Examples: *apāmārga* – *apāmārga*, *kadamba* – *kadambasvāna*, *kuśa* – *kuśabu*, *ketakī* – *ketakīsvāna*, *tulasī* – *tulaśī*, *pārijāta* – *pālijātasvāna*.

379 In the PuCi the name is used in its *vṛddhi* form (*baibhītaka/baibhītika*), probably to denote the flower of the plant. The use of *vṛddhi* is also attested for the flowers of other plants with Vedic roots, i.e. for *khadira* (2.12ab, 2.25c *khādīra*) and *śimsapā* (3.4d *śaimśipā*).

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of *pañkajamālatyā* (3.38a) as “two garlands of *palesvāna*” (*palesvāna svānamāla nimāla*, the Skt. being interpreted as *pañkajamālābhyām*), can also be identified as errors. In these cases, a lack of knowledge or careless mistakes can be proven.

The distinction between mistaken translations and creative exegesis is, however, sometimes difficult to draw, as there are sometimes indications that the translator may have deliberately “made” new sense of the Sanskrit text. For example, *mahāpuṣpa*—the Sanskrit name that, according to the *Śivakoṣa* (verse 300), denotes either *kovidāra* or *kunda*—is translated as *jitapholasvāna* in PuCi 4.5c, i.e. is identified with *javā*. *Javā*, the China rose (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L.), one of the top flowers for worshipping goddesses (see pp. 115–116), is mentioned in the PuCi for the worship of all female deities. Only the passage on worship in the *paścimāmnāya* does not quote it. What would be more natural than to reclaim a name such as *mahāpuṣpa*, which has no clear botanical referent, as a “great flower”, interpret it as the large-flowered and highly important *javā*, and therewith make a useful addition to, or even fill a conspicuous gap in, the list of flowers suitable in the *paścimāmnāya*? Likewise, the reinterpretation of the misspelled *sarbarī* (for *barbarī* 4.15b) as *apāmārga* possibly reflects a prohibition observed by the *paścimāmnāya*, one known to the translator but not represented in the text. In any event, a prohibition is also placed upon *apāmārga* in the *uttarāmnāya* (4.51a). That the translator actively tried to make sense of corrupted text passages is also attested for the above-mentioned unintelligible reading *jhaḍī* or *ṛḍī* (4.78c). This is rendered as *jhin-tivāna*, thereby becoming related to the graphically closest Sanskrit name, *jhiṅṭī*.³⁸⁰

As the case of *mahāpuṣpa* already shows, the translator sometimes connects plant names with one another in Newari which are unrelated in Sanskrit. Another example is provided by the Newari name *lakṣmīsvāna*, employed as a translation for *sīkhinī* (PuCi 1.25d), *sevantī*³⁸¹ (2.16ab) and *śyāmā*³⁸² (1.109a). Very likely *lakṣmīsvāna* denotes a *Sesbania* species. *Sesbania sesban* (L.) Merr., the Egyptian riverhemp, is often given as its equivalent.³⁸³ In the NLAK and in other flower texts, *lakṣmīsvāna* usually translates Sanskrit *jayā/jayantī/nādeyī*. No parallels are attested in the known corpus for the Sanskrit terms “used” by the translator of the PuCi as equivalents for *lakṣmīsvāna*. These are, however, names for which either no (*sevantī*), no unambiguous (*śyāmā*)³⁸⁴ or hardly any (*sīkhinī*)³⁸⁵ botanical

380 As mentioned above, a copy of the PuMāh actually has *jhiṅṭī* in the Sanskrit text.

381 In its two other mentionings, *sevantī* is translated as *sevantī-* and *sevantīsvāna*.

382 The flower is described as being “black” (*hāku*).

383 Shrestha (1998: 237) identifies *lakṣmīsvāna* as *Sesbania agatifolia*, an invalid botanical name, typically found for Sanskrit *agastya* (accepted botanical name: *Sesbania grandiflora* [L.] Poir.).

384 Meulenbeld (1974: 605–606) records 35, the *Śivakoṣa* (verse 332) five different meanings.

385 This name is not recorded in the botanical handbooks consulted. P. P. Regmi (1983: 197) identifies the plant with *Celosia argentea* L.



Fig. 5.14 The marigold, native to South America, has become an integral part of the South Asian culture of flowers. Garlands made of its bright orange flowers are marketed throughout the year; photo: 4 November 2007, Bhuvaneśvarī Temple, Deopatan.

referent is found. Again, one may surmise that *lakṣmīsvāna* was known to the translator as a ritually important plant, but one for which he did not find a ready Sanskrit equivalent in the text, and which he therefore employed as a rendering of otherwise “useless” names.

Tapholasvāna, another Newari name, which in its modern form (*taphosvāṃ*) denotes a very prominent flower, occurs sporadically in the PuCi; in 2.14bc as a rendering of Sanskrit *nandyāvarta*,³⁸⁶ in 3.14d for *śatapatrikā*, and in 4.19c for *śatavarga*. In other Nepalese flower texts, too,³⁸⁷ *śatapatrikā*—in the PuCi otherwise not distinguished from *śatapatra(ka)* and translated as a “lotus having a hundred petals” (*śarachi hala du palesvāna* and similar)—is especially often rendered as *tapholasvāna*, sometimes in more modern spellings. In Nepali translations, such as that of the *Puṣpamāhātmya* [II], the name *śayapatrī* is used. Nowadays, *taphosvāṃ* and *śayapatrī* usually denote the marigold, i.e. cultivars of *Tagetes* (see Fig. 5.14). A very popular *pūjā* flower all over South

386 In the second instance, *nandyāvarta* is translated as *nadyāvartasvāna* (PuCi 2.29c).

387 The textual tradition and the texts mentioned here have been treated in chapter 4. In manuscript F₄ there is a marginal gloss on PuCi 3.38cd with *tapholasvāna* for *śatapatrikā*.

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Asia,³⁸⁸ marigolds originated in South America and probably only reached the Indian coast with the Portuguese (i.e. not before the 16th century).³⁸⁹ So far it cannot be definitively clarified whether *tapholasvāna* already denoted *Tagetes* at the time of the PuCi or only later. Nor do I know of any source to pin down the arrival of the marigold in Nepal. That in the PuCi *śatapatrikā* is equated with *tapholasvāna* only once, whereas in later texts it beomes a stable equivalent, may be accidental, but may also hint at the fact that it was a novelty at the time of the translation of the PuCi. That *śatavarga*, too, was translated as *tapholasvāna* is reasonable, as that name is similar to *śatapatrikā* and not attested elsewhere as a flower name. It is one of the “blind spots” of the text. The third name rendered as *tapholasvāna* in the PuCi, *nandyāvarta*, is glossed in the *Ācāracintāmaṇi* (1983: 163,) as *piṇḍitagara*, which implies that it was identified with *Valeriana hardwickii* Wall., a close relative of *tagara* (*Valeriana jatamansi* Jones ex Roxb.). In Nepal, however, *tagara* is ritually identified not with *Valeriana*, as in many botanical handbooks, but with *Tabernaemontana divaricata* (L.) R.Br. ex Roem. & Schult. Could this be the reason why an identification of *nandyāvarta* as *piṇḍitagara* did not make sense in the local context?

Whereas the examples discussed so far only suggest purposeful reinterpretations, conditioned by local or temporal factors, other cases clearly attest to such. *Hemajāti* or *pītajāti*, the golden or yellow *jāti*, a type of jasmine, is rendered as *ajulasvāna* in the PuCi (4.2c, 7a, 70c). Nowadays *aju-* or *ajisvām*, the modern form of this name,³⁹⁰ denotes the yellow jasmine *Chrysojasminum humile* (L.) Banfi (see Fig. 5.15), a flower native to Nepal and prominently employed in contemporary rituals. There is no absolute certainty that when the PuCi was translated into Newari *ajulasvāna* denoted the same species, but there are strong indications that it did. There is a continuity of evidence for the name from the 17th century on in various texts. Moreover, the Sanskrit name suggests that it, too, denotes a yellow jasmine.

The translation of *tamāla* as *silhāla* (var. *sinhālahala*, *silhārahala*), too, bespeaks a local reassignment. Subject to temporally conditioned reinterpretation, this latter name, today taking the form *sinhāsvām* (var. *sinā°*, *sināy°*, *sinhāy°* etc.), denotes the butterfly bush *Buddleja asiatica* Lour. (see Fig. 5.16). Like *Chrysojasminum humile*, *Buddleja* is a plant that is omnipresent in rituals performed in the Kathmandu Valley, but is not listed in the handbooks on Indian flora consulted.

388 The marigold shapes the image of the modern Indian culture of flowers so much that Goody (1993: 321) chose “the marigold and the jasmine” as the subtitle to his chapter on India.

389 Dymock et al. 1995: II, 321. For more details, see A. Zotter (2016: 410–415).

390 Apart from the PuCi, the old form of the name is found in the *Puṣpasāra*, where *hemapuṣpa* is translated as *ajilasvāna*; Malla et al. (2000) also give *ajira-* or *ajilasvāna*.

5.4 Translation and Application



Fig. 5.15 The yellow jasmine *Chrysojasminum humile* (L.) Banfi, a flower native to Nepal and known in Newari as *aju-* or *ajisvām*, grows in many gardens of the Kathmandu Valley; photo: 27 March 2011, Kathmandu.



Fig. 5.16 The butterfly bush *Buddleja asiatica* Lour. is an all-rounder in Nepalese ritual practice and one of the evergreen plants in the Kathmandu Valley where it thrives practically everywhere; photo: 9 March 2007, Kathmandu.

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The identification of *tamāla* with *Buddleja* is not documented in any other written source, but is known among Newar ritual specialists.³⁹¹ For various reasons, the Sanskrit name *tamāla* is an ideal one for representing the locally important plant. Firstly, the Sanskrit text invariably speaks of the leaves of *tamāla* and hardly lays any restrictions on their use. As to the evergreen and readily available *Buddleja*, in Nepali also known as *bhīmasenapātī*, its leaves too are used universally in *pūjās*, often substituting for other, unavailable items. Secondly, an alternative interpretation of the Sanskrit name *tamāla* or *tamālapatra* is facilitated by the fact that it does not have a translocally stable botanical identity.³⁹²

As these examples show, the fact that a text such as the PuCi only reveals the names of plants but dispenses with any description of them seems to promote its creative exegesis. In this “names-only situation” great interpretative leeway opens up. This certainly is a headache for any philologist aiming at establishing a “proper” or “original” meaning. R. Schmidt for one in his study of plant names has let off some steam. He pauses his rendering of plant names in a medicinal work

to note with what difficulties one has to struggle when it comes to determining the plant names in a particular text. To me, in many cases it seems altogether impossible, the more so as the help of indigenous commentaries often fails, too. In the case of most information provided by doctors, thorough special investigations are doubtless individually required in order to know clearly what is meant. One cannot forbear vociferously accusing Indians that their chaotic delight in childish play with synonymous terms renders the perusal and processing of their medicinal writings a true torture.³⁹³

Instead of faulting texts for not doing what a European mind expects of them (and for doing what they probably never intended to do), I shall stress the positive aspects of many plant texts. As I hope to have shown, the tendency to render names without any further description makes for a high degree of adaptability

391 Personal communication, Binod Raj Sharma 3 April 2007.

392 For possible identifications, see appendix A: s.v. *tamāla*.

393 “... um festzustellen, mit was für Schwierigkeiten man zu kämpfen hat, wenn es gilt, in einem bestimmten Texte Pflanzennamen zu bestimmen. Es scheint mir in vielen Fällen überhaupt unmöglich, zumal auch die Hilfe der einheimischen Kommentare oft versagt. Sicherlich bedarf es bei den meisten Angaben der Mediziner der eingehendsten Spezialuntersuchungen von Fall zu Fall, um klar zu erkennen, was gemeint ist. Man kann nicht umhin, die Inder laut anzuklagen, daß ihre wüste Freude am kindischen Spiel mit synonymen Ausdrücken die Lektüre und Verarbeitung ihrer medizinischen Schriften zu einer wahren Qual macht” (Schmidt 1911: 751–752).

within the textual norm. The translator of the PuCi often turns to “blind spots” or ambiguities, as represented by *śatavarga*, *mahāpuṣpa*, *sarbarī* or *jhaḍi*, and fills these semantic lacunae with new content. Moreover, Sanskrit names that are not attached to a stable botanical entity are obvious candidates to be co-opted for local species. These names do not come with conventional notions about what the associated plant ought to look like. Local varieties or new arrivals can be legitimated by referring to Sanskrit text passages that were composed at a time and place where these plants did not exist. In this way, the “blind spots” of the text serve an important function, inasmuch as they can continually be recruited to denote new and different referents.

These examples can be called creative reinterpretations of the text that need not deliberately alter or rewrite the strict guidelines of Sanskrit *pramāṇa*. In one passage, however, the translator not only reinterprets the text but indeed considerably diverges from it, if not actually distorting it, namely where *ketakī* is prohibited for Narasiṃha. Following PuCi 2.63b the discussion is whether the prohibition against offering *ketakī* only pertains to Narasiṃha, or to all forms of Viṣṇu other than him. In the Sanskrit, both views, as well as the one that *ketakī* is both prescribed and prohibited (*niṣiddhavihita*), are cited and decided in favour of the opinion that *ketakī* is forbidden only for Narasiṃha. The Newari only covers the first part of the Sanskrit passage,³⁹⁴ not the alternative views. The rendering of 2.64cd even stands in direct opposition to the Sanskrit, reading: “Both kinds of *ketakīsvāna* should be offered to Narasiṃha”.³⁹⁵ That the translator here consciously diverges from the root text and proposes the opposite view is also indicated by the fact that all manuscripts covering the Newari text show a lacuna in the Sanskrit portion in this place. It cannot be definitely excluded that this resulted from an accidental loss of text, but the factual situation lends more credence to the translator having sanitized the root text by doing away with the verses 2.63–65 in order to promote his own stance in this question.

A whole range of discrepancies between the Sanskrit and the Newari text can be diagnosed, from mistakes to creative exegesis to conscious deviations, the boundaries between these types being not easy to draw. But do these reinterpretations

394 *ketakīṣedho narasiṃhaṃ viḥayeti ratnākaraḥ* (According to the *Ratnākara*: “The prohibition of *ketakī* excepts [the worship with it of] Narasiṃha”) matches the Newari: *amo ketakīsvānaṃ narasiṃhayā mūrtisa joko chāya teva* (“This *ketakīsvāna* should only be offered to the icon of Narasiṃha”).

395 *nitājāta ketakī narasiṃhayāke chāya teva*. The Sanskrit has the opposite: *narasiṃhasya pūjāyāṃ niṣiddhaṃ ketakīdvayam*. The available Nepalese manuscripts of the *Puṣpamālā* notably vary in this place. Only the four copies from the Kathmandu Valley (B 134/17, G 52/11, E 820/13, E 1136/8) accord with the reading PuCi 2.64cd, the ones in Maithili script from Janakpur (M 115/29, M 120/8) support the Newari translation, reading: *narasiṃhasya pūjāyāṃ praśastaṃ ketakīdvayam*.

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also point toward any particular use of the text in ritual practice? To be sure, translations such as *jitapholasvāna* for *mahāpuṣpa* or *tapholasvāna* for *śatapatrikā* may be comprehended as having reference to some practical context. The presence of *ajulasvāna* and *silhāla* attests to a rootedness in local plant lore. The inversion of the prohibition of *ketakī*, too, might be based on a divergent local usage. Apart from these few examples there is, however, nothing else in the Newari text that hints at actual ritual implementation. There are no explications from a practical perspective. The assignments are rendered in Newari, but they are not operationalized, as is done, for instance, in the PuMāh (see Table 4.1 above). One may therefore conclude that the Newari rendering remains true to the śāstric character of the root text. Regarding the translator's motivation, it could be called more intellectual than practical, more interested in lexicography than in actual ritual.

Ritual Application?

As the actual practical context of the PuCi lies in the past, extra precaution is called for when probing the relation between text and ritual practice. Not only the material basis of the ritual culture, but also its actors, norms and on-the-ground practices have changed considerably since the middle of the 17th century. The dynastic change in the 18th century followed by the state-building process in the long 19th century and the processes of democratization, modernization and globalization of the 20th century have thoroughly reshaped the ritual cultures of the Kathmandu Valley. It is therefore much more likely that features of the practical context the PuCi was addressing will be revealed in historical documents and *pūjāpaddhatis*. Such a study might answer questions as to what courtly *pūjā* practice looked like under Malla rule, who decided which flowers were to be employed in which *pūjās*, what rights and duties were held by different types of ritual specialists, and how ritual logistics were organized. As this, however, would require a book of its own, the following remarks, based on personal observations over the past several years, are confined to a few thoughts on possible contact points or parallels between text and practice.

Initially driven by a romanticizing impulse, I went in search of people who use the text for their *pūjās*. Actual discussions and observations in the field quickly disabused me of this naïve approach. No one I met used a text like the PuCi. Apart from some manuscript owners, no one even seemed to be aware of its existence. But even if the practical impact of the text proved to be non-existent, today's *pūjā* practice attests to the durability of many of the general rules covered in the text. These rules are more or less common knowledge among ritual specialists or interested laypersons. Regrettably, such expertise is rarely passed on to

younger generations. Upon asking for flowers employed in *pūjā*, I was usually referred either to elderly ladies or to practising priests. Neither male priests, who directly or indirectly draw their expertise from the textual tradition, nor the women who have acquired their knowledge about flowers by experience or practical teaching would pluck flowers with unwashed hands, use damaged flowers or buds, transport flowers with bare hands or scold anyone who “steals” flowers by surreptitiously plucking them from bushes protruding over the fences of others’ gardens. Preferably, however, the flowers for *nityapūjā* are planted in one’s own garden and are plucked after the morning toilette and before the first tea. The rule that *pārijāta* flowers are not to be plucked is strictly followed. If the daily worship is not limited to one’s own household deities, women tour the temples of their neighbourhood with a metal plate or special *pūjā* basket containing the carefully arranged offerings, protected from dust and the eyes of onlookers by a clean cloth or a crocheted cover. The services of flower sellers may be made use of, especially on festive days or for the more irregular visits to bigger temples. The range of flowers offered in their small stalls mirrors some of the more prominent special rules stated in the PuCi, which in this case are widely known. Hence, Śiva is popularly worshipped with leaves and fruits of the *bilva* or flowers and fruits of the thorn-apple, Viṣṇu with *tulasī* and *jātī*,³⁹⁶ the goddesses with *javā* and *karavīra*. Experienced ritual practitioners know many more regulations covered in the PuCi. They would criticize someone for worshipping Viṣṇu with unbroken rice (*akṣata*) and would never offer *tulasī* to Gaṇeśa. They cultivate *aparājitā* flowers and know the symbolic value it has in Tantric ritual. Many more parallels could probably be confirmed if more study were closely devoted to the practices of those who have access to the pertinent textual tradition, namely the Rājopādhyāyas, Karmācāryas and other specialists initiated into the Nepalese Kaula traditions.

It must be stressed, however, that by far not all specialist knowledge about ritual flora rooted in Nepalese (and especially Newar) culture is contained in the PuCi. In the Newar caste system of the Kathmandu Valley, the provision of flowers is the traditional occupation of the Newar Mālī subcaste, also called Gathu (Kathmandu), Gāthā (Bhaktapur) or, honorifically, Mālākāra. Until very recently, Mālī women delivered the required ritual plants to the houses of their patrons on a daily basis. Nowadays they also sell the plants to paying customers.³⁹⁷ Besides

396 In Nepal, the yellow jasmins *Chrysojasminum humile* (L.) Banfi and *Jasminum nudiflorum* Lindl. are used above all as *jātī* and are called *jāī* in Nepali. They are considered especially suited for Viṣṇu, not least because of its colour.

397 The traditional duties of the male members of this community, who embody deities such as the Navadurgā and perform their ritual dances, included carrying the brides of high-caste families (Gutschow and Michaels 2012: 55).

the “classics” of *pūjā* flowers, their assortments extend to many other plants and plant parts. Hence, on days on which special *pūjās* are called for, one receives for a small charge a whole bundle of plant material, of which only a few items are known from Sanskrit texts (see Fig. 5.17).³⁹⁸ For many species in the rich and diversified Newar culture of flowers there is no Sanskrit name.

It is not only the case that a sāstric text such as the PuCi, which radiates out over a translocal normative plane, cannot adequately reflect local conditions; it may even stand in obvious contradiction to local ritual usage, as the following example illustrates. In the PuCi, as in other flower texts, *kunda* is generally prohibited for Śīva. This jasmine, in Newari commonly known as *dāphvasvām*,³⁹⁹ is one of the most important ritual flowers used by the Newars. It is employed universally in *pūjās* and other rituals, and Śīva, of course, is one of its recipients. Asked about this discrepancy between text and practice, members of the Rājopadhyāya community, who did not know the PuCi but who, when looking at its contents and the cited texts, immediately recognized it as being authoritative for their tradition, spontaneously had different explanations. One justified the deviation by pointing out that Śīva is only worshipped in Nepal in the form of a *liṅga* and therefore never alone, but always together with the goddess, who resides in the pedestal of *liṅgas* (*yoni*).⁴⁰⁰ Another referred to the fact that, in their *pūjās*, Newars never employ a *kunda* alone, but always tuck shoots of *dūrvā* grass into the calyxes (see Fig. 5.18).⁴⁰¹ The prohibition was thus interpreted to mean that either Śīva alone should not be worshipped with *kunda*, or that *kunda* alone should not be offered. These arguments attest to the same line of thought as found

398 On days such as Gaṇeśacaturthī (Bhādra śuklapakṣa 4), one can observe a veritable “clash” between the two dominant ritual cultures of flowers in Asan, one of the central hubs for *pūjā* flowers in Kathmandu. On the one hand, the local Mālis offer bundles of plants for the birthday *pūjā* for the trunked deity celebrated within the Newar community. Other dealers sell *apāmārga*, *bilva* leaves and *dhustūra*, needed by Nepali speaking Bahuns and Chetris for their *rṣipañcamīpūjā* celebrated on the following day.

399 Also *dapvaḥ*°, *dāphvaḥ*°, *dābāsvām* (Malla et al. 2000, Kölver and Shresthacarya 1994). This name can be traced back to the older form *dvāpholasvāna*, as attested in the Newari text of the *Puṣpasāra* and elsewhere. In contrast, in the PuCi and in the glosses on the *Amarakoṣa* (NLAK) *kunda* is identified with what in Newari is called *bhoyusvāna*. The change from *bhoyu-* to *dvāpholasvāna* may be a historically traceable development, since in the later independent development of the Newari text of the PuCi in manuscript New₄ *kunda* is once rendered as *bhoyudvāpholasvāna* (PuCi 1.96a). Alternatively, local variance might have been at play, the name used in one locality eventually prevailing over one in another. The disparity between literary and spoken language is also worth considering when looking for an explanation.

400 Personal communication, 9 February 2007.

401 Personal communication, 5 January 2007.



Fig. 5.17 Plants offered by Newar Mālis at Kathmandu's flower markets on occasion of Gaṇeśacaturthī celebrated on the 4th of the bright half of the month of Bhādrapada. Besides plants known from the Sanskrit tradition, such as the lotus leaf, there are also those whose use is specific for the Newar ritual culture; photo: 15 September 2007, Kathmandu.



Fig. 5.18 Newars usually offer *kunda* flowers (New. *dāphvasvām*) with shoots of *dūrvā* grass tucked in their calyxes. In this case, 108 *kunda* flowers were prepared for a *pūjā* on occasion of a second birthday (New. *nedambunhi*); photo: 28 October 2007, Bhaktapur.

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above to be operative in the textual tradition: Instead of doubting the validity or veracity of the śāstras, discrepancies with ritual practice are cleared up through exegesis.

The PuCi records rules followed in treating actual *pūjā* flowers. Depending on the individual interest and knowledge of practitioners, stronger or weaker parallels can be elicited. As expected, the highest degree of conformity is attested for the practices of those with access to the textual tradition, as the Nepalese religious elites' practices recur to the same texts as cited in the PuCi (see chapter 3.3). There is, however, no absolute match between text and practice. Even as many plant names mentioned in the PuCi have no referents in the local botanical landscape, so too many plants locally known and used lack a Sanskrit name. One can be sure that neither the PuCi nor its translation into Newari was written as a practical manual for concrete ritual practice; at most the text served as a reference work, a kind of lexicon containing rules for the use of flowers. The text is more an intellectual exercise on the subject, serving to collect and preserve knowledge. It was not put into actual practice, and it has been shown that it cannot to a certain extent be implemented at all. It does, however, offer a means of supporting *pūjā* practice normatively. In such legitimization processes, the exegesis of the text is not necessarily stable. Those parts of the Sanskrit text that are more susceptible to shifts in meaning especially invite reinterpretation. A text like the PuCi, which as a śāstra contains authoritative and, in principle, inalterable information, can therefore be made to accord with prevailing circumstances by creative exegesis, and thus survive as a norm, albeit one that undergoes modernization.