

NEWAA RITUALS AND ITS' PROCESS



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Daya Foundation Disclaimer

Since Daya Foundation's three core objectives are education, health, and culture, we have translated and published the book "Newa Sanskar Wa Ukiya Bidhi " (Newar Rituals and Their Processes) , originally written in Nepal Bhasa by the late Baldev Juju, into Nepali and English to promote Newar culture. As this book is a direct translation of the original work in Nepal Bhasa, Daya Foundation is not responsible for any disputes that may arise regarding the words, language, rituals, and processes mentioned in the book.

The content within this book is intended for educational and cultural purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information, readers should be aware that variations in rituals and customs may exist among different Newar communities and regions. The interpretations and explanations offered are based on traditional practices and scholarly research but should not be considered definitive or prescriptive.

The authors and publishers are not liable for any discrepancies or differences in interpretation. Readers should seek guidance from local experts or community members for personalized advice. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions of any other individual or organization involved in the publication.

Preface

With the influence of western culture, Nepalese are slowly losing their cultural identity. Should this continue further, Nepalese would lose their uniqueness and would not enjoy the special position they have been enjoying in the world – this is a danger, which all Nepalese should be careful of.

In order to present Nepalese culture in the international scenario, Newari culture is displayed with pride. Therefore, it is important that Newars, themselves, know the significance and the inherent philosophical idea behind their cultural rites, and non-Newars should, without any hostility, help in preservation of Newar culture, as it is presented as cultural identity of the entire nation.

In this pretext, this book entitled *Newar Rituals and their Processes* is aimed first at presenting the underlying philosophical theories in the rituals from death till old age, and then to point the need of easing the rituals suitable to modern day lifestyle without affecting its foundational essence. I have tried to show the significance of the rituals followed by Newars in their lives along with the meaning of such rituals, and also have enlisted the items required for different rituals. With this, even at the lack of a learned priest, the *thakāli* (the eldest in a lineage) can perform all the rituals. Thus, I believe that this book should be useful.

Especially the Newars residing out of the Kathmandu valley are facing problems at the lack of Brahmins suiting their culture. They should be particularly advantaged by this book. It is better to continue the rituals in line with one's own tradition and cultural practices even at the lack of a family priest.

I feel indebted to friends at Vedic Academy, who have taken the responsibility for the publication of this book; I feel happy to give this responsibility to Vedic Academy, of which I am the



Chairperson. I thank the friends at Vedic Academy. I extend well wishes to our academy member Maheswor Juju for sponsoring the publication of this book. I must also thank Dr. Kamal Prakash Malla for writing a preface to this book, which has added value to this book. He is an inspiration and would always inquire about its progress. I cannot repay the debt of brother, Jeevan Rajopadhyaya and friend Surendraman Shrestha, who have gone through each and every page. I extend my love and gratitude to brother Jeevan Rajopadhyaya. Lastly, I extend stream of gratitude to friends, well-wishers for their inspiring queries on Newar culture.

Author
Baldev Juju

Translation Note:

The translation is based entirely on what Baldev Juju (and respective authors/organization in the forewords/introduction) has written in his book in Nepal Bhasa. The Nepali and English translation follow the suit. For the words in Sanskrit, International Alphabet for Sanskrit transliteration has been used, while popular spellings/phonetics are retained for the words of Nepal Bhasa, without following the diatrical standards.





**Late Shambhavananda
Rajopadhyaya**



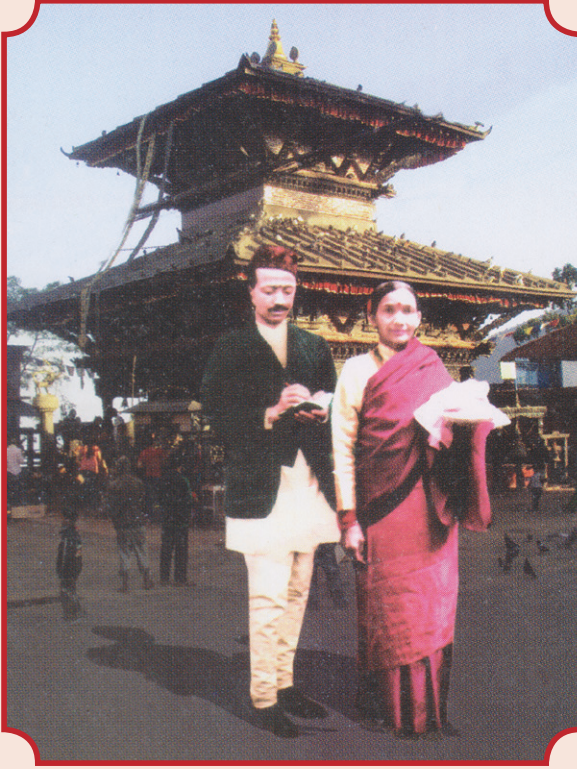
**Late Amarvani
Rajopadhyaya**

This endeavour is offered to my parents, Shambhavananda Rajopadhyaya and Amarvani Devi, who, despite abandoning their physical bodies, have still loved my family and showered blessings in their divine forms.

Baldev Juju



To the venerable guru and guru-aama of Makhan lineage, Kathmandu, from the 'āgama' tradition, which is a respectable and sacred tradition of the Newars.



Both Late Vishwambhar Raj Rajopadhyaya (Kul Chudamani) and late Kul Laxmi Devi Rajopadhyaya

are guru and guru-aama of sacred āgama tradition of Newar culture. With veneration to their lifelong contribution to many āgamas in Kathmandu and believing that life can be sustained by following one's tradition, I relieve myself from parental loan by taking the financial responsibility for this publication. May peace be upon us! I extend hearty wishes from my family's side. All profits from this book shall be donated to Vedic Academy.

Niece - Maheshwor Juju Rajopadhyaya, Thahity

Baldev Juju's Endeavor : Words from My Heart

The book *Newar Rituals and their Processes* authored by Baldev Juju is a praise-worthy endeavor. It has two aspects – behavioral and philosophical. The behavioral aspect is that it gives sequential details of how the Newar ritual should be carried out and what items are required thereof. The philosophical aspect, on the hand, shows the meaning of such rituals and furthermore, Baldev Juju has clearly stated where Newar culture stands unique.

Baldev Juju is a thinker of Newar culture. His works *Newā Sanksriti ra Newā Darshan* (NS 1115 [1995 AD, 2052 BS]), *Nepā yā Tāntrik Dya wa Tāntrik Pūjā* and *Kāntipur* (NS 1108 [1988 AD, 2045 BS]) both co-authored with Surendra Man Shrestha clearly gives a description and analysis of Newar society, culture and philosophy – this exemplifies his scholarship and keen analytical power. Our Newar society has only few ritual priests; with few thinkers of Sanskrit and culture and professional ability, the knowledge of Sanskrit language and culture is slowly declining. It is not unusual to see the declining status of our rituals and culture conducted by *dya-bhāju* who cannot read a verse properly, Shaiva-Shākta tantric *āchāju* who cannot explain the verses and Joshis who have not read the basics of astrology. In such a distress, Baldev Juju comes as a bright light. He does not only have the knowledge of the language, but also has a perspective and interest to see things and present it in writing properly.

This book authored by Baldev Juju presents description and analysis of rituals followed by Shaiva/Hindu followers of Newar society. Death rituals are not discussed in this book; it contains clear interpretation of the rituals from naming till old-age. Many of our





ritual manuals name ten rituals (*das-karma*) or thirteen (*trayodasa*) rituals (see: Nepalese Buddhist Rituals¹ written by Amritananda). Our ancestors have recorded hundreds of process, manuals and rituals so that it doesn't get disordered. In the Nepal mandal, there is an influence of Hindu rituals basically of Kanyakubja, Maithili, Dravid and Pourasthya traditions. There are some changes based on time, place, caste and professions.

In the Nepal mandal, kings of Licchavi dynasty had tried to perform rituals on par with *shruti* (that is heard), *smriti* (that is remembered), *dharma shāstra* (religious classical scriptures) and *purans* (old tales). Kings and *sāmantas* as Mandev I, Amshuverma or Sivadeva II had proudly tried to establish Aryan norms. In approximately 500 years of dark era from 879 AD till 1354 AD, at the end of Licchavi dynasty until the rise of Jayasthiti Malla, the rulers and priestly castes are seen to have endeavored to Hinduize the Newar society as much as possible. This is evident from analysis of number, time and other details from handwritten manuscript entitled *Dasakarma paddati evam Dasa Kriya Bidhi* available at National Archives. The popularity of manuscripts also containing ritual manuals since NS 296 [1176 AD] clearly shows the fact.

The foundation of Newar customs in practice till today dates back to the reforms made by Jayasthiti Malla dated NS 515 Magh Shukla 10 following a *kotyāhuti* hom, after his ascension to power, ending a long political instability, regular foreign attacks, internal and family conflicts – this is evident from descriptions in different chronicles of the 19th century. This provision was revised by Mahendra Malla in Kathmandu and Siddhinarasimha Malla and Bishnu Malla in Patan.

In this book, Baldev Jujū has given as much significance to the behavioral aspect as to the philosophical-ideological aspect. But it would have been much more valuable had he discussed on where, how and when these rituals came, where and how different are these Newar rituals to Indian fundamental Hindus (Vedic sanatan,

¹ John Brough, "Nepalese Buddhist Rituals", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 3 x 4 (1948), pp. 668-76

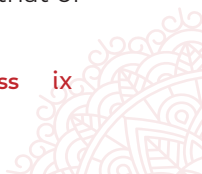


puranic or tantric Shaiva-Shakta) and to cord-wearer (*tāgādhārī*) Khas community. It would have paved way for historical and comparative studies and analysis. I also feel that not only Newar rituals and culture, but the fundamentals of Newar ideologies can also be found by comparing and contrasting these rituals with *Nirayasinthu* (1610-40 AD) compiled by Kamalākar Bhatta or compilations of Nepal, viz. *Satkarmaratnāvalī* by Girvanayuddha Bikram or *Karmakānda Bhāskar* by Pt. Dadhiram Marasini. The basis of rituals is ideology and belief. Modern sociology and anthropology have termed Newar social organization as an incomplete copy of the ideals of Hindu caste system (*varnāshram*). French sociologist Louis Dumont had stated “The Newar Caste is an imperfect imitation of the classical Indian varna model”. Among the rituals described by Baldev Juju in the book, the rituals of *ihi*, *bāhrā* and *jjā-janko* is not followed by cord-bearer Khas community. A mock-marriage similar to *ihi* ritual is seen in south Indian practice. There are two verses in the *Narad Smṛiti* (NS 500) composed by Manikyavardhan for Jayatavarman, the *amātya* of Sthiti-raj Malla. This comes in the 12th chapter of *Vyabaharpad* of *Narad Smṛiti* or after the 28th verse of *Stripumsayog*, only in the Nepalese copy are there extra verses found:

***vyañjanaistu samutpannaih somo bhuñjeta yositah ||
payodharaistu gandharvo rajayagnih prakirtitah ||
tasmādvyañjanopetāmarajāmapayodharām ||
ayuktāpūrvām somādyairdadyad duhitaram pitā ||***

The meaning of this verse is as follow: Gandharva occupy the female breasts, fire stays at her menstruation. Thus, the girl's father needs to marry her daughter away before this (before development of breasts and start of menstruation).

These verses are taken from verses 19-20 of passage two of appendix to Grihyasutra Samgraha by Govilputra. The ideological foundation of *ihi* ceremony of Newar society is shared with that of





Nayar Brahmins of south India. The female sexuality is considered dangerous in girl's life. In order to alleviate this, the girl is offered first to divinity (as Suwarna Kumar or Vishnu Narayan) and then immediately at menstruation or before that to the Sun God² in a symbolic form after a 12 days enclosure – the ideological foundation of the *ihī* and *bāhrā* are seen to avoid this danger. The verses of *Narad Smṛiti* here and in south India are not the same without any reason. Newar is a society of people, who regard the Nepal valley as not their residence but also workplace with multiple rites, culture, customs and beliefs at different times. Thus, this society has *pravrajyā* ritual for Shakyas (*bare chiugu*) based on Theravada traditions; there are ones, who take *Varjābhisek* according to Vajrayan; there are ones, who take *ācharyābhisek* or *dikshyā* according to Shaiva-Shakta tantra practices; there are those who take *jogi dikshyā* according to Kapalika traditions. There are those who play *damaru* and become Bhesdhari or Darshandhari. Baldev Juju at point clearly states:

"Instead of just abiding by the tradition as it was followed since ages in the society just for formality without knowing its meaning, it is important and beneficial to know the rationale behind them."

Even after saying so, the purpose of some rituals or their philosophical, historic and social background may not be as clear or without debate. In our society, in any ritual of *kaytā-pūjā*, the start of education and of Vedas is not seen; neither any educational chapter nor any section of Veda is taught. I still remember some 50 years back, my guru taught me in my ears *gāyatrī* mantra.

I, inquisitively, asked my guru "what is the meaning of this *gāyatrī* mantra?" He, in a very angry voice, shouted at me "Is there any meaning of *gāyatrī* mantra?" There must have been philosophical and ideological background in the *guhyaśūtra* (secret formulae), and then *smṛiti* (that is remembered), *puran vidhi* and *paddati* (manual) compiled by our ancestral saints for the benefits of household Aryans within BC 800-400 – but now only the skeletal

² Malla, in his opinion puts it this way, which the rituals do not endorse. This book, too, by Juju does not see *bāhrā* as marriage to Sun-God



remains of it has survived in Newar society; the essence had already died. Muslims invaded the Indian sub-continent and then the westerners. Upon a millennium of their reign, people here have survived these rituals only as conservative traditions and its ideological-philosophical aspect has been long lost.

Newar faced difficulties to continue their *guthi*, festivals and rituals after the supremacy of Gorkhali in the Nepal valley. Their sources of income, residence, properties, profession were slowly confiscated by the rulers and were left broke. Some left the valley to seek refuge at Jumla to Tehrathum; while some were left without heirs. A social reform by Bhimsen Thapa shows the pitiful socio-economic status of Newars until 1832 AD, after 52 years of the invasion by Prithvi Narayan Shah and his army and their settlement in the valley (see: Chittaranjan Nepali, *Jeneral Bhimsen Thapa ra Tatkalin Nepal*, Kathmandu Nepal Sanskriti Sangh, 2013 Chaitra, 222-327 “Reformative Steps in Rites of Newar Castes”). After the World War, with the price hike, there are evidences of change of rites and behaviors of Newars with publication of *Istihār*. Also in the Panchayat regime the Social Reform Act, 2033 tried to divide the behaviors of the Newars of the valley.

Surely, the society is not unchanging and non-progressing. Society, demography and economy – all three bring change in culture and customs. The social structure of the valley changed consciously or unconsciously when the ‘passport’ system was cancelled on 23 December 1956, Sunday. Now, Newar customs is influenced as its economy and politics by foreign forces; for example, after 50 years of the Friendship and Peace Treaty, 1950 with India, around 78 per cent of our economy is dependent on Indian market as our politics is going pro-Indian. Similarly, our culture and customs are too getting Indianized. In this context, Newars are facing a challenging situation to maintain their ‘Newar’ identity. Newar rulers and priests declare themselves as resident of Indian sub-continent saying ‘*jambu-dvīpe bhārat-khaṇḍe*’ (of jambu continent, of Indian sub-continent) in any religious function.





In this book, Baldev Juju has a clear vision of the behavioral aspects of Newar rituals. We, Newars, have been practicing our lifestyle with rituals dating from 2,500 years back with/without knowledge or capacity with cautions as 'children need to be shown such rites', 'social rites should not be messed with' or 'what would relatives/ neighbours say'. In the context of less number of learned *dya-bhāju* or *gubhāju* and Joshi, this book by Baldev Juju is praise-worthy and practical. He has presented his ideas in a simple language in orderly fashion. We, as faithful to Newar customs, are thankful to him. This book is a support to our society; moving ahead is our task. I salute Baldev Juju from my heart.

Kamal Prakash Malla

Silha Chahre/Shivaratri – NS 1119

Hijakhusi, Kathmandu



Publisher's Note

First Edition

Vedic Academy (Vaidik Pratisthan) is happy to publish the book entitled *Newa Rituals and their Processes*. Arts and culture of the Kathmandu valley have become an identity of Nepal in front of the world; the culture of this valley is that of Newars. In other words, the unique culture of Nepal is that of Newars. International tourists flock here to be amazed by the culture of this valley and we see them celebrate and dance in Newar festivals with Newars following their lifestyle. This does not, however, mean that tourists do not visit other places of Nepal: they visit other areas of Nepal filled with natural beauty and historical significance.

This is a first of our publication endeavor in line with Vedic Academy's objective of contributing to the continuation of culture that are essential to live a life with unique identity but united as Nepali. The Academy feels proud to take the responsibility of publication of such a knowledgeable book authored by our chairperson himself. We are thankful to the publishing committee, coordinated by our members Maheswor Juju Rajopadhyaya, along with Harisharan Rajopadhyaya and Rabiraj Rajopadhyaya, for successfully completing their assignments. We also extend our deepest respect to Maheswor Juju Rajopadhyaya for sponsoring this publication filled with great cultural significance. We are thankful to him and wish for his parents' eternal peace. The author himself is a learned philosopher, and this book is significant as he has endeavored to show philosophy of life through cultural philosophy. We believe learned readers would cordially encourage Vedic Academy by correcting any mistakes.

Vedic Academy



Second Edition

All one thousand copies of the first publication dated 1999 AD (Nepal Sambat 1119, Bikram Sambat 2056 Baisakh) were sold out. Even the author copies were sought. Thus, the Academy has gone for second round of publication.

Newars have been successful in their lives due to their love for their rituals. With such devotion, people have been seeking this book. Even as the print is out of stock, people seek a photocopy of the book at their own cost. This is also a kind of love to the rituals.

So, thank you everyone. Let's all be united. Our culture is our identity.

Vedic Academy



Patrons of Daya Foundation



Late Dayaram Bhakta Mathema



Late Krishna Pyari Mathema



Late Indra Kala Mathema

Publisher's Note on this Edition

In supporting the cultural activities, Daya Foundation is committed to bringing awareness and educating people on various festivals and rituals that have been a way of life for many generations. In this book we are happy to share Newari traditions and rituals that are observed even today in most Newari households with honor and pride. All the rituals are believed to bring good luck and ward off evil, bring good health, prosperity, longevity and family connection and care to the individual and the family.

Generally, when traditions are followed and handed down from generation to generation, it is carried out without question, since it is the family heritage and legacy and something that has been in practice by the ancestors over generations. With newer and younger generations, they like to understand the depth and meaning, the significance of any particular ritual. This helps them to appreciate their culture more and be able to explain it to their children whether they are in Nepal or living abroad.

We are grateful that this particular family (author Baldev Juju's family) has agreed to collaborate with Daya Foundation to share this treasure with the community at large. Our hope is for people to have a better appreciation of our old heritage, enjoy and incorporate the traditional values as they see fit in their own lives and prevent this unique and ancient practice from becoming obsolete over time.

Translating Newari culture books to Nepali and English is important for several reasons. Firstly, it allows for the preservation and dissemination of Newari culture to a wider audience. Newari culture is rich and diverse, with its unique language, traditions, rituals, and art forms. By translating Newari culture books, more people, both within and outside the Newari community, can learn about and appreciate this cultural heritage.



Secondly, translating Newari culture books helps bridge the language barrier. Nepali and English are widely spoken and understood languages in Nepal and globally. Translating the books into these languages makes the content accessible to a larger audience who may not be familiar with the Newari language. This promotes cultural exchange and understanding among different communities.

Furthermore, translating Newari culture books can contribute to the documentation and academic study of the culture. It allows researchers, scholars, and students to access valuable information and insights into Newari traditions, history, folklore, and customs. This can lead to a deeper appreciation and study of Newari culture.

Finally, translating Newari culture books can have economic benefits. It can promote tourism and cultural exchange, attracting visitors who are interested in learning about the unique aspects of Newari culture. This can contribute to the local economy and create opportunities for cultural tourism and related industries.

Overall, translating Newari culture books to Nepali and English plays a crucial role in preserving, promoting, and sharing the rich cultural heritage of the Newari community with a wider audience, fostering cultural understanding, and contributing to academic research and economic development.

The Foundation has therefore decided to have the Newari manual translated into Nepali and English to make it accessible and available to various individuals and groups that wish to learn, practice, share and keep this valuable heritage alive.



Daya Foundation
दया फाउण्डेशन
For Education, Health & Culture

About the Founder of Daya Foundation

The late Dayaram Bhakta Mathema was a successful public servant and entrepreneur in Nepal who had a sixty plus year career helping spread both democratic values and economic development in the Himalayan country.

Mr. Mathema, both in his public life as well as a business entrepreneur, endeavored to provide access to education, improve health outcomes and preserve and celebrate cultural heritage. He desired to establish a family-run foundation to support education and health for the marginalized segment of our society and preserve our cultural heritage. As per his wish, the family registered Daya Foundation, a non-governmental organization in 2009. Mr. Mathema set aside funds to carry out Daya Foundation's mandate. The foundation believes in incremental, long-term commitments and its way of encouraging the development is an 'entitlement mentality' among recipients of its support; it is continuously streamlining its systems and structures to ensure that its support produces results that can be monitored and evaluated. Since its founding in 2009, the foundation pursued numerous initiatives and impacted many lives.

The Foundation dedicates this publication to Mr. Mathema's legacy and also to those who have partnered with us. We also thank all the members of the broader community who have supported the Foundation's efforts in various ways. The level of community support and alignment that the Foundation has experienced throughout the past fourteen years has given us reason to be optimistic for the future.

About Daya Foundation

A small initiative driven by one man's dream to build a better community grew to become Daya Foundation. We honor Mr. Dayaram Bhakta Mathema's vision, who has given us the purpose to serve our community, and we are determined to deliver significant support and activities to educational, health, and cultural initiatives. We believe in collaboration with implementing partners and agencies that are already functioning in these sectors to improve the lives of those underprivileged.

Our core working principle is partnership with other NGOs, schools, colleges, youth groups, hospitals, healthcare centers, rehabilitation centers, and community groups. Many such agencies have grown in Nepal with innovative ideas to improve the lives of the Nepalese. We are guided by the idea to support them from the back-end and push them to implement such ideas and projects for our community. We are a registered non-profit organization that is operating in full-fledged. We provide financial, technical, and volunteer assistance to different projects running in areas of education, health, and culture. We operate through contributions from Dayaram Bhakta Mathema's family and support from other philanthropic agencies or individuals.

Mission

Empowering the Nepalese community through education, healthcare, culture, and humanitarian support for a resilient society.

Vision

A Thriving Nepal and improved education, health and culture, guided by positive Values and entrepreneurship.

Values

Empowerment, Integrity, Collaboration, Compassion, Sustainability

About the Translator



Abhas Dharananda Rajopadhyaya is a Hindu Vedic/Tantric priest associated with the Changu Narayan temple and currently serving as a lecturer of MA MCJ at Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Kantipur City College. He has completed MPhil in English from Pokhara University (2019), MA (Anthropology) from Tribhuvan University (2017) and MA MCJ from Purbanchal University (2013), with an exceptional academic record of three-gold medals, including Purbanchal University Gold Medal 2013 as university topper securing 4.00 out of 4.00 CGPA. He has worked as assistant researcher for different national and international projects and has national/international papers and publications specializing in cultural anthropology of Newars, media, oral history and folklore among others. He has also worked as sub-editor for Amalekh Weekly for seven years and associate editor for different online portals (including NepalNews, Dekhapadhi). His other involvements include script and research in documentary and short-films, General Secretary of Newa Film Society and membership of different professional and research organizations, along with consultancy for various NGOs/INGOs and inter-governmental bodies as UNESCO and UNDP.

Translator's Note

I feel honored to be associated with the English translation of scholar Baldev Juju's work on Newar rituals entitled *Newa Sanskriti va Uki ya Vidhi*. Documenting the rituals from birth to old age, as practiced in the Newar society, this book provides a commentary on the ritual significance and philosophy of these rituals in a broader perspective of what Juju calls Newar darshan (philosophy).

It is indeed an interesting work to go through, which I believe should be shared beyond Newar society or extended to those who cannot comprehend Nepal Bhasa. The translations should equally benefit Newar community in the valley to those spread all over major urban centres of Nepal and furthermore to those all over the globe. I feel indebted to Daya Foundation for this initiation, Baldev Juju's family for agreeing to spread this knowledge and to Bijay Kasajoo for all his tiring efforts throughout this journey. I must also extend my gratitude to Sanjay Sharma Rajopadhyaya for all his support throughout the translation, and to Biraj Kaji Rajopadhyaya for helping me gain better understanding of some words in Nepal Bhasa.

The English translation uses a large number of words specific to Nepal Bhasa. The description of such words is provided at the beginning and the names in Nepal Bhasa are used throughout, for specifically two reasons – first, such words of Nepal Bhasa cannot be perfectly translated into English with the same, exact meaning; and next such words should not always be translated owing to its underlying ritual/socio-cultural roots. The text used here is entirely as that written by Baldev Juju, except for few changes owing to language concerns. Extra information that needs to be added for non-Nepal Bhasa readers has been added as a footnote.

I am hopeful that this work shall be brought into use in rituals, especially in places that lacks a Newar purohit. I request valued readers and/or users of this book to give constructive remarks and feedback to further improve the work with a view to promote Newar ritual and cultural heritage.

Abhas Dharananda Rajopadhyaya

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1.

Significance of Life Rituals

Humans are *made* by rituals, because without rituals humans could be dangerous as criminals. History shows nomadic life of humans in the primordial days, where they would roam around naked and feed on raw animal meat at the lack of rituals. Very late did humans are said to have developed as civilization. Thus after living a civilized life abiding by the rules and regulations made by human society, humans started rituals suiting the civilization and, thus, humans were shaped by rituals they grew up with.

Newars of Nepal have a set of rituals from birth till old age. There are rituals defined for certain ages. People still lament in case one dies without following such rituals of age. The importance of abiding by such ritual practices is to make a civilized living with the rituals Newars have been practicing since ages. Thus, in an endeavor to shed light on such rituals practiced by the Newars, I begin with the naming ritual.

2.

Naming Ritual

(a) Significance of naming ritual

What is the significance of naming? It is important to know the philosophical meaning behind the processes in the naming ritual and how it is important in our lives.

Naming ceremony is to give a name. Name is given not only to a person but also to objects. It would be difficult to call or identify anything or anyone, if there is no name attributed to it, and so a name is to be given to a new-born child to identify him/her. This ritual is called naming.

First of all, gods and immediate relatives are informed at the birth of a new member in a family. For this, there is a ritual for some where they pack one beetle nut (*gway*, Nepali: *supārī*), clove (Nepali: *lwāng*) and vermilion powder (*bhui-sinha*, Nepali: *sindūr*) in a special leaf plate (*jya-nā-lapte*; the pack is called *gway-sinha-pwo* in Nepal Bhasa) to offer to their esoteric deity (*āgan-dya*), lineage-deity (*digu-dya*) and other revered deities, and then to immediate relatives. Some only inform their immediate relatives without such offering, but offer money through care-taker (*aji*) or others on behalf of the new-born to their revered deities on fourth, sixth and twelfth days of birth.

Previously, the navel cord is cut on the day of the birth or a day after and it is kept in an earthen pot to offer to the demi-goddess (*chhwāsa*) at the road junctions. The ritual pollution (*jay-bili-māli*, Nepali: *sūtak*) is implicated on the family and immediate relatives



only after the navel cord is cut. Now, as the children are born in hospitals and the cord is cut there, the ritual of offering the earthen pot at road junctions is lost.

On the sixth day of child-birth, the aunts (from paternal side) place a series of light (*diyo*) on an earthen pot and massage the child with oil. The aunts then wrap a new piece of cloth (*ichā*) to place the child on mother's lap and offer money on child's head. This is called *chhaithī*, meaning the rituals of the sixth day. In return, the aunts are gifted salt, *chāku* (made from jaggery and sugarcane juice), ginger, thyme seeds (Nepali: *iwāno*) and new clothes. All those present in the rituals are distributed salt and ginger.

On the tenth day, the ritual pollution is cleansed by cutting nails, hair and taking a bath. The mother and the child too need to bath on this day, be it with warm water. Offerings of the tenth day are made. Somewhere there is a tradition of consuming soup with a special grass (called *khichā-bhwātha*) and sesame seeds (*til*).

Upon completing these activities, the naming ceremony starts.

(b) Process of naming ritual

The child is given a name in this ceremony. A name is important in the entire life and even after death; thus it is not just any random or insignificant activity, but has a long-lived tradition abiding by a certain set of rituals. For example, nowadays to inaugurate a shop even, people invite their close friends and relatives or even a special guest to cut a ribbon so that they all know the name of the shop. Similarly, there is a tradition of naming by inviting not just relatives but also the deities that are revered by the family.

A vessel filled with water (Nepali: *kalash*) is placed with branches of jasmine flower (Nepali: *chamelī*, Nepal Bhasa: *dwāpho-swā*) and other flowers. An earthen plate (*kisali*) with rice, beetle nut (*gway*) and coins is placed atop. Alongside the *kalash* are placed *dhaupati* (curd), on its right are Ganesh, tutelary deity and on the left are protector deities, signified by beaten rice (*baji*, Nepali: *chiura*) and rice grains on pieces of leaves. All revered deities are placed thus and on the left side is placed another vessel called *kulichā* (Nepali:





mānā) with rice-powder (*chwa-ki*) and the child's cloth (*bhoto*). Another special vessel of vermilion powder called *sinha-mu* and mirror called *jwalā-nhyāka* are also placed on either sides and a light-vessel with Ganesh icon (*sukunda*) is lit.

Upon placing all these elements, a priest (Nepali: *purohit*) or the eldest male of the lineage called *thakāli* worships all the elements in a sequence by sprinkling water, putting *tikā* and flowers. A document indicating details of the child-birth (Nepali: *chinā*) is also worshipped in this ritual. Upon the end of the worship, the eldest daughter-in-law of the lineage called *thakāli-naki* cleanses the child and mother by circling the child and mother and then placing yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*, Nepali: *rāyo-sarsyu*) on a fire on a small earthen plate. This is repeated three times and next, rice and water is circled such and the fire is taken away outside the main door called *pikhā-lakhu* in Nepal Bhasa. On behalf of the child, the mother worships the *kalash*. The *thakāli-naki* mixes curd and rice grains to the mother to worship all the deities three times and another one for the home. The child is given the *tikā* and new clothes. Now the *thakāli* comes to the child and announces the name of the *chinā* to the child's ear – right ear for boy and left for the girl. The *thakāli* then gives the infant a taste of honey on a betel leaf (*gwā*, Nepali: *pān*) with his fingers and then washes his hand and child's mouth in a separate vessel. A light is placed in the vessel and its water is offered to road junctions. This is called *kala wāke-chhoye*. After completion of these rituals, the *thakāli* again worships the *kalash* and offers money to the deities and *tikā-dakshinā* to those present, including the care-taker of the child and mother (*aji*). At the completion of the rituals, the holy water of *kalash* is sprinkled to everyone; *tikā* and *prasād* are distributed to everyone. The *sinha-mu* is given to the *thakāli-naki* and she, upon offering the *sindūr* to the deities, takes the *sindūr* for herself. The *thakāli* takes the *jwalā-nhyāka* and sees his reflection on it and shows it to everyone. Now the *thakāli-naki* puts *tikā* on a wooden vessel called *pāthi*, puts pieces of fruits in it and then offers it first to the gods and three times to the child. A light is shown to the child and everyone worships the child with dry-fried paddy and red powder. The cloth is then sent to *pikhā-lakhu* with few drops of mother's milk by *aji* or someone and the small *mānā* pot

is brought back after washing. Everyone offers money on child's head and thus the naming ritual is completed.



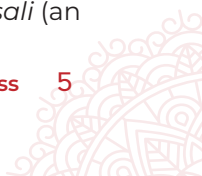
(c) Meaning of naming ritual

Every process in the naming ritual has meanings and they are not just superstitions, because culture itself has some rationale. Newar rituals too have philosophical bases on how to live life and some even have highly standard directions for our lives too, which we should understand.

There is a theory that Newars consider their revered deities as family members as per philosophy of Newar culture; the same is reflected in the naming ritual too. As every member of family are informed and consulted on significant matters, there is a tradition that even deities as esoteric deity (*āgam-dya*), Ganesh, lineage deity (even the home is revered as a deity), protector deities are also involved in whatever rituals practiced.

A *kalash* can be revered as any gods or goddess; the deity invoked is believed to stay in the same *kalash*. Therefore *kalash* needs to be placed in any rituals in Newar culture, be it in any fasting rituals or other important rituals as naming, weaning, coming-of-age, marriage or others. The god Macchindranath is also believed to be brought to Nepal on a *kalash*. It is also said that the divine *kalash* is there in the earthen idol of the deity. Thus, the idol undergoes maintenance work regularly and it is done in a set of rituals during Macchindranath's *nha-wa* (renewal ritual).

It is, thus, established that *kalash* can be used to invoke any deity. Even if one has to go out for any significant works, two water-filled pots in the form of *kalash* are placed on either sides of the main gate. Offering is made to the same in the form of tutelary deity with a prayer of success without any hurdles. A new bride is brought to the home in the same way with two *kalash* on either sides and welcoming ritual (*lasa-kusa*) is performed. The meaning behind it is that the deities invoked in the *kalash* too approve of the new daughter-in-law of the house. During the big festivals of Dashain and Tihar or other esoteric rituals, Newars place a *kalash* filled with rice-beer or alcohol (ritual is called *thāpi-swanegu*) and a *kisali* (an





earthen pot with rice, beetle nut *gwā* and money) atop. This vessel itself is considered divine and this is another basis, where we can consider *kalash* can be worshipped as any deity.

Likewise, in the naming ritual, a *kalash* is established to invoke the esoteric deity, lineage deity and all other deities revered by the family.

A curd-vessel (*dhaupati*) placed near the *kalash* signifies longevity of life. A *tikā* of rice and curd is believed to keep the child healthy, give long and good life and ward off evils. Even while going out for important works or while going abroad, curd is placed atop the *kalash* and is bowed to. Likewise, in the naming ritual too, the curd-*tikā* is believed to do good onto the child and to all others present. Belief of wellness is thus associated with this.

In the welcoming (*lasa-kusa*) ritual, the eldest daughter-in-law of the family (*thakāli-naki*) circles the mother-child with yellow and black sesame seeds (*ikā-pakā*) and places it in the fire, which is then put away outside the main door *pikhā-lakhu*. This has a very significant meaning – yellow and black sesame seeds when burnt are believed to ward off evil spirits. It keeps the child safe from such evil elements. The idea is to keep the evil elements at bay and thus remove hurdles while performing any rituals.

Giving the child a taste of honey after announcing to him/her the name can be interpreted as supply of nutrition in case the child cannot suck mother's milk. Cereals meant for babies or sweet pudding (*haluwā*) can also be given in small amount from this day on. Nowadays, health personnel refer different medicines for infants, but the tradition has a different medicine for the baby (*ghoti-chauthi*) and for mother (*kwati-wāsa*).

At the end of the ritual, pieces of fruits are sprinkled on the child. This refers to blessing the child at the success of the ritual. Fruit signifies completeness, and thus the ritual signifies the completion of the ritual. Worshipping with dry-fried paddy (*lāwā*) again signifies well-being and good life.



An important point here of the Newar culture is the significance given to the eldest male and female member (*thakāli* and *naki*) of the family or lineage. While the scriptures give importance to father in performing this naming ritual, the Newar community gives the responsibility to the *thakāli*. Newar culture gives them the responsibility to perform any ritual and they are revered by all younger ones by bowing down to their feet. They are recognized even as divine and their words are always abided by. This societal discipline to respect elders is apparent in the Newar society.

Since Newars invoke divine into their social life, they have an identity to bear such divine, altruistic characteristics and are always away from evil thoughts. This is because they are disciplined by Newar rituals. Names are almost always chosen from divine names or else of precious gems, as Hira, Moti, Panna, Manik, Suvarna etc. It signifies that Newars wishes the child to be as gods or as precious as these gems. Nowadays, at the influence of the western culture, trends of western names have emerged. Names as Mary, Jenny for girls and John, Jackson for boys give an impression as if they are not Nepali names; thus it is advised that they give names that suit the Newar society.

In a normal lens, the naming seems a very ordinary task without any significance, but this is not so in the perspective of Newar philosophy. The philosophy behind these rituals is to put the infant in the boundaries of Newar culture to make him/her a capable and good person with divine qualities. This is a very thoughtful and adaptable philosophical idea. Thus, Newars would always invoke and respect their tutelary deities, lineage deities and others in any rituals. This clearly highlights a theory of Newar philosophy of divinizing humans.



3.

Weaning Ritual (*Machā Janko*)

(a) Significance of weaning ritual

One attribute of Newar culture is that the society has managed, through rituals, how to handle child-birth, how to grow a child and how to nurture the mother post the labour pain. Even at the lack of health experts and their consultations, Newar rituals give a practical knowledge of rituals aimed at how to care the new-born child and how to make the mother healthy. Newar culture gives all life-lessons that can be used in this scenario.

Newars have made rituals on how to care the child and mother post child-birth. They are both massaged with oil twice daily. The mother consumes cooked rice with ghee and *chāku* (made of jaggery and sugarcane juice) three times daily. She consumes her first meal before the dawn to prevent gastritis; she is not given stale food. From the tenth day, she is given minced meat. As she is looked after in this period, the child gets enough nutrients from mother's milk along and she too recovers soon. After 10-15 days, the mother is taken at her paternal home (Nepali: *māiti*) and the same routine of three meals a day and two-times massage daily is continued there. The practice is still continued as a part of culture and this is a cultural compulsion too.

Upon nurturing the child thus, on the fifth month for girls and on the sixth month for boys, the weaning ceremony (*machā-janko*) is conducted. Until the weaning ritual, the child is only fed on mother's milk. In case if the mother's milk is not enough,



small quantities of pudding (*haluwa*) can be fed. Nowadays, milk powder is also available and infants are fed that too, but medical professionals would suggest mother's milk only. After four months, medical experts refer small amounts of cereals and this too is now a practice. Coincidentally, Newars have since ages had a ritual of weaning at the fifth month for girls and sixth month for boys. This clearly suggests Newar culture follows a healthy lifestyle.

(b) Process of weaning ritual

Weaning ritual is another ritual for infants after naming. Naming is a ritual for giving a proper identity, while weaning is for giving proper nutrients to the child to make him/her stronger and healthier. After the weaning ritual, the child is slowly given all other solid foods for his/her growth. Thus, the weaning ritual is very important.

In the weaning ritual too, just as naming ceremony, a water-filled vessel (*kalash*), *dhaupati* and other deities as esoteric deities (*āgam-dya*), Ganesh, protector deities are placed on either sides signified by beaten rice (*baji*) and rice-grains (*ākhe*) on pieces of leaves. A vessel of vermillion powder (*sinha-mu*) and mirror (*jwalā-nhyāka*) is also placed on either sides of the *kalash*. Then a priest or the eldest male member of the family (*thakāli*) lights a lamp (*sukundā*) and then the worship starts with sprinkling water, putting on *tikā*, flowers and others. The eldest daughter-in-law of the family (*thakāli-naki*) welcomes the child and mother with a key to worship altar preceded by stream of water (Nepali: *jaldhārā*). Yellow and black mustard seeds are circled round the mother-child and burnt on a fire and a light is placed on it. The fire is then taken away to be placed outside the main door (*pikhā-lakhu*). The child and mother worship the *kalash* and other ritual elements. The *thakāli-naki* mixes curd (*dhaupati*) and rice and gives it to the mother three times to offer to the gods invoked at the *kalash* and again one time to the home. Now *tikā* and flower is placed on the child, the mother and everyone. Now, the *thakāli* feeds seeds of coconut (*naikyā-mū*) and of betel-nut (*gway-mū*) to the child along with small pieces of banana. This is called *fal-prāsan* in Sanskrit. The *thakāli* then washes his hand and cleans the child's mouth. Next a plate with paddy, mud, brick, ornament, pen/pencil, book, a





special garland (*janko-kokhā*, Nepali: *rakshyā-mālā*) among others is brought to the child until the child chooses an item from it and paddy is placed on the child's head. Belief has it that whatever the item the child chooses, he/she is destined to the same profession in future.

Next, cooked rice is fed to the child. A big plate with different feasts (*thāy-bhu*) is brought. First a plate for the Sun-god is offered with a light on it and is placed at sunlight. A leaf is placed near the big plate and offering is made to different gods (ritual is called *bau-biyegu*) – cooked rice and other vegetables are placed five times on the leaf and water is offered; palm-filled with water is circled around the plate, given to the child to drink and left on the ground. Then cooked rice and curd is fed five times with ring finger + thumb, little finger + thumb, middle finger + thumb, index finger + thumb and all five fingers and water is fed again. Next, set of egg, fish, meat, lentil cake (*bārā*) and alcohol is given to the child. It is followed by meat ball (*lā-gwa*) and meat cake (*lā-pī*) along with rice-beer and next comes five set of breads (*pancha-pakwānna*) with milk. Small bits of these pieces are only given to the child and the remaining is kept in the big plate *thāy-bhu*. Handful of the cooked rice and lentils is given to the child and placed in a separate vessel previously used to wash hands. This is repeated three times and curd and cooked rice is added to the plate and the same process is repeated once. The *thakāli* washes his hands and cleans the child's mouth too. After this a separate plate with similar food items is brought and is worshipped by the mother on behalf of the child. It is placed in the vessel used to wash hands. It is then taken to the road junctions and offered there. The big plate *thāy-bhu* is separately and safely taken away for the mother to consume the remains.

After this weaning process, the child is given a new cloth and the special protector garland (*janko kokhā*, Nepali: *rakshya-mālā*) is given to the child. The *thakāli* then worships the deities and make monetary offerings to the deities, priest and care-taker (*aji*). The *kalash* is taken out and its water is given to everyone along with *tikā* and *prasād*. The *jwalā-nhyāka* is taken by the *thakāli* and after cleaning the Om sign on it sees his reflection in it and shows it to everyone. The *naki* takes the *sinha-mu* and takes its *tikā* after



offering to the gods. At the end of the ritual, pieces of fruits, fried paddy (*tāy*, Nepali: *lāwā*) and red powder (*abhir*) is offered to the child and a light is shown. Everyone then worships the child with *tāy* and red powder (*abhir*). The *aji* or someone takes the child's old cloth on a separate vessel *mānā* with few drops of mother's milk and places it outside the main door (*pikhā-lakhu*) and brings back the *mānā*. The child is then taken by his/her maternal uncle (*pāju*, Nepali: *māmā*) and taken to nearest Ganesh temple and other temples for worship. *Tāy*, *abhir*, monetary offerings are also carried alongside to worship the deities outside and the home is also worshipped. Those at home worship the child from the windows with *tāy* and *abhir*. The uncle then gives back the child to the mother and thus ends the weaning ceremony.

(c) Meaning of weaning ritual

Now it is important to know the rationale behind the weaning ritual. Instead of following the ritual as superstition without any knowledge of it, it is way better to know the philosophy behind it.

There is a philosophical reason behind every ritual that Newars have been performing. These rituals help in making and living a dignified life as a person with good characteristics. Similar philosophical idea too is reflected in the rituals of the weaning ceremony. Weaning rice pudding with gold or silver spoon or coin, as other culture has it, does not match with theories of Newar culture. In case Newar priest is unavailable, it is better to practice Newar culture under the *thakāli*. Conducting ritual by those who do not match our culture does not give a sense.

All the deities revered and worshipped during this ritual are all invoked to participate in the child's weaning. This has been discussed previously in the naming ceremony. Now, I try to present analysis on child's weaning ceremony.

The use of *thāy-bhu* in the weaning is special to Newar culture. The *thakāli-naki* cleanses herself and cooks all the food in cleansed water, maintaining purity as far as possible. The cooked items are arranged in the big plate *thāy-bhu* in a sequential order, brought to the child and the *thakāli* feeds the child in a ritual order.





Nowadays some people have switched to easier ways, instead of preparing *thāy-bhu*, by worshipping Ganesh and feeding rice-pudding (*kheer*) for the weaning. Some other queue up nearby at the *mala-jā* ritual, where cooked rice is prepared ritually and fed to new infants during processions (*jaṭra*) of some gods. The domestic weaning ritual is alternated by feeding *mala-jā* too.

It is better to feed on *mala-jā* than on rice-pudding (*kheer*) as it is auspicious and ritually maintained. The *mala-jā* is prepared in a tantric fashion with *kalash* worship and is prepared with beans, lentils, lentil cakes, meat among others. Thus, as in domestic weaning ritual, almost all the food item requirements are met. The use of *kheer* alone does not meet these ritual requirements and thus the rationale of the ritual remains incomplete.

(d) Culture of *thāy-bhū*

There is a secret behind *thāy-bhu*. To prepare this, the *naki* cleanses herself and prepares all the essential food items in clean, pure water maintaining purity as far as possible. The vegetables and beans are placed in accordance to one's tradition; at the center is heap of cooked rice; three earthen bowls are kept and filled with alcohol, rice-beer and milk/curd. At the top of the rice-heap as a pinnacle is placed a flat-cake (*bārā*) made of black gram beans, fish, meat, egg and near to it is adorned meatball (*lā-gwa*) and meat flat-cake (*lā-pī*), along with a set of five breads (*pancha-pakwānna*), betel quid (*pān*) and pack of dry fruits (*masalā*). In case, set of five breads (*pancha-pakwānna*) is not available, any other five different types of breads (*roti*) can be used as alternate. This big-plate (*thāy-bhu*) is placed atop a holding with three legs (*trikhutī*). The *thāy-bhu* cannot be placed on ground as it is prepared with utmost care to purity and cleanliness, and every element in it signifies different deities. So placing it in the ground is believed to make it impure and thus a *trikhutī* is used. In cases of feasting with sacrificial offering after the worship of significant deities during *sikā-bhu* (the head of the sacrifice is divided into eight pieces to be taken by members in order of seniority) the leaf-plate is made with two extra leaves at the bottom as a seat (Nepali: *āsana*) so that the leaf-plate holding the feast does not directly touch the ground and its purity is not





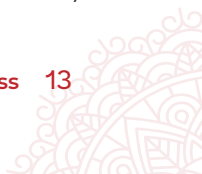
compromised. Similar to placing a seat as *trikhutī*, the foods on the *thāy-bhu* plate are also seated on two set of leaves.

In adorning the *thāy-bhu*, slices of pumpkin (Nepali: *pharsī*) in the shapes of circles, square and elongated rectangles are also placed in the sequence. Vegetables in the *thāy-bhu* may vary; some use five, eight or twelve varieties of vegetables. Some place eight-mother deities (Sanskrit: *aṣṭa-mātrkā*) along with Bhairav, while others place five as symbols of five Buddhas. In any way, the vegetables represent esoteric deities (*āgam-dya*), tutelary (Nepali: *iṣṭa-devatā*), lineage deities (Nepali: *kul-devatā*) and their blessings is sought. Thus, at the end of feasting on *thāy-bhu*, it should not be thrown randomly. Instead there is a ritual of *kala-wāyegu* to worship and place at designated places, which is special to Newar culture.

Feeding everything on *thāy-bhu* to the child would mean that the child is ritually free to eat everything. He/She may have to live on different kinds of food items depending on space and time; in such cases this ritual holds him/her frees to eat anything acceptable by the society for consumption.

Three different sets of auspices (Nepali: *sagun*) are placed in the *thāy-bhu*. The first is of egg – it contains egg, black gram bean flat-cake (*bārā*), meat, fish and alcohol. The second is on meat – meat ball (*lā-gwa*) and meat flat-cake (*lā-pī*) plus rice-beer. The third one is a set of five breads (*pancha-pakwānna*) and milk/curd. All these three sets of auspices are meant to build up three different set of energies. The *sagun* has been traditionally continued in the Newar culture as a means to gain energy in a tantric way.

Let's start with egg-*sagun*. It has five items and represents the five elements (*pancha-tatwa*). All living beings are made of these five elements and egg-*sagun* thus symbolically energizes human spirit as if taking a sacrifice. If one is spiritually strong, then he/she can easily overcome different difficulties in life. Somewhere this egg-*sagun* is symbolically attributed to *bīr-bhojan*. This auspicious set of items is believed to give qualities of spiritual strength and enthusiasm. Learned ones say that the *pāyā* (procession of swords)





during Dashain is followed by spiritual attainment of the swords (*khadga-siddhi*) through similar *bīr-bhojan*. In divine dances, the troupes are taken out of their residences after receiving animal sacrifices and egg-*sagun* symbolic of five elements. Everyone has seen Nyatamaru Ajima dance of Kathmandu brought out after sacrificing a sheep (*nepa-phai*). Thus, egg-*sagun* is aimed at gaining spiritual energy through mental strength.

Now in the second phase of *sagun*, although there are three elements – meat ball (*lā-gwa*), meat flat-cake (*lā-pi*) and rice-beer, it gives the same impression as five elements. Meat ball (*lā-gwa*) represents earth element, rice-beer represents light element; the remaining three water, ether and wind are represented by meat flat-cake (*lā-pi*). The flat-cake is first spherical, then plain and wide. The spherical shape represents ether, plain represents water as it always maintains its level and the wide flat-cake represents wind element. Thus, the three items contains all the five elements. This is believed to strengthen the body. For instance, the peasant *Jyāpu* communities consume meat beaten rice (*chhowayla-baji*) and they work in the field all day long without losing energy. This is a quality of rice-beer.

The five breads (*pancha-pakwāna*) and milk are said to give mental strength. Five items of five different shapes also represents the five elements. The meaning to this *sagun* is to gain required mental strength to perform different taks. Thus, consuming *thāy-bhu* has its own meaning and rationale.

The *thāy-bhu* is not just brought into use during the weaning ceremony, but also during coming-of-age *ihi* (*bel-bibāh* or *suvāna-kumār bibāh*) ritual and in marriage during taking-away of bride (*whonkegu*). The rationale behind it is the same – to gain spiritual, physical and intellectual strength. This *thāy-bhu* ritual in the weaning ceremony is to give good wishes to the child to gain these three types of strength to live a successful life.

At the end of the ritual, blessings from the deities is obtained and after everyone worships the child with fried-paddy (*lāwā*) and red powder (*abhir*), maternal uncle (*māmā*) takes the child from the

mother to nearby Ganesh temple. Upon bringing the child back, the child is considered free from other pre-ritual bindings. Thus, in the eyes of Newar culture, the weaning ceremony is regarded as an important one and is celebrated till date.



4.

Coming-of-Age Ritual for Boys (*Buskhā* or *Chūdākarma*)

(a) Significance of *chūdākarma* ritual

As humans are social beings, they abide by the rituals and regulations of the same society they grow up in as its member. They feel satisfied and proud to live by such rituals of the society, no matter how others see them. Though it is not that there are people who abandon their society and become proud of it, but there can be only few to discard one's relative and live a satisfied, lonely life. To speak harsh, in reality, it is unsuitable for humans to immorally abide by personal interest and thus discard the society they grew up in with so much care, love and support. Thus, everyone loves their society.

In order to make children fully abide by rituals and regulations of Newar society, it is important to know these rituals. There are not many restrictions as a child, but after coming-of-age rituals (*chūdākarma* for boys, *ihī* for girls) only they need to abide by rules and follow restrictions of the society. It is not compulsory for them before coming-of-age rituals to follow ritual pollutions (*sūtak* or *āśauch*) but after the coming-of-age rituals, following such rules is a compulsion. Thus these rituals (*chūdākarma* for boys, *ihī* for girls) are important to bring them under the rules and disciplines of the society.

Let's first discuss on the *chūdākarma* ritual for boys. Previously, Newars would perform *bratabandha* around 5-6 years after the *chūdākarma* ceremony, but nowadays they have mixed it to



conduct both of these separate rituals in one ceremony. There are very few who perform these rituals separately. Bajracharya and Shakya castes conduct this as *bare-chhuigu* (*chūdākarma*) into one ceremony. With an objective lens, there is no problem with conducting these otherwise separate meaningful rituals in one ceremony, it has now been blended and we should recognize this as the demand of time.

Coming-of-age for boys (*chūdākarma*) is a ritual to give entrance to the child in societal norms, while initiation (*bratabandha*) is a ritual to give education to the child and thus discipline him.

The time for conducting this coming-of-age *chūdākarma* ritual for boys is when he can speak well, move around, become inquisitive, recognize love from relatives as maternal/paternal uncles/aunts, brothers, sisters and thus understand the significance of society. The ritual at such age opens him up to know more from the society. He can then abide by the social norms and become a disciplined member of society and not ignorant on social regulations. The boy upon undergoing this ritual needs to be disciplined in manners of ritual pollution, respect elders and love the younger ones. He also realizes the importance of relatives in society, start learning about the smaller responsibilities in society. He then becomes prepared to follow the social activities as his own duty. This is important to make the boy a social being after the coming-of-age ceremony. If this ritual is delayed and performed late, it might pave way for indiscipline and he might be probable to live in his own way disrespecting social boundaries. Thus, we need to realize the philosophical idea behind this ritual to do it duly in order to instill in the boy good qualities for his better future.

(b) Process of *chūdākarma* ritual

Like in any other rituals, in the *chūdākarma* ritual too, a water-filled vessel (*kalash*), *dhaupati*, esoteric deities (*āgam-dya*) and other deities, along with vessel for vermillion powder (*sinha-mu*) and *jwalā-nhyāka* are to be placed. A bronze plate for paternal aunt (*nini*, Nepali: *fufu*), and razor (*khwa-chā*) and bronze cup for Napit caste are also placed alongside *kalash* for worship. A priest





or the eldest member of the clan (*thakāli*) performs the worship in sequential order by offering *tikā*, flower, ritual thread (*jajamkā*), incense, light, fruits, breads and other items. The eldest female daughter-in-law (*thakāli-naki*) welcomes the child (*lasa-kusa*) with a key and stream of water and takes him to the worship altar. She then takes yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), circles the boy and puts it in fire three times and with rice grain and water one time. A light is placed over it and sent outside the main door (*pikhā-lakhu*).

Next the child worships the *kalash*. The *thakāli-naki* places *dhaupati* curd on the worship plate, the child bows to it. The *naki* takes curd with a flower and mixes it with rice-grain to give it to the child three times to worship the *kalash* and one more time for the home. The *naki* puts *tikā* and flower on the child. The *thakāli* then comes with a plate (*bhālinchā*) containing rice powder and oil (*kwa-chika*), a handful of specific type of grass (*dubo*), paddy, piece of raw meat and money. He then uses *dubo* to dip into *kwa-chika* and then applies the paste on the child from toe to head and head to toe three times, places paddy on the child's head and gives the plate to the child. The hands of maternal uncle (*pāju*) are worshipped and he is given a set of gold and silver razors (*lu khwa-chā, wah khwa-chā*) and needles (*lu-mulu, wah mulu*). Then the *pāju* holding child's toupee, shaves the head on all sides with the razors and marks the ears for piercing. The *thakāli* then worships hands of paternal aunts (*nini*) and gives her bronze plate and clothes and worships hands of Napit and gives razors to him/her. The boy is then led by *naki* to a separate place to shave his hair.

The Napit barber shaves the boy's head and pierces his ear, while paternal aunt(s) holds the bronze-plate and cloth to receive the shaven hair. The boy is given two special type of food (*kalyā-mari*) and goes to take a bath. The *naki* again performs the *lasa-kusa* welcoming ritual to invite the boy to the worship altar, fire is placed in front of the the boy and yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) is circled around the boy three times and water-rice grain one time as previous. The boy worships the *kalash* and receives rice-curd *tikā*, flowers and new clothes from the *naki*. Sandalwood paste is applied on the shaved head of the child and the toupee



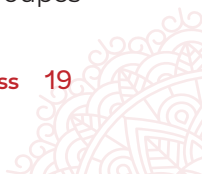
is bound with yellow-thread (*kumhakā*) along with a flower of the *kalash*. The boy now dresses up with the new cloth and the *thakāli* does the final worships and make monetary offerings. The water of the *kalash*, *tikā*, flower and *prasād* are distributed to everyone. *Naki* takes the *sinha-mu* and the *thakāli* takes the *jwalā-nhyāka*, sees his own image at it and shows it to everyone. The *thakāli-naki* then bestows pieces of fruits to the boy with a vessel (*pāthi* or *mānā*) three times and everyone worships the boy with fried paddy (*lāwā*) and red powder (*abhir*). The boy is then taken out to nearest temple for worship and brought home, thus ends the *chūdākarma* ritual.

(c) Meaning of *chūdākarma* ritual

There is meaning on par with Newar cultural philosophy in all the rituals of *chūdākarma* process. Such cultural significance must not be demeaned as superstitious. Anything without direct benefit must not be regarded as insignificant. Newar cultural practices ease people's lives in society and enables an environment for shaping real Newar life – all Newars need to understand this and this is today's need too.

Newars worship their deities before starting any activities, so in coming-of-age ritual (*chūdākarma*) too, there is a tradition to install a *kalash* and worship all their esoteric (*āgam*) deities and other revered deities alongside. Here too, in accordance to Newar cultural philosophy, revered deities are regarded as one's own family member and are invoked in *chūdākarma* ritual too. The ritual is aimed at initiating the child to the society of which gods too are a part. The major process of this ritual thus is to install divinity into a handful piece of hair (toupee) at the tip of boy's head. The toupee is called *āga-sa* in Nepal Bhasa, as a symbol of divinity. Upon this ritual, the boy is required to wash up to toupee daily while washing his face. The toupee is now not just normal hair, but is *dya-sa* meaning hair with/of divinity.

The preceding ritual with *bhālinchā* plate symbolizes purification of the child. Applying paste of *kwa-chika* (rice powder and oil) using the *dubo* grass itself is a purification rite. This rite is found in different other rituals too: in divine dance rituals, the dance troupes





apply *kwa-chika* in hands and faces before invoking deities in their bodies. Tradition of bathing upon applying this paste in body is found in different requirements of purification. Previously, females used to apply this paste in faces and hands while washing their faces in the morning. Now it is limited to rituals only, while 40-50 years ago we knew it as a common practice. It was prohibited previously to wash face using soaps and at that time *kwa-chika* was only used as we heard. Now with availability of different face-wash and soaps in the market, this tradition is no more now.

(d) Role of maternal uncle (*pāju*) ritual

There is a significant traditional role of maternal uncle (*pāju*) in the *chūdākarma* ritual. He is entitled the responsibility to use golden and silver razors to shave the child's head except toupee, and to make a mark for piercing the ear using gold and silver needles. This ritual has a significant meaning.

Maternal uncles have a huge cultural role in Newar society, in every ritual from a child's birth to marriage functions. At the birth of a child, the maternal family provides the child bed-sheets, stick (to hang clothes to avoid direct sunlight in face), pillow filled with mustard seeds, eye-liner box, vest and other materials required for the child. Around two weeks after child-birth, the mother and child are taken at their maternal place. The child is taken care of there and so is the mother. The child is loved by the maternal uncle (*pāju*) and are revered and respected as gods and not just as any other younger ones. In case the child is touched by feet, the *pāju* repent by bowing down to the child.

Similarly, in the weaning ritual, coming-of-age ritual, initiations among others, maternal uncles are required to be present. For girls too, during coming-of-age rituals as *ihī* and *gufā* ceremony, auspicious items (*ku*, Nepali: *sagun*) are brought from maternal side. New clothes for *ihī* ceremony are also brought from maternal side. Even at the marriage when the bride leaves her paternal home, her maternal uncle (*pāju*) carries her to the palanquin (*doli*) or nowadays automobile.





Pājus regard their nieces/nephews as *bhimha machā* or *bhinchā* or *bhina-machā*, all of them carries Nepal Bhasa word *bhi* meaning well. They are revered and offered *tikā* and monetary offering (*dakshinā*) at every rituals. This helps in making the social life-bond stronger according to Newar philosophy. Thus, the role of *pāju* in the *chūdākarma* ritual is significant.

(e) Role of paternal aunt (*nini*) ritual

Similar to the role of maternal uncle (*pāju*), there is also a significant role of paternal aunt (*nini*, Nepali: *fupu*). In the ritual, she receives the shaven hair of the boy on a bronze plate and clothes given to her, and then offers it to the nearest river. The Newar term for nephew relation is *bhinchā*, be it for a male's sister's son or female's brother's son. So as *pāju* loves and cares for his nephew, so does *nini* and she too is involved in every ritual activities. She comes to light oil-lamps for the child on the sixth day of his/her birth, and then receive shaven hair in *chūdākarma* and nails in *bratabandha* ceremony for boys and nails in the *ihī* ceremony for girls. The first shaven hair and cut nails are not randomly disposed but are ritually offered at the river by *nini* with a prayer of well-being for the child. The birth-hair *bu-sa* (*bu* = birth, *sa* = hair) is not randomly disposed as any other insignificant item but ritually shaven and offered to the river. In this way, the ritual teaches to maintain cordial relations with both *pāju* and *nini* (both maternal and paternal side relations) in order to attain wide social life.

At the end of *chūdākarma* ritual, to attain blessings from all the deities worshipped there, holy water, *tikā* and flowers are distributed to everyone. Everyone also gives their blessings to the boy by worshipping him with fried paddy (*lāwā*) and red powder (*abhir*). The blessings are also to make the child abide by the customs of Newar society and become a virtuous person as divine beings in the future following Newar culture.

We need to follow these age-old, significant rituals like *chūdākarma* realizing its real essence. Doing so would allow Newar children in future to proudly identify themselves as Newars and maintain a virtuous living thereof.



5.

Initiation Ritual for Boys (*Kaytā-pūjā* or *Bratabandha*)

(a) Significance of *bratabandha* ritual

It is of essence to become learned, with knowledge and wise in life. Ignorance, stupidity and lack of knowledge are like heavy load for family and society – they fear of insignificant life. Everyone wishes to educate one's child at younger age and make him/her a wise person. Newar culture has a provision to ritually educate children so as to make him/her wise. This is a specialty of Newar culture.

As a child starts to talk and understands the meaning of family and relations, the *chūdākarma* ritual binds him to the societal disciplines and then to initiate his education on different subjects to attain higher education and specialize in any discipline, the *bratabandha* ritual comes into play.

Previously realizing that study cannot be completed at home in a sophisticated environment, boys are sent to *gurukul* schools in forests for education according the puranas. Instead of sending them to forests, Newar society has devised a system where they invite all the relatives and the eldest male member of the family (*thakāli*) ties him a piece of loin-cloth called *kaytā* (Nepali: *langoti*). The rationale here is to ritually bind him to rule so that he does not go beyond in life in an unwanted direction.

Therefore, the *bratabandha* ritual is of high significance. Those without the knowledge of its significance might argue that it is a waste to invite so many relatives and organize a feast at a meager ceremony of tying a loincloth (*kaytā*). It is to be understood that the



duties of relatives does not end at feast and giving blessings to the boy; they should always look after and keep surveillance on the boy. A society becomes good only if everyone in it has a virtuous heart of helping every other member. This is expressed in the tradition where the relatives look after the boy after he goes out and comes back home with the boy. The meaning behind is that they help the boy in walking the right path of life and maintain a decent behavior and habit. Therefore, the *bratabandha* ritual is important culture in the social dimension as well as philosophical dimension. Instead of just abiding by the tradition as it was followed since ages in the society just for formality without knowing its meaning, it is important and beneficial to know the rationale behind them.

(b) Process of *bratabandha* ritual

In the *bratabandha* ritual too, similar to other rituals, a water-filled *kalash*, Ganesh, esoteric deity (*āgam-dya*), protector deities and other revered deities are installed with rice grain (*ākhay*) or beaten rice (*baji*) on pieces of leaves. Next to *kalash* are placed plate to be given to paternal aunt (*nini*), bronze bowl plus razor for Napit, loincloth with seven pieces of cloth (*kaytā*) and *sinha-mu* and *jwāla-nhyāka* on either sides. The priest or *thakāli* starts by lighting a *sukundā* and worshipping all ritual elements, offering incense (*dhupāy*), lamp (*itā*), fruits and *roti*.

There are some who performs fire ritual (*hom*) for the *bratabandha* ceremony. Such rites require a priest. Conducting this ceremony only by *kalash* worship can be performed by *thakāli*. Actually, the *bratabandha* ceremony with fire ritual or just by *kalash* worship is similar to invoke the gods.

Upon the worship of *kalash* and other deities, the eldest female daughter-in-law (*thakāli-naki*) welcomes the child (*lasa-kusa*) with a key and stream of water and takes him to the worship altar. She then takes yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), circles the boy and puts it in fire three times and with rice grain and water one time. A light is placed over it and sent outside the main door (*pikhā-lakhu*).





Next the *thakāli-naki* places *dhaupati* curd on the worship plate, mixes curd with rice grain to give it to the boy three times to worship the *kalash* and one more time for the home. The *naki* puts *tikā* and flower on him. The *thakāli* then comes with a plate (*bhālinchā*) containing rice powder and oil (*kwa-chika*), a handful of specific type of grass (*dubo*), paddy, piece of raw meat and money. He then uses *dubo* to dip into *kwa-chika* and then applies the paste on the child from head, hands and toe, and toe, hands and head three times, places paddy on the child's head and gives the plate to the child. The *thakāli* then worships hands of paternal aunts (*nini*) and gives her bronze plate and clothes and worships hands of Napit and gives razors to him/her. The boy is then led by *naki* to a separate place to cut his nails.

The Napit barber cuts the boy's nails, while paternal aunt(s) holds the bronze-plate and cloth to receive the nails. The boy then goes to take a bath with dried mustard (*khau*, Nepali: *pinā*). The *naki* again performs the *lasa-kusa* welcoming ritual to invite the boy to the worship altar, fire is placed in front of the the boy and yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) is circled around the boy three times and water-rice grain one time as previous. The boy worships the *kalash* and receives rice-curd *tikā*, flowers and new clothes from the *naki*. The *thakāli* then takes loincloth and ties it the boy with knot at his right side, worships the knot with *tikā* and flower. Next, *naki* gives clothes to the boy and the *thakāli* gives him stick, deer-skin, bow and arrow. Then alms are given to the boy by all starting from the eldest along with rice, fruits and money. *Thakāli* does the final worships and make monetary offerings. The water of the *kalash*, *tikā*, flower and *prasād* are distributed to everyone. *Naki* takes the *sinha-mu* and the *thakāli* takes the *jwalā-nhyāka*, sees his own image at it and shows it to everyone. The *thakāli-naki* then bestows pieces of fruits to the boy with a vessel (*pāthi* or *mānā*) three times, shows him a light and everyone worships the boy with fried paddy (*lāwā*) and red powder (*abhir*).

The boy then bids his mother farewell for studies by bowing to her feet and he is taken out of the home to the nearest Ganesh temple. There betel nut (*gway*), clove (*lwāng*) and coin placed on seven betel leaves (*pān*) and the boy take the seven steps on them. Boy's



maternal uncle (*pāju*) then holds the boy's hands and brings him home, worshipping all the deities en route with fried paddy (*tāy*), *abhir* and coins. Upon entering home, all the females worship the boy with *tāy* and *abhir*. Thus ends the *bratabandha* ceremony.

(c) Meaning of *bratabandha* ritual

Every ritual in the *bratabandha* ceremony is philosophically aimed at making and child's life better. The rituals are conducted by worshipping the invoking the revered deities and Newar society has its own way of doing things.

There are two ideologies behind worshipping the deities. The first idea regards deities as omnipotent beyond the reach of human. It is believed that gods give humans both happiness and sadness. In this view, if we make devotion, gods will be happy and will grant us our every wish. Instead of believing in endeavors to attain one's goals, this ideology teaches one to do serve the god and live life thus. This can open way to dangerously make human superstitious only.

There is another ideology that gods are like us. Therefore, in every ritual activity, gods are placed in front of us as members of our family and worshipped thus. Even to eat any food item, there is a tradition to make offering to the god. What this ideology of treating gods as members of the family instills is that one should work hard to achieve anything. As senior members of the family support younger ones and bless them every time, so do the gods help us indirectly by strengthening us spiritually. This idea encourages working more with spiritual strength than solely depending on god. Newar belief system is designed thus.

Newar cultural philosophy has it that human can achieve divinity and that gods stay at a family as its members. Similarly, in the initiation (*bratabandha*) ceremony too, the esoteric (*āgam*) deities, other revered deities and protector deities are invoked and worshipped in the same light. Upon receiving blessings from the deities and from relatives at the end of the ritual, the boy is sent for his studies. The responsibility to keep surveillance on the boy is shared by all the





relatives; they all give clothes as auspicious sign (*sagun*) to the boy blessing him success in every step of life. This is the rationale behind worshipping gods in the *bratabandha* ceremony.

The eldest daughter-in-law (*thakāli-naki*) of the family performs the *lasa-kusa* to the boy by circling yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) and putting it in fire, the *thakāli* applies *kwa-chika* (mixture of rice powder and oil) using a *dubo* grass to the child from head to toe and toe to head – this is the same purification ritual as in the *chūdākarma* ritual. Similarly, Napit cuts the boy's nails as the paternal aunt (*nini*) receives it in a bronze-plate and new piece of cloth – this purification ritual followed by bathing is required in every ceremony thereafter.

After this, the *thakāli* puts on the loincloth (*kaytā*) to the boy and worships its knot. The meaning of this ritual is to discipline the boy to stay in the rules of *brahmacharya* to control his physical desire and to focus on attaining education. Seven pieces of clothes are tied to the loincloth that symbolizes overcoming the sleeplessness of seven days and nights to focus on learning. Similarly, there is a meaning and practical message in walking seven steps at the Ganesh temple. It is said that to walk just seven steps with the wise is beneficial in developing friendly relation; in Sanskrit friendship is also termed *sapta-padīna*. This teaches the boy to maintain polite behavior without fighting with anyone during the learning phase.

This meaningful *kaytā-pūjā* (*bratabandha*) ritual is continued as cultural practice among the Newars. Done duly at a defined age, it ensures that the boy does not cross disciplinary boundaries. Today Newars are known for their integrity and less criminal records; this is a result of Newar cultural practices. Therefore, to make Newar child a virtuous person, we need to follow these cultures based on Newar philosophy and refrain from blindly following western culture.



6.

Initiation Ritual for Girls (*Ihi*, *Bel Bibāh* or *Suvarna Kumār Bibāh*)

(a) Significance of *ihi* ritual

Society is of greater importance to humans. Upon nurturing a child from birth to adulthood, everyone wish their children to be a virtuous person in the society. In order to meet this purpose, society has been practicing different rituals and cultural practices from times unknown.

Newars of Nepal too have been practicing their own sets of rituals with their unique philosophical concepts that are fundamental to Newar identity. The *ihi* ceremony for Newar girls is one of such social customs. The girls upon completion of the *ihi* ceremony are regarded as full members of society and are entitled to social norms and rules. Unless this ritual is performed, the girls do not necessarily need to abide by rules as food pollution (*jutho*), first menstrual pollution (*khay-bili*) or ritual pollution by death. Usually as the childhood phase is complete, the coming-of-age ceremony for girls (*ihi*) is performed. It can be performed at home or at community events of group *ihi* ceremony. After this, the girls attain full membership of the society and need to abide by its rules and norms.

Since vermilion powder (*sindūr*) is smeared to the girl's forehead in *sindūrārohan* rite within this ritual and *kanyādān* (giving away the girl) is performed, this ritual is also referred as marriage.

As marriage is termed *ihi-pā* in Nepal Bhasa, many would regard *ihi* as a marriage ceremony. But, in reality, it can be asserted that



this is not a marriage ceremony, if we see through a lens of Newar culture.

First of all, applying *sindūr* on the forehead cannot just be regarded as a marriage ceremony. In the Madhesh and Indian culture, putting on *sindūr* is essential in the marriage; and with that lens, the *ihi* ritual of Newars is seemingly a marriage custom. But in the *ihi* ritual, the *sindūr* is applied by the eldest daughter-in-law (*thakāli-naki*) of the family and not by the husband as in Indian culture. Thus, applying the *sindūr* is merely to initiate in the society; just as boys are initiated in the social rituals by putting on a toupee in *chūdākarma* ritual, the girls are initiated by applying *sindūr*. The *sindūrārohan* (putting on *sindūr*) is thus just an initiation rite.

Similarly, the ritual giving away of girl (*kanyādān*) too cannot be regarded as marriage ceremony. Even in the Brahmin practices, giving girl's hand to the boy in *kanyādān* rite does not complete the marriage function. There is a separate ritual called *whonkegu* to perform by the newly wed couple sitting together; only after this ritual are they entitled as husband and wife. Performing the *kanyādān* rite without the *whonkegu* process would not make the groom responsible towards the bride; thus in the Brahmin marriage, the *kanyādān* rite immediately follows the *whonkegu* process. In the Newar *bel bibāh* ritual, however, only *kanyādān* rite is performed and is not followed by *whonkegu* rite; therefore it cannot be clearly regarded as a marriage.

Another point is that the child upon completion of *bel bibāh* lives with her parents as the member of that family. In case of ritual pollution at birth or death, she too has to follow the suit even after the *kanyādān* ritual in *ihi* ceremony. Had she not undergone *ihi* ritual, she would be merely a child and need not follow such rules of ritual pollution and had this *ihi* been an actual marriage, she would not have to abide by these rules as her parents. This clearly means that *ihi* is not a proper marriage.

As boys are initiated in the society as its member under the auspices of divinity by installing a toupee as symbol of divinity, similarly girls are initiated thus in the society as its member under the auspices



of the divinity. To regard such socially significant *ihi* ritual as a marriage and allege Newar girls of polygamy is demeaning to Newar culture and everyone needs to understand this.



(b) Process of *ihi* ritual

Bel bibāh is an elaborate ritual and is performed for two days: the first day is called *duso* and the actual *ihi* is performed only a day after. On the first day, a *pīth* (temple) worship is performed in the name of the girl with *samay-baji*, rice-cake (*chatāmari*) and egg. The *thakāli* performs a commemoration ritual (*shrāddha*) with plum (*bayar*) – the ritual is called *briddhi shrāddha* or *nanimukhi shrāddha*. Then yellow thread (*duso-ka*) is worshipped.

A priest installs a water-filled vessel (*kalash*), *dhaupati*, Ganesh, tutelary deities, lineage deities and other protector deities along with other revered gods in pieces of leaf, with beaten rice (*baji*) and rice grain (*ākhay*) and worships them. On an earthen pot (*salā-pā*) with *swastika* symbol is kept yellow thread, a type of leaf (*jya-na lapte*), *chāku* (made of jaggery and sugarcane juice), black turmeric (haledo), dried fish, betel nut (*gway*), fried paddy (*tāy*), *manafwa* among others and is worshipped. The girl is brought to the altar by the eldest daughter-in-law (*thakāli-naki*) of the house amidst a *lasa-kusa* ritual by holding keys and streaming water. Next, yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) is circled round the girl and kept in fire and lighting a lamp on it, it is sent outside the house at *pikhā-lakhu*. The girl worships the deities as *naki* mixes curd from *dhaupati* and rice grains. The girl is given the mixture three times to worship the *kalash* and one time for the house. The girl is then given red *tikā* mixed with curd and flower.

Two sticks of sabaigrass (*babiyo*) are placed on head and legs of the girl and a garland of yellow thread is circled 108 times on the child on the sticks. The garland is tied to the items in the earthen pot with *swastika* symbol (*salā-pā*) and is put on the girl. Monetary offerings are made to the deities, priest and others and the *tikā* and *prasād* are distributed. The *thakāli* takes the *jwalā-nhyāka* and shows it to everyone, while the *naki* takes the *sinha-mu* and gives it to everyone. The *naki* then worships deities and the girl





with pieces of fruits in a wooden vessel (*pathi*) one and three times respectively. A light is shown to the girl and everyone worships her and blesses her with *tāy* and red powder (*abhir*). Then the *naki* takes the girl to a place to eat from *thāy-bhu*, a large plate. En route the girl is asked to churn black gram (*māy*) on a stone slab with her feet. Before she eats from *thāy bhū*, she is given the *prasād* of *pīth-pūjā* and her yellow garland is kept safely in the earthen plate with swastika sign in a separate place. Before feasting on the *thāy-bhu*, a separate meal is offered with light to Sun-god and is placed where sunlight is seen. Then after offering the meal to the gods in a separate leaf, she feasts on the large plate *thāy-bhu*. At the completion of this ritual, she washes her hands and mouth in a separate vessel. Another plate of meal is placed with it (called *kala-bwa*) and placing an oil-light on it, the remains of the *thāy-bhu* is offered at the road junctions. Thus ends the first day of *ihī* ceremony.

On the next day, after daily bathing and purification rites and arranging all the required materials, the *naki* welcomes *ali-dya* and *ināy-dya*. The *ali-dya* is a mound made of earth with rice grain (*ākḥay*), betel nut (*gway*) and coin in it, and has a pinnacle shape over it with flags (*karna patā*, *pancha patā*, *aruwā*) on it. Three sets of silver eyes with black dots (*drishti*) are placed on it as living god. The *ināy-dya* is a water-filled vessel *kalash* with a three-layer flag of red cloth. Both are held by someone at the *pikhā-lakhu* and the welcoming rite (*lasakusa*) – sprinkling water, circling with yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) and putting it in fire, putting *tikā* with curd and rice grains, worshipping with pieces of fruits over a *pathi* three times and welcoming with keys and stream of water – is performed to take the deities at the fire altar (*yagya-kunda*). Series of *kalash* are installed at the fire altar along with *sinha-mu* and *jwalā-nhyāka* on either side. Bronze plate to be given to paternal aunt (*nini*) and bronze cup for Napit along with his/her razor is also placed behind the *kalash* and worshipped. Now, as done in the previous day, the girl is brought to the altar with *lasakusa* ritual using keys and stream of water. The circling with *ikā-pakā* and putting it in fire, mixing rice grains with curd and worshipping the gods three times and the home one time are also performed. The mixed *tikā* is put on the girl. A plate called

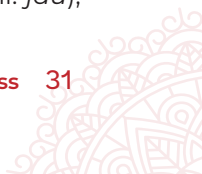


bhalinchā with *kwa-chika* (mixture of rice powder with oil), paddy, raw meat and money is brought by *thakāli* and he applies the paste from the girl's head to toe and toes to head three times, puts paddy grains on the girl's head and gives the plate to the girl. Next, he worships *nini's* hands and gives her the bronze plate with clothes on it and gives Napit the razor and bronze cup.

Naki then brings the girl to the Napit with *lasakusa* rite; the Napit cuts her nails as the *nini* receives her nails on the bronze plate. The girl then goes to bathe and is led back to the altar with the purification and *lasakusa* ritual as previously with *ikā-pakā* circling and burning. The next step is *sindūrārohan* – the *naki* takes vermilion powder (*sindūr*) from *sinha-battā*, offers a pinch to the deities, put on herself and then to the girl as the second eldest female (*nwaku*) helps put on a strip of red cloth on girl's eyes. The process is done three times and the cloth plus *sinha-battā* is given to the girl. Next, mixture of curd and rice is put on as *tikā* to the girl and a saree (*ihi-patāsi*) is given to her.

Next, she worships *ali-dya* and pieces of fruits are worshipped to her from a vessel (*pāthi*) three times, light is shown to her and everyone worships her with fried paddy (*tāy*) and *abhir*. She is then taken for *thāy-bhu* with the same *lasakusa* ritual as previous day, en route she is asked to grind black on a stone-slab with her feet. The *thāy-bhu* of this day is prepared with *tāy*, curd, bread and milk; another plate (*sūrya-bwo*) with the same ingredient is offered to Sun-god and is sent to a place with sunlight. The yellow-garland is taken off and is separately placed. After offering to the gods on a separate leaf (*bali-biye*), she consumes the food and washes her hands and mouth. This along with another set of meal (*kala-bwo*) with the same items with a light is offered at road junctions.

The priest then performs the fire rituals and the girl is again led to the worship altar with the same *lasakusa* rite with *ikā-pakā* circling and burning. She now sits on her father's laps and wears the garland of yellow-thread. In front of her is placed a copper plate with stone apple (*bel*) and raw gold symbolic of the tutelary gods. Worship of the gods is performed with flower and sacred thread (*jajamkā*). The girl's father takes barley grains (*tacho*, Nepali: *jau*),





sesame seed (*hāmo*, Nepali: *til*), pieces of *kusha* grass on his hands and touches the girl's thumb to the *bel* and gold, while the girl's mother gives a stream of milk and water on their hands. She is then taken off her father's laps. This rite is called *kanyādān*. After that monetary offerings are made to the deities on the copper plate. The priest or *thakāli* ties the *bel* fruit on the hands of the girl with a sabaigrass (*bābiyo*) rope and the *naki* makes her go round the fire altar. The tied rope is taken out and she receives heaps of rice, fruits and money from her relatives – this rite is called *bārā-chhuigu*. The *thakāli* then worships all the gods and make monetary offerings, and then distribute holy water, *tikā* and *prasād* of the worship to everyone. The *sinha-mu* is taken by the *naki*, while the *thakāli* takes the *jwalā-nhyāka* and shows it to everyone. With this ends the *ihi* ceremony.

This is an important process of *ihi* ceremony. After this, a long rope with fig (peepal) leaves is offered as garland to the house; everyone takes the heat of the fire before the fire ritual concludes. Some place eight *kalash* with eight auspicious symbols (*aṣṭa-mangal*), Ganesh *kalash* and serpent *kalash* among many others. With an objective of worshipping all the revered deities, this significant ritual is concluded.

(c) Meaning of *ihi* ritual

I present here the meaning and significance of the processes in the *ihi* ceremony.

Let's first discuss on the *pīth pūjā* (worship at a temple) as a part of the rituals on the previous day (*duso*). It has been said earlier that on par with Newar cultural theory, divinities are seen as members of family. Therefore, not just the deities at home are worshipped, but also the deities in the locality and *pīth* deities outside the locality are worshipped and invited to bless the girl. The tradition of *kalash* installation is thus aimed at invoking one's tutelary deities, lineage deities, protector deities, Ganesh and other deities.

What this clarifies is that the *ihi* ceremony is conducted in presence of the societal relations and even deities to bless the ritual.





Even the deceased ancestors are said to be around us and they too are invoked for the ceremony at the commemoration ritual *shrāddha* with plum (*bayar*). Thus, blessings for a successful life are sought for the girl to be initiated not just from the deities, but also from the ancestors as well.

The yellow thread is called *duswa-kā*, meaning the thread of the *duswa* ritual done on the first day. The girl cannot leave the home upon wearing this garland and thus is bound by the garland of 108 threads. The *thāy bhū* ritual suggests the strengthening of the spiritual energy of the girl. These rituals are helpful to complete the *ihi* ritual the next day.

The main process of *ihi* is on the next day. The girl is purified by bathing, burning the yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) on fire, cutting nails from a Napit and then bathing again – these are all rites of purification. The stepping into adulthood is marked by smearing of vermillion powder (*sinha*) by the *naki* and gifting her special saree called *ihi-patāsi*. In the Newar traditions, until the coming-of-age rituals (*chūdākarma* for boys and *ihi* for girls), they are treated equally and wear the same kinds of clothes. But now after the *chūdākarma* ritual for boys, a male dress is given with a cap, while after the *ihi* ritual for girls, a saree is given to strictly differentiate male and female. Similarly, adult male are identified by a toupee while adult females are identified by vermillion powder (*sinha*) on their forehead.

The *kanyādān* ritual, whereby the girl is offered at auspices of deities in the form of stone apple (*bel*) and raw gold on a copper plate, means that the girl is initiated into the society/family of which even gods are a member of. She is now entitled to follow all the rules and regulations of the family as its member.

Gold can be taken as any deity; it is not necessary to carve deities in it and thus *ihi* ceremony requires this raw gold. Mostly this gold is referred as Narayan, while the Buddhist traditions refer to it as Bodhisatwa or Bodhichitta. In either case, the raw gold is tutelary gods/goddess of Newar tradition who are also the members of their society. Therefore, the *kanyādān* is offered to that deity who





provides a guardianship to the girl and in the divine patronage is she initiated into the society. This ritual offering is not any donation of objects that are never expected to be returned, because the parents still hold the guardianship of the girl even after *kanyādān* ritual. Only after marriage is the guardianship transferred to the husband.

Performing such Newar ritual after gaining a depth understanding of its meanings can only make the future generations of Newar proud of their heritages and identity at home and in the world.



7.

First Menstrual Ritual (*Bāhrā* or *Gufā*)

(a) Significance of *bāhrā* ritual

Character is very important in Newar society; those without proper character are not given proper position in the society. Failure to abide by social norms in Newar society can result in expellation from their *guthi* committees. Therefore, Newars are always careful of their child's character; this care is much more in the case of girls as their character are always considered very sensitive and vulnerable. Parents always advise their children to build a good moral character.

Newar culture has provisions to duly teach children to build good moral character. The first menstrual ceremony (*gufā*) is an example of it. As girls step into adulthood and approach menstruation, she is taken to a separate, dark room without sunlight for 12 days, away from the sight of any male members. This is called *bāhrā* or *gufā* (literally meaning cave).

From the health perspective, it can be argued keeping the girl in the dark room away from sunlight might be dangerous. But from social perspective, this ritual is very essential to give her the life lessons. To ensure good health, the dark room must be kept clean.

Lack of knowledge of sexual health can be unfavorable for girls. Though medical science has advanced, but there are harmful sexually-transmitted diseases as HIV/AIDS globally. Some may ruin



their social life due to unwanted sexual practices. To aware the girl of sexuality and sexual health at young age of such harms, the Newar *bāhrā* ritual is useful.

It is today's need to openly discuss sex-related queries with use of educational materials on such topics, and not just in the dark room. But the danger of suppressing shame to discuss sex-related queries can lead to unnatural sexual excitements and can be far more dangerous, if not tamed properly. Cases of sex-related crimes and violence can be heard of in even developed countries. Shame, thus, is important to an extent and this is taught in Newar culture. This coming-of-age ritual for girls requires sharing the dark room with only girls so that they can better understand their sexual queries. This can minimize chances of sexual misconduct. Women, who can give sex education, must be present in the room.

The girl can be afraid of the first menstrual experience due to lack of knowledge. She needs to be taught that this is natural and not due to any diseases. She is taught of her bodily changes that come naturally as she steps into adulthood. She is also taught on safety measures from unwanted stare, about sexual relationships and handling sexual misconduct. As the room is only entered by females, they can openly talk about it. Girls are expected to fully understand such realities and be cautious in their lives.

On getting such lessons for 12 days from experienced elders, she is taken out of the room. She is from then on, not a small girl-child but a lady with sound knowledge on sexual matters. She is also thereafter cautious and strong enough to face the real world at school. Thus, the *bāhrā* ceremony has a great significance.

(b) Process of *bāhrā* ritual

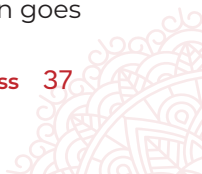
Sending the girl-child to a dark-room (*gufā*) at her first menstruation is tradition since time immemorial, but now to ease the ritual, the ritual is conducted before her first menstruation. An astrologer (*Joshi*) is consulted to calculate an auspicious date and time (*sāit*) for *bāhrā*. In such cases, we need to be careful as the purpose of the ritual is not met since the girl has not stepped into adulthood.





When a child enters the dark-room (*bāhrā*), first of all, *thakāli naki* gives curd and clothes to the child inside the room. Curd, rice and red *tikā* are mixed in a *pūjā* plate and given to the girl three times to worship the Sun, lineage deity and esoteric deity respectively and one time to the house. Yellow, red and curd *tikā* and flower is then sequentially put on her forehead and a new cloth is given to her. After this, she is kept inside the room for 12 days. Within these days, she is given a mixture of fried wheat (*gahu*), fried black soya-bean (*bhatmās*) and fried corn (*makai*) called *chusyā-musyā*. On the 12th day, she undergoes purification by applying *kwa-chika* (rice powder and oil paste), cutting her nails and taking a bath. She then dresses on new clothes.

Outside the room the ground is smeared and water-filled *kalash*, *dhaupati*, Ganesh, esoteric deity, protector deity are all installed with *sinha-mu* and *jwalā-nhyāka* on either side. On lighting the *sukunda*, the priest or *thakāli* starts the worship. The *naki* brings the child covered with a shawl with a key at her hand and stream of water. A *lasakusa* ritual is performed first by purification from circling and burning yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) and showing a light. As she uncovers her shawl, she set eyes first on the Sun and worship it. She is then seated in the worship altar and she offers water (*arghya*) to the Sun three times with jasmine flower with *dubo* grass in it and cow-milk. The *naki* then takes a silver box of vermilion powder, offers first to the gods, puts on herself and then on the girl as an assistant covers the girl's eyes with a red piece of cloth. This rite is conducted three times and the cloth-piece and silver box are both given to the girl. Her head is dressed with yellow thread three times and next with red thread. Curd-mixed *tikā* is given to her with new cloth. Next is the rite of *bāhrā chiugu*, where the girl is given heaps of rice, fruits, betel quid (*pān*) and money three times. The *thakāli* makes monetary offerings to the deities and others, and distributes the holy water, *tikā* and flower. The *naki* takes the *sinha-mu* and applies the *sinha* on herself and all others, while the *thakāli* takes the *jwalā-nhyāka* and sees his image and shows it to all others. The *naki* then worships the child with pieces of fruits using a vessel (*pāthi*) three times as everyone worships the child with fried paddy (*tāy*) and red powder (*abhir*) and gives her blessings – thus ends *bāhrā* ceremony. Finally, the child then goes





to nearby Ganesh temple with *sinha-mu* and *jwalā-nhyāka* in her hands, worship the god and comes back home.

(c) Meaning of *bāhrā* ritual

First of all, the purpose of giving auspicious cloth (*sagun*) to the girl entering the *bāhrā* is to wish for wellness of girl and overcoming any hurdles for the upcoming 12 days. Upon the completion of the 12 day rituals, the girl is taken out from the dark room to sunlight; this signifies movement towards wisdom. Sun is the god of light and as it emits light everywhere, the darkness is gone and everything is bright. In the similar sense, Sun is worshipped to signify the spread of the light of knowledge.

Wearing yellow and red threads and applying *sindūr* signifies the completeness of the female. The rite of going to Ganesh temple with *sinha-mu* and *jwalā-nhyāka* on two hands is also of high symbolic significance. The *jwalā-nhyāka* signifies knowledge: as we gain knowledge of any scars on our face looking at a mirror, we need to know if we are doing our duties responsibly and if there is any scar in our life and character. The *jwalā-nhyāka* gives the knowledge to self-examine time and again for any such scars in our character: the girl upon the completion of this ritual is therefore shown the right way of her duties. The *sinha-mu* is a symbol of virtue and goddess Laxmi. It signals that girls should always bear the qualities of *sinha-mu* and be polite, virtuous and adorned by shame, which is regarded as an attractive feminine quality. Going to Ganesh temple and worshipping him is meaningful as Ganesh makes any work successful by providing *siddhi* and thus the tradition is in practice.

It is to be understood that as boys are taught self-restraint in the *bratabandha* ritual to focus on studies, similarly girls are taught self-restraint by giving them sex-related education in the *bāhrā* ritual before she attains higher education. This is a special characteristic of Newar society. It is evident from the ritual that girls are not restricted to gain higher education outside. Equality on matters of educating both boys and girls is already established in the ritual itself. But in cases of child marriage, where the *bāhrā* ceremony is to be held at husband's place, the purpose of the ritual might be different – it is a different case.



8.

Marriage Ritual (*Ihi-pā or Bibāh*)

(a) Significance of marriage ritual

Rituals have a great significance in people's lives. It is a difficult task to trust someone unknown, unrelated and whose habits are unknown and to live together for whole life as a family member. It is a social rite for male and female to live together loving and sharing with each other after marriage.

Life becomes easy and happy if husband and wife can live together, care each other with a bond of love; else if they do not agree to each other, life becomes harsh for both of them no matter how much money they own. So people investigate about each other's habits and character and reach to point of marriage upon agreeing to each other – this is how marriage should actually be done.

Some people befriend and love each other for years and only after knowing each other for long do they agree to start a conjugal life upon marriage. This tradition can be seen in many western countries. Some even marry their close relatives, but Newar society forbids marriage with such close relatives.

There is a separate theory on marriage ceremony based on Newar cultural philosophy; it does not match with western traditions where sexual satisfaction is in focus. It is important for them to have a cordial relation, especially in terms of physical capacity. Since their marriage is more physical than spiritual, there are high rates of divorces on matters that would have otherwise been easily solved.



That is not common in Newar practices, where even after bigger conflicts too they stay separately for months or years but not get a divorce. Some get back together and live a life filled with love after such long periods too – such examples are found in Newar society.

Puranic culture asserts the essence of marriage to produce offsprings. Sons are usually preferred to perform the rituals at death, following a belief that such rituals by a son would allow one's spirit to ascend to heaven. Even in case one does not beget a son, he would get another wife to seek a son. Puranic stories narrate kings with hundreds of wives to beget a child, as a result of which queens avenge others by poisoning the other child. This shows how dangerous polygamy can get. This idea regards wives as machines for begetting child. But Newar society does not allow wives to be treated thus: whether or not she begets a child, she is allowed full entitlements as a member of the family and later takes position of *thakāli-naki* even. She cannot be othered for not begetting a child.

In the story of Mahabharat, king Pandu takes help from other deities to beget five sons known as Pancha Pandav (five sons of Pandu) as he is unable to do so. Newar society, however, would never accept such action.

After marriage, in Newar culture, the bride and groom's family are considered as one. Therefore, it is forbidden to marry within close relations. The two unrelated families after getting tied by marriage relations of a son and daughter from each family now are regarded one and maintain a cordial relation. This clearly signifies that the purpose of marriage is to broaden social relations and create a good environment in society. Therefore, Newar society would prefer to maintain marriage relations with those following a similar cultural practice and they would not prefer exogamous marriage because of cultural differences. They are cautious against exogamy as it might create conflicts and can affect Newar cultural identity.

(b) Process of marriage ritual

In marriage, there are separate rituals to be conducted both at the bride's and groom's families, and there are rituals that need to be conducted together. Upon meeting and agreeing for marriage by



both the bride's and groom's families, a day is fixed to bring betelnuts (*gway*) from groom's side. For this ceremony, a set of 10 betelnuts, *sindūr* box with vermillion powder plus red piece of cloth, *pūjā*-plate, curd, clothes, fruits and other food items is taken to the bride's place. The *thakāli* from groom's side gives the betelnuts to the *thakāli* from the bride's side to fix the marriage.

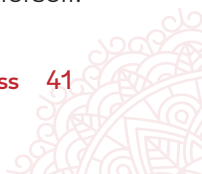
A day or couple of days before the marriage, a commemoration *shrāddha* ritual is performed with plum (*bayar*). On the day of marriage, the groom puts on new clothes, *naki* puts on *tikā* and flower garland (or of *dubo* grass) and he worships the curd and water-filled *kalash* on either side of the main door before leaving the house. The groom is welcomed by bride's father with a garland and worshipped with fried paddy (*tāy*) and red powder (*abhir*).

(i) Process of acceptance (*swayambar*)

At an open area in the bride's place, ground is smeared and purified to install *kalash*, *dhaupati* and other gods as Ganesh, esoteric deity, protector deities signified by beaten rice (*baji*) and rice grains (*ākhay*) on pieces of leaves, along with *sinha-mu* and *jwalā-nhyāka* on either sides. A priest lights the *sukundā* and worship the gods in an orderly manner. Along with *kalash* are placed 10 set of betelnuts (*gway*), *sindūr* box, flowers and garland of *dubo*.

After the worship, the bride goes around the groom three times with a flower garland and gives the groom 10 set of betelnuts and the garland. The groom then takes the *sindūr* box, offers a pinch of the vermillion powder (*sindūr*) to the deities and smears the bride's forehead with the *sindūr* three times, while someone covers the bride's eyes with a red piece of cloth only exposing her forehead. The box along with the piece of cloth is given to the bride as she bows down to her husband. After this, different ornaments as *tilahari*, rings are gifted to the bride and conversely, the bride gifts the groom with rings and other ornaments.

As the newly wed couple sits together, the *naki* from bride's side mixes curd and rice grain and gives it to the couple three times to worship the deities and once for the home. Then the *naki* puts on *tikā* and flower to the newly wed couple, and also puts it herself.





The *thakāli* from both sides then worships the deities, make monetary offerings to the deities and priest and so does the newly wed couple. The holy water, *tikā* and *prasād* is then distributed to everyone; the *naki* takes the *sinha-mu* and puts it herself and gives it to others, while the *thakāli* takes the *jwalā-nhyāka*, clears the Om sign with a flower, puts it on and shows it to everyone. After this, the *naki* worships the deities one time and the couple three times with pieces of fruits on their head. They are shown a light-lamp and then everyone worships the couple with fried paddy (*tāy*) and red powder (*abhira*) and thus ends the *swoyambar* rite.

(ii) Process of sending away the bride (*bhamchā pita bigu*)

After a few hours or the next day of the *swoyambar* is conducted rite to send away the bride. The bride is seated and betel-nuts (*gway*) brought from groom's side is placed in front of her. A total of 12 sets of 10 betel-nuts are placed in a tray for the deities as Ganesh, Sun, esoteric deities (*āgam-dya*), tutelary deities, lineage deities and others and is bowed to. Next, betel-nuts are accepted from the bride by her side of relatives; the close ones take betel-nuts packed in red clothes called *putu-gway*. The parents of the bride take the *gway* at the end. After the *gway* rite is completed, except for the bride's parents, the groom joins the bride and both are given mixture of curd and rice grain from the *pūjā*-plate brought from groom's side to worship the deities in the tray represented by 12 sets of betel-nuts three times and one time for the house. Then, they are given *tikā* and flower. After this, all the ritual elements are placed aside to bring *thāy-bhu* (large plate with different food items); first they both wash their hands and offer a separate meal for Sun with a light on it which is placed at sunlight upon worship. Both then offer the food to deities on a separate leaf (the rite is called *bau bikegu*). The groom then takes the egg set with his right hand and alcohol bowl on his left, consumes it and then passes it to the bride for consuming and left on *thāy bhu*. Next comes five sets of breads called *pancha-pakwāna* along with milk or curd, which is consumed in a similar way first by the groom and then by the bride. Beaten rice (*baji*) and curd (*dhau*) is added to the plate and then they wash their hands and mouth on a separate vessel. Another meal called *kala-bwo* is placed on it with a light on and all





the remaining items are sent outside to offer at road junctions – the rite is called *kala wāki chhoye*. Cleaning the area and sprinkling water there to purify the place, the *thakāli* from both sides joins the ritual to worship the deities on the tray represented by betel-nuts (*gway*). Monetary offerings are made to the deities and priests by the *thakāli* and the couples.

Next two large *pūjā*-plates (called *jo kota*) brought from groom's side are brought. The priest or *thakāli* from the groom's side offers spikenard (*naswā*, Nepali: *jatāmasi*), vermillion (*kumkum*), pieces of betel-leaf (*gwā kuchā*) and pieces of betel-nut (*gway kuchā*) to the bride and her parents, who smear them on hands and smells it. Rice grain and curd are mixed and offered to the deities represented by betel-nuts (*gway*) on the tray and *tikā* is put on bride and her parents. The food items of the *kota* are offered to the tray. Next, *de pau* (10 betel-nuts with cover, silver coins, jasmine flower with dubo grass and rice grain - *ākhay*) is shown to the bride's parents and the jasmine flower plus *ākhay* is given to bride and her parents. A *tuti wakki* (anklet) is worn to the bride by the *thakāli* of groom's side. The bride's father gifts the bride *jwalā-nhyāka* and the mother gifts her *sinha-mu* after taking the betel-nuts. The maternal uncle (*pāju*) carries the bride on his back and the bride's father hold groom's hand for the farewell. After circumambulating the vehicle three times they both get in. A shawl (*du-phāngā*) is placed at the top of the car and everyone worships the vehicle with fried paddy (*tāy*) and red powder (*abhir*). They stop at a nearby Ganesh temple, where the in-laws exchange courtesy and regard both families as one. Thus ends the *pita bigu* rite.

As they reach the groom's place, the couples are welcomed at *pikhā-lakhu* with two water-filled *kalash* and two large oil-lamps (*twā-dewā*) on either sides of the main door. The *sukunda* is also lit and a mat is placed on which the new couple steps. The *naki* from groom's side prepares fire, circles the couple with yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) and puts in in fire three times and with rice grains and water once. Light is shown to the couple and all the items are set aside. Next, curd and *pūjā*-plate (*kota*) is brought to which the couple bow; *naki* mixes curd and rice grains with a





flower and gives it to the couple three times to worship the *kalash* and one time to worship the house. After putting *tikā* and flowers on their heads, they are both worshipped with pieces of fruits from a vessel (*pāthi*) three times as someone joins the heads of the couple. A light is shown to them and everyone worships and blesses them with fried paddy (*tāy*) and red powder (*abhir*). The *naki* then welcomes the bride with keys and stream of water and takes the couple to the altar for *hownke* rites.

(iii) Process of welcoming the bride (*hwonkegu*)

The bride places 12 sets of 10 betel-nuts (*gway*) on a tray symbolizing different deities as Ganesh, Sun, esoteric deities, lineage deities and local deities. Everyone from the eldest take betel-nuts from the bride, including the groom at the end. Next, the *naki* from groom's side mixes curd and rice grains and gives it three times to the couple to worship the deities in the tray and once to worship the house. Both the couples are then given *tikā* and flower. After this, all the items are separately kept to bring in *thāy bhu*. The process of consuming *thāy bhu* is the same as previous, with a separate meal for Sun and offerings to deities on a separate leaf. It is then followed by *kala wāye* rites. The *thakāli* from groom's side then worships the tray and makes monetary offerings to the deities and priest. The *naki* then worships the deities one time and the couple three times with pieces of fruits, as someone joins their heads. A light is offered and then everyone worships the couple with *tāy* and *abhir*. Thus ends the *whonkegu* rites.

After 2-3 days of this rite, the bride's side visits the new home of their daughter with gifts of clothes, ornaments, food items and other worship elements, including *pūjā*-plate and curd. A *sukundā* is lit and the bride's father first worships the *sukundā*, puts *tikā* and flower to his daughter and gifts her new clothes and ornaments. Others too gift the bride with monetary offerings. Upon completing this rite, the bride's side invites the new couple as providing entry for the groom at their place. They are given egg-*sagun* and feasted as lavishly as possible. After bidding farewell to the couple, the marriage ceremony is concluded.





(c) Meaning of marriage ritual

A day or couple of days before the marriage, a commemoration ritual *shrāddha* with plum (*bayar*) is conducted on both sides. This is to inform the ancestors of the marriage. Newar philosophy has it that the three generations of ancestors upon death still remain as deities at home without ascending to heaven. Though having left their physical bodies, they are still considered to be around and are invoked in major occasions by performing *bayar shrāddha*.

The *swayambar* rite involves the acceptance of each other by bride and groom with garlands and smearing vermilion powder (*sindūr*) and gifting ornaments to the bride, in the auspices of all the revered deities. This rite is concluded by giving *tikā* and flower to the new couple by the *naki* from bride's side. The rite represents selection of life partner: previously, in the puranic stories, kings would invite princes from different kingdoms and ask his daughter (princess) to select her suitable life-partner for marriage. Only after the princess select her partner does the marriage ritual take place.

According to Newar culture, the major part of marriage ceremony is sending away the bride from her place (*pita-biyegu*) and entry rites at groom's place (*whonkegu*). The concept is that a daughter of one family becomes a new daughter-in-law of another family. For this, all the relations from bride's side as a daughter must permit for her new role as daughter-in-law at another home. The commemoration ritual is also aimed at seeking such permission; the *pita-biyegu* rite involves offering betel-nuts (*gway*) to respective deities and then only to the bride's family members.

Similarly at the groom's end too, as the new bride (daughter-in-law) is welcomed (*whonkegu*) she seeks permission from all the relatives from groom's side. The commemoration ritual *bayar shrāddha* is already performed at groom's end; and during the *whonkegu* rite again betel-nuts (*gway*) is offered to the deities and then to the new relatives from groom's side. The bride does not get entitled as member of family until she gives *gway* to her new relatives. If a child is born of the daughter-in-law from whom family members have not taken *gway*, they do not observe ritual pollution





at birth (*sūtak*). This would mean she is not considered or approved as a family member.

It is necessary here to understand how Newars see their family relations. A theory is that in Newar culture, not only son-daughter, brothers, daughter-in-laws stay as family members but also ancestors and esoteric deities (*āgam-dya*). Thus, humans, ancestors and deities need to be present in any family functions. Every day after washing face, people offer water to their ancestors; this means the family performs daily rituals for ancestors and also for esoteric deities and other deities. Then they bow down to the *thakāli* of the family to seek blessings and the *thakāli* gives blessings to their younger ones as a part of daily morning rituals. While consuming meal too, first the food is offered to deities and then to ancestors. Involvement of the three groups is an important aspect of Newar family.

The marriage function too abide by this idea and upon gaining approval from ancestors, deities and human members only is the bride sent to be a daughter-in-law at groom's house.

Since the marriage ceremony contains a broader social meaning, it is considered an important ritual. Not abiding by this rule would bring chaos in society. Thus such meaningful rituals should not be considered as insignificant.



9.

Old-Age Ritual (*Jyā-Janko*, *Budhā-Budhi Pāsni*)

(a) Significance of old-age ritual

Humans achieving divinity in accordance to philosophy of Newar society has been previously stated. There are examples from tales of tantrics achieving perfection (*siddhi*) with penance (*sāadhanā*) – a Thakuri Malla king became Pachali Bhairav (*Pachali āju*), Kirat king Yalambar of Wongha became Aakash Bhairav (*āju-dya*), a female from Makhan Rajopadhyaya clan became Bijeshwari goddess. They attained perfection with penance; Newar culture ascribes divine status to those who live long up to certain ages. Such old-aged people undergoes *jyā-janko* (Nepali: *budhā-budhi-pāsni*) ritual and are respected by making a procession on a palanquin. Because of this, the old age ceremony is considered very significant and this idea is unique to Newar culture.

If all the life rituals are performed duly on a child and she/he is nurtured following the social customs, it is for sure that the child does not take on bad conduct. Abiding by such rituals help in making him/her responsible in life and attain success too. Such person in Newar society is regarded bearing divine qualities and at an age, she/he can attain divine position. The ritual of *jyā-janko* at an old-age carries such a philosophical meaning.

To undergo *jyā-janko* ritual is a significant thing in one's life; it is not ordinary to attain divinity with a physical, human body. This is why people always attend this ceremony to take blessings from the aged person on a divine chariot, regarding him/her as



having attained divinity. It is believed that the blessings of the aged person undergoing this ritual are always fulfilled.

The event of *jyā-janko* is not just once, but there are five occasions this can be done. The first *jyā-janko* is performed at the age of 77 years, 7 months and 7 days – this is called *bhim-rathārohan* in Sanskrit. The second one is around 83 years and 4 months when the person sees one thousand full moons in his lifetime – this is called *chandra-rath* . The third one is performed at an age of 88 years, 8 months and 8 days – this has been called variantly both *dev-rath* and *mahā-rath* . There are very few people who complete the third *jyā-janko* , while the fourth and the fifth ones are very rare. The fourth one is conducted at the age of 99 years, 9 months and 9 days, while the fifth one is performed at 108 years of age.³ The ritual-manuals term the fourth and fifth ones as *dibya-rath* and *mahādibya-rath* respectively. Thus, Newars have a unique culture of celebrating old age.

(b) Process of old-age ritual

In an elaborate form of old-age rituals, a fire ritual is conducted with worships of nine planets (*nava graha*), eight immortals (*aṣṭa-chiranjivi*) and other donations; while some may shorten it with a *kalash* worship.

For a shorter version with only *kalash* worship, like in other rituals above, a water-filled *kalash* , *dhaupati* and other deities are invoked and worshipped by placing beaten rice (*baji*) and rice grain (*ākhay*) on pieces of leaves with *sinha-mu* and *jwalā-nhyāka* at either side. Along with them are placed paddy (*dhān*), winnowing plate (*nānglo*), broom (*kucho*), chariot and birth document (*chinā*). Usually in this old age ritual, the responsibilities of *thakāli* and *naki* are performed by the children and daughter-in-law of the old-age person (or couple). The daughter-in-law performs the *lasakusa* by holding a key and stream of water; she also circles the aged person with yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*) and burns it in fire. The daughter-in-law in the capacity of *naki* mixes curd and rice grains in *pūjā* -plate and gives it to the aged person three

³ Ritual manuals available, as now, confirm this ritual to be conducted at 110 years, 10 months and 10 days.

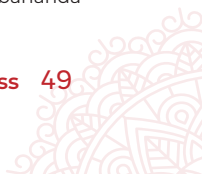


times to worship the deities and one time to worship the home. Then she gifts a new cloth and an earring (called *punnāchā*) and the aged person wears these new clothes. If the aged person is a female, she is given a gold *tikā* (*lu-chi* or *lu-sinha*) and if the aged person is a male, he is given a turban (called *phetā*) worn round the head. The aged person is then brought in front of the chariot and is asked to move seven steps on betel nut (*gway*), clove (*lwāng*) and coin placed on seven betel leaves (*pān*) as in *lasakusa* rite holding a key and along stream of water. The aged person worships the chariot/ palanquin and then sits on it. He/She is then worshipped with *yomari* (delicacy made of steamed rice powder with *chaku* in it) three times, balls of sesame seeds (*til*) three times and pieces of fruits three times and is shown a light; it is followed by everyone worshipping him/her with fried paddy (*tāy*) and red powder (*abhir*). The chariot is then circumambulated in the altar. Next, a copper vessel (*kwallā*) with a wooden plank is placed at the feet and everyone washes the aged person's feet, make monetary offerings and seek blessings. After this rite, the aged person gets off the chariot and makes donations as he/she wishes.

The son, who acts as *thakāli* for the ritual, make monetary offerings to the deities and others, distributes holy water, *tikā* and flower as *prasād* to everyone.

These are the basic steps for *jyā-janko*. The same steps are followed in the second and third *jyā-janko*; the only differences are in chariot and gods, so the worship mantras are changed for respective deities. For instance, the first *jyā-janko* has the chariot of Sun-god and thus Sun is worshipped, while the second one has chariot of Moon-god and thus Moon is worshipped. The moon-palanquin is not pulled by ropes but carried on shoulders. The third *jyā-janko* has a *deva-rath* with icon of Narayan. Some replace it with piece of gold in the form of their tutelary deity and the chariot is pulled from window. Some ritual manuals state the third *jyā-janko* as *mahā-rath*. The fourth *dibya-rath* and the fifth *maha-dibya-rath* rituals are very rare and its process cannot be ascertained at the lack of ritual manuals.⁴

⁴ The ritual manual for the fourth janko is now available and published by herambananda Rajopadhyaya. The fifth one, however, remains unpublished.





(c) Meaning of old-age ritual

The rites of *kalash* worship, performing *lasakusa* to the aged ones all are matters of courtesy to the deities. Next, the rites of putting *tikā* and earrings (*punnechā*) are observed followed by worshipping with *yomari*, sesame seed-balls and pieces of fruits. This is to show respect to the aged person in chariot, who has achieved divinity. A similar ritual of spreading *yomari*, *lwahachāmari* and pieces of fruits from the roof of temples are observed on its anniversary (*busāra*). Similarly, there is ritual of dropping coconut from the top of the chariot of Macchindranath at Lagankhel on the next day of the procession on *bhujyā* day. In Kathmandu too, *lwahachāmari* and pieces of fruits are spreaded while offering large pieces of clothes (*patā*) at the chariot procession of Janabahal's Seto Macchindranath. Also in the *pāhā-chahre* festival on the third day, when the chariots of Bhadrakāli, Tebahal and Wonga *ajimā* meet at Ason, people spread red, yellow and blue *chatāmari* (flat cake made of rice powder) from the roof of houses nearby. These are all symbolic of respect to the deities.

The idea of chariot procession is to inform everyone. Some even play musical instruments for the procession so that many people come to see and get informed. The procession at the city is a different thing – the first *gyā-janko* procession is conducted by pulling the chariot, the second by carrying on the shoulders and the third by pulling up from the window. Pulling the chariot from the window shows that the human residence too is like a divine residence or temple. Newar culture shows that even residential houses too have divinity in them.

Bowing down to the aged couple by washing their feet and making monetary offerings after the procession is to take blessings from the aged ones. It is considered beneficial to seek blessings from the aged person, who is now considered divine.

The *gyā-janko* ritual is of great significance. It is a perfect example of humans achieving divinity in accordance to the philosophy of Newar culture.

10. Items Required for Different Rituals

It is important to note what items are required for different rituals from the naming till old-age ceremony. Insufficient or lack of items at the rituals would not just bring difficulties but also make the rituals incomplete, unorganized and chaotic. Therefore, it is better to examine the required items a day prior to the ritual. I enlist here the list of materials required for different rituals.

Previously, rituals were performed in an elaborate manner but nowadays people lack time for long rituals. I, thus, list here only the necessary items required to meet the ritual purpose.⁵

(a) Items required for naming ritual

kalash (water-filled vessel), *kisali* (an earthen plate filled with rice, betel-nut/*gway* and coins), branch of jasmine flower/*dwāpha-swā*, *dhaupati* (curd-bowl), *sukundā* (lamp+Ganesh), *sinha-mu* (vermillion powder vessel), *jwalā-nhyāka* (traditional mirror), curd, vermillion powder (*sindūr*), *mānā*, baby's cloth, rice powder/*kanikā*, *chinā* (document with birth details) and its cover, betel leaf, honey, flower, fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), rice grain (*ākhay*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), new clothes for baby, yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), small earthen plate for burning fire, *kwatiwāsa*, *ghoti*, *chauthi*, *pūjā*-plate, water vessel, big-bowl, keys

⁵ Refer to your lineage priest (purohit) for any change in the list.



(b) Items required for weaning ritual

kalash (water-filled vessel), *kisali* (an earthen plate filled with rice, betel-nut/*gway* and coins), branch of jasmine flower/*dwāpha-swā*, *dhaupati* (curd-bowl), *sukundā* (lamp+Ganesh), *sinha-mu* (vermillion powder vessel), *jwalā-nhyāka* (traditional mirror), curd, vermillion powder (*sindūr*), *mānā*, baby's cloth, rice powder/*kanikā*, flower, fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), rice grain (*ākhay*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), small earthen plate for burning fire, new clothes for baby, *janko kokhā* (special garland for the ceremony), silver anklet, keys, banana, seed of betel-nut (*gway-mu*), seed of coconut (*naikyā-mu*), plate, handful of mud, brick piece, handful of paddy, ornament, *pūjā*-plate, water vessel, big-bowl

Items for *thāy-bhu*

big plate *thāy bhu*, holder with three legs (*trikhutī*), lentil, vegetables, beans, pumpkin (*farsī*), *sagun* items (egg, fish, meat, flat-bread of black gram/*bārā* and alcohol), meat ball, flat-cake of meat, five types of *roti* (*pancha-pakwānna*), earthen pots (alcohol, rice-beer and milk or curd), betel quid (*gwā*), packet of dried fruits (*masalā*), curd, special type of leaf (*jya-nā lapte*), cooked rice

(c) Items required for *chūdākarma* ritual

kalash, *kisali*, branch of jasmine flower, *dhaupati*, *sukundā*, *sinha-mu*, *jwalā-nhyāka*, curd, vermillion powder (*sindūr*), bronze plate and new clothes for paternal aunt *nini*, small bronze cup for Napit barber, sandal wood *tikā*, yellow thread (*kumha-kā*), gold razor (*lu khwa-chā*), silver razor (*wah khwa-chā*), *bhalinchā* (plate made of bamboo-strip), *kwa-chika* (rice powder and oil), handful of *dubo* grass, handful of paddy, raw meat piece, dried mustard, flower, fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), rice grain (*ākhay*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), small earthen plate for burning fire, new clothes for boy, key, *pūjā*-plate, water vessel, white sesame (*til*), a type of *roti* (*kalemari*)



(d) Items required for *bratabandha* ritual

kalash, *kisali*, branch of jasmine flower, *dhaupati*, *sukundā*, *sinhamu*, *jwalā-nhyāka*, curd, vermilion powder (*sindūr*), bronze plate and new clothes for paternal aunt *nini*, loincloth (*kaytā*), bow and arrow, cloth-bags for rice (*jāki*) and beaten rice (*baji*), betel leaf - 7, clove - 7, betel-nuts - 7, coin - 7, rice for giving alms, coconut, fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*ajamkā*), rice grain (*ākhay*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), small earthen plate for burning fire, new clothes for boy, key, *pūjā*-plate, water vessel

(e) Items required for *ihī* ritual

The practice of fire rituals (*hom*, *yajñā*) for *ihī* ceremony has been continued till date. Since it is hard to manage for *ihī* rituals, many have been practicing a group *ihī* ceremony as well. But if we focus on the meaning of *ihī*, it can also be done without the fire ritual and shortened with just *kalash* worship. Previously, the *chūdākarma* and *bratabandha* ceremony too were conducted in elaborate manner with fire rituals but are now shortened by performing *kalash* worship only. In the similar manner, *ihī* can be shortened. If one wishes to perform it in an elaborate manner, the family priest shall make a note of the items required thereof. It is not necessary to enlist them here. I present here only the required material list for a shorter way of performing *ihī* ceremony:

kalash, *kisali*, branch of jasmine flower, *dhaupati*, *sukundā*, *sinhamu*, *jwalā-nhyāka*, curd, vermilion powder (*sindūr*), bronze plate and new clothes for paternal aunt *nini*, small bronze cup for Napit barber, *bhalinchā* (plate made of bamboo-strip), *kwa-chika* (rice powder and oil), handful of *dubo* grass, handful of paddy, raw meat piece, dried mustard, vermilion powder box (*sinha-battā*), red piece of cloth, special saree (*ihī parsi*), yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), small earthen plate for burning fire, key, rice for *bāhrā chiugu*, stone slab, cylindrical stone piece, black gram (*mās*), bronze plate, stone apple (bel), raw gold, barley (*tacho*), sesame seed (*hāmo*), cow-milk, babiyo rope, flower, fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red





powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), rice grain (*ākhay*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), *pūjā*-plate, water vessel (*karuwā*), *ali-dya* (heap of earth), *ināy-dya* kalash

Items required for *duso* rituals

For *pīth-pūjā*: *pūjā*-plate, *samay-baji*, rice bread (*chatāmari*), egg-sagun items

For *bayar shrāddha*: worship items, *kisali* - 3, plum (*bayar*) - 50, *dubo* grass, rice grain (*ākhay*), barley (*tacho*), sesame seed (*hāmo*), cow milk, copper plate, *dhaupati*, *sinha-mu*, incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), rice grain (*ākhay*), *roti*, fruits, vermilion powder (*sindūr*), fried paddy (*tāy*), flower

For *duso* rituals: *kalash*, *kisali*, branch of jasmine flower, curd, vermilion powder (*sindūr*), *sinha-mu*, *jwalā-nhyāka*, *sukundā*, earthen plate with swastika sign (*salā-pā*), yellow thread (*kumhakā*) ball, special type of leaf (*jya-nā lapte*), *chāku* (made of jaggery and sugarcane juice), black turmeric (*haledo*), *manafwa*, dried fish, betel-nut (*gway*), keys, small earthen plate for burning fire, yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), (*bābiyo*) stick - 2, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), rice grain (*ākhay*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, stone slab, cylindrical stone piece, black gram (*mās*), *pūjā*-plate, water vessel

For *thāy bhu* rites: The same as in weaning ceremony.

(f) Items required for *bāhrā* ritual

kalash, *kisali*, branch of jasmine flower, *dhaupati*, *sukundā*, *sinha-mu*, *jwalā-nhyāka*, curd, vermilion powder (*sindūr*), vermilion powder box (*sinha battā*), red cloth, yellow thread, red thread, Sun icon, *arghya*, cow milk, jasmine flower with *dubo* grass, barley (*tacho*), sesame seed (*hāmo*), rice grain (*ākhay*), flower, fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, wooden vessel (*pāthi*),



yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), small earthen plate for burning fire, new clothes for girl, key, *pūjā*-plate - 2, water vessel, for *bāhrā chhui*: rice, fruits, betel quid (*pān*), money

(g) Items required for marriage ritual

From the groom's side for *supārī* rites: *pūjā*-plate, curd, new clothes, fruits, trays, *mari-kasi*, plate to hold 10 big-sized betel-nuts (*gway*), silver box of vermilion powder (*sinha battā*), vermilion powder, piece of red cloth, other items to be placed in trays as per one's wish

From the bride's side for *swoyambar* rites: *kalash*, *kisali*, branch of jasmine flower, *dhaupati*, *sukundā*, *sinha-mu*, *jwalā-nhyāka*, curd, vermilion powder (*sindūr*), 10 betel-nuts, silver box of vermilion powder (*sinha battā*), piece of red cloth, flower garland, *dubo* garland, flower, fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), *pūjā*-plate, water vessel, ring for groom

From the groom's side for *swoyambar* rites: red *tikā* mixed (curd, rice and red *tikā* powder), flower garland, fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), water jars for either side of main door - 2, curd - 2, ornaments for bride

From the groom's side for *pita-bigū* rites: a bowl-shaped utensil covered with red cloth for betel-nuts (*gway-bātā*), *putu-gway* (betel-nuts in a sewed red cloth) - as required, *pūjā*-plate (*kota*) with curd, pair of two big *kota* (*jo-kota*) - 2, red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), *dhaupati* - 2 (for both *jo-kota*), betel leaf pieces (*gwa kuchā*), betel-nut pieces (*gway kuchā*), spikenard (*na-swā*, *jatāmasi*), vermilion (*kumkum*), *roti* in a box - 12, *day pou* (jasmine flower with *dubo* grass - 12, rice grain *ākhay*, silver coins - 12, musk/*kasturi*), anklet (*tuti bakkī*), *du-phangā*

From the bride's side for *pita-bigū* rites: earthen plates - 8, trays, utensils to gift the bride, *sinha-mu*, *jwalā-nhyāka*, *thāy bhu* (similar to weaning ceremony, but beaten rice is kept instead of cooked rice), fried paddy (*tāy*, *lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), *pūjā*-plate, water vessel, big bowl





From the bride's side:

For welcoming the bride: *kalash* for either side of main door - 2, large lamps (*twā dewā*) - 2, *sukundā*, *pūjā*-plate (*kota*), curd, yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), small earthen plate for burning fire, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), fried paddy (*tāy, lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), *potāy* (yellow *tikā* mixed with rice powder), keys, water vessel (*karuwā*), mat

For *whonke* rites:

A bowl-shaped utensil for betel-nuts (*gway-bātā*), earthen plates - 12, tray, curd, *pūjā*-plate (*kota*), *thāy bhu* (similar to weaning ceremony, but beaten rice is kept instead of cooked rice), wooden vessel (*pāthi*), pieces of fruits, fried paddy (*tāy, lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), *sukundā*, meal for Sun (*surya-bwa*), meal for road junction (*kala-bwa*), water vessel, bowl to wash hands, leaf - 1

(h) Items required for old-age ritual

kalash, *kisali*, branch of jasmine flower, *dhaupati*, *sukundā*, *sinhamu*, *jwalā-nhyāka*, curd, vermilion powder (*sindūr*), chariot, rope, weaning plate (*nānglo*), broom stick (*kucho*), paddy for seat, *chinā* (birth document), flower garland, fried paddy (*tāy, lāwā*), red powder (*abhir*), incense (*dhūp*), light (*itā*), small thread (*jajamkā*), rice grain (*ākhay*), *roti*, fruits, pieces of fruits, wooden vessel (*pāthi*), new clothes, earring (*punnechā*), gold *tikā*, long strip of white cloth (*phetā* or *betāli*), *yomari* - 1 leaf bowl, ball of sesame seed - 1 leaf bowl, yellow and black mustard seeds (*ikā-pakā*), small earthen plate for burning fire, *pūjā*-plate, water vessel, key, betel leaf - 7, clove - 7, betel-nuts - 7, coin - 7, *kolla*, wooden plank, white cloth, other donations (as wish)

Requirements for chariot:

- ❖ *Bhim-rath*: with horse, suitable to be pulled
- ❖ *Chandra-rath*: with white duck, suitable to be carried on shoulder
- ❖ *Dev-rath*: with *Garud*, suitable to be pulled

For donations:

- ❖ *Bhim-rath*: eight immortals (*aṣṭa-chiranjivi*) and nine planets (*navagraha*)
- ❖ *Chandra-rath*: 16 sets of silver Chandra (moon) icon
- ❖ *Dev-rath*: seven saints (*saptarshi*)⁶

⁶ The donations for *Dev-rath* is *asta-rasu* (eight *vasu*-gods) according to ritual manuals.

Items Required for Different Rituals



Whole Rice Grain



Wooden Apple



Leaf Plates



Paper-rolled Incense



Betel Nut



Black Sesame



Junge Dhan



Camphor



**Earthen cup filled with rice,
Coin and betel nut**



Kush



Maay



Earthen Plates



Barley



Fried Paddy



Paddy



Introduction to Philosopher/Author Late Baldev Juju



Name	:	Late Baldev Juju
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