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Childhood and Newar Tradition: Chittadhar Hṛdaya's *Jhī Macā*

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THE TEXT AND ITS CONTEXT

A short book 32 pages in length, *Jhī Macā* ("Our Child") was published in 1947 by Chittadhar Hṛdaya, a native resident of Kathmandu, Nepal. Its title conveys the author's intention that this book guide Newar parents in their home teaching and serve as a first reader for their children. Because it is a literary genre not often examined by scholars of oriental literature and because it is a valuable sourcebook that reveals much about its sociocultural context, I have undertaken this translation of it.¹

The remarks of this section briefly sketch the historical background of Newar civilization and highlight certain important themes in the text. The interested reader desiring more in-depth coverage of these subjects should consult other sources (ISHII 1986, 1987; TOFFIN 1984; SLUSSER 1982; LEWIS 1984).

NEWAR CIVILIZATION

The Newars are a Tibeto-Burman language-speaking ethnic group of the Himalayan region whose culture hearth area has been the Kathmandu Valley for at least the last one thousand years. Based on very efficient systems of intensive rice cultivation and the profits local traders derived from their favorable entrepot position on trans-Himalayan trade routes, Newar civilization reached a high level of artistic achievement and cultural elaboration.

From its earliest history onward, Newar culture has been highly Indicized in many domains (GELLNER 1986). Protected from colonization by the lowland malarial zones and the Himalayan ranging imposing

barriers, the Newars created a civilization adapted largely from north Indian peoples and culture. Living traditions still preserve many historically important examples of ancient Indic art, architecture, texts, rituals, and festival celebration. Newar Buddhism is perhaps the most notable survival, as it endures today as a separate tradition adhered to by distinct Newar castes. Now in a minority, Buddhist Newars live alongside other Newars practicing Shaivite and Vaiṣṇavite forms of Hinduism. This religious admixture makes the pluralism and cultural complexity of Kathmandu, modern Nepal's capital, especially striking.

The Newar line of kings was deposed in 1769 by the Shah dynasty of Gorkha, warrior caste Pahārī Hindus. Many Hindu peoples from the Himalayan mid-hills subsequently migrated into the Valley and now constitute about one-half of the local population. These migrants moved to the Valley periphery to establish farms and to work at the new government enclaves close to the capital. This ruling line endures today, although from 1846 until 1950 a single family called "Rana" controlled all state affairs. Rana rule preserved Nepal's autonomy by sealing off the nation from outsiders; their despotic rule also left Nepal's rural hinterlands economically backward. From its inception, the modern state has been staunchly Hindu in character and dominated by high caste elites. Since 1951, Shah governments have sought to unify the many non-Indic peoples across the modern state by promoting Nepali as the national language.

Although their homeland was conquered, Newars were involved in the unification process that created the modern state of Nepal. Now surrounded by modern state establishments and burgeoning suburbs, the old towns—Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur—have remained distinctly Newar settlements. Divided into over a hundred castes and fissured further according to strong loyalties to their localities, this ethnic group is still united by a common language and a core culture.

Newar civilization coheres around common traditions that are found across the Kathmandu Valley, and even in the satellite towns Newars established across the mid-montane region of Nepal. Narrow lanes and courtyards of every size organize very tightly packed settlements. The flagstone and brick streets are interwoven with many Hindu and Buddhist shrines, the most notable style being the wooden multi-roof "pagoda" temple. Small shops in the major towns line the chief thoroughfares and bustle with trade. The brick houses, tile-roofed and trimmed with intricately carved woodwork, rise three or more stories. All elements create a traditional urban aesthetic unique in South Asia.

The children's stories from *Jhī Macā* give the reader an intimate

sense of what this culturally vibrant, densely settled society looks like from within. The author draws upon important personal relationships and activities that define the Newar urban experience, and I highlight several of these themes now.

THE ECOLOGY OF NEWAR URBAN LIFE

Jhī Macā is a poetic insider's appreciation of the Kathmandu market as an environment where men and animals live closely together. Swooping swallows, thieving crows, and the beloved pigeons all come dramatically into view, as do the mice and scavenger cats who prowl the rooftops. Two of the most lovely passages find the mother teaching the child to admire fluttering butterflies (Episode 8) and to attract flickering fireflies (Episode 10).

Anyone who has visited Kathmandu will recognize the author's imagery of children looking out the upper-storey windows at herds of cows and sheep and at festivals that crowd the streets. Through the child's eyes one can sense the natural theatricality of the Newar market. Many outside observers have long described these same streets and courtyards as public health nightmares, but *Jhī Macā* gives no hint of this. Instead, the episodes provide a sense of how the Newar ethos of non-violence shapes their urban environment: for this community, all insects and animals live unharmed by humans. The poet's portrait is an idealized one.

KINSHIP

Newar society is patrilineal in the north Indian style, with preference for patrilocal marriage and large extended-family households dominated by the eldest males. The bond between a mother and her son—who live under the same roof all their lives—is understandably the chief narrative presentation in *Jhī Macā*.

The text often testifies to the Newars' love for their children. This is touchingly conveyed in Episode 1, when the author writes of a father observing his baby breastfeeding: "Having seen the dance of the mother and child, father's face showed how pleased he was and revealed his heart's message."

Also interwoven in the text is a sense of the dual citizenship of Newar women, who move back and forth between their natal and husband's homes throughout their lives. Every mother's child likewise maintains enduring and loving bonds with the mother's brothers, the *pājus*; the latter also have ritual obligations to fulfill throughout the child's life. It will surprise no anthropologist who has worked in Newar society that one episode finds the mother teaching her child kinship

terms (Episode 2)! These ties dominate Newar social life (TOFFIN 1975) and so the text.

RELIGION

Jhī Macā is written from the perspective of the author's own Buddhist merchant caste, the Urāy of Kathmandu. The many references to sacred observances and morality underline the pervasive presence of religion in Newar life. Most episodes touch upon important foci in the popular tradition: Sūrdyaḥ, the sun god worshipped every day on the rooftop, merits attention (Episode 4), as does the Buddhist celestial *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, the most popular Newar deity (Episode 4); *Saunti*, the festival of lights devoted to Lakṣmī, goddess of fortune, is also highlighted (Episode 14), as is the *Gumlā bājan* (Episode 13), a musical procession of Urāy men. For the latter, drummers and other musicians go each day for a month to Svayambhū, the chief Buddhist shrine on a nearby hilltop, and fill the morning market with drumbeats on their return (LEWIS 1984: 349–368).

The text also illustrates the enculturation of core religious viewpoints from the Newar lay Buddhist's perspective. A recurring theme is the moral superiority of *ahiṃsā*, the abstention from killing any living being. Cats are thought evil for their killing mice (Episode 5), as are the sparrows for catching butterflies (Episode 8). That the child is taught the months largely in terms of their religious festivals (Episode 9) again underlines how religion is integral to the Newar organization of ongoing life. Religious ritual (*pūjā*) is likewise a recurring theme.

THE AUTHOR AND HIS MILIEU

Chittadhar Hṛdaya is recognized today as one of the great literary figures of modern Nepal and the pre-eminent Newar poet of this century. A childless widower at an early age, he devoted his life to writing and participating in the vigorous intellectual life that evolved in Kathmandu. During the last years of Rana rule, Chittadhar defied the Prime Minister's prohibition against Newari-language publication; while jailed for this in 1946–1947, he also wrote his great poetic masterpiece, *Sugat Saurabh*, the life of Śākyamuni Buddha written in Newari.² With the coming of press freedom after the fall of the Ranas, Chittadhar became a leading author. Besides his poetry, he also published several novels and was a significant scholar in his own right who wrote articles and books on a variety of historical subjects. His prolific literary career continued until his death in 1982.

Underlying all of Chittadhar's works is the social activist's commitment to reviving the Newar culture. Born 130 years after the Newar

kingdoms fell, the author saw dramatic indications of cultural decline over his lifetime: many temples were nearly in ruins and old customs were declining; with Nepali as the national language, Newars were abandoning their mother tongue; handicapped by disunity caused by their own factionalism, many were reduced to despair and cooptation. A local newspaper eulogized him thus:³

. . . [Chittadhar] consecrated all his life without frustration to the cause he was committed to. He even gave all his material possessions for the promotion of literature . . . and accepted the hardship a writer is supposed to face in a poor and undeveloped country. The life he lived should continue to be a source of inspiration to those who have taken to writing as a serious pursuit.

Jhī Macā leans against cultural decline in response: it is a book that illustrates how to teach core vocabulary, traditional concepts, and religious attitudes to Newar children. The book naturally focuses on language, ending appropriately with instructions on writing in the distinctly Newar script, *rañjanā*. Subsequent generations of Newar youth continue to read this book, too. Chittadhar later composed a sequel and both have been reprinted several times.

Chittadhar knew that childhood upbringing was the crucial time to inculcate an attachment to one's own culture and so wrote this book which was, he once told me, one of his favorites. Here, the *mahākavi*'s mastery⁴ shines. In these vignettes, the author eschewed using fancy Sanskrit vocabulary terms—"spicing" literature with Sanskrit is a sign of erudition in Kathmandu—because this little book was intended to be as fully "Newar" as possible. Note the use of wonderful onomatopoeics for fireflies (Episode 10) and burning wick lamps (Episode 14). The simplicity of the language makes *Jhī Macā* more than a mere manual. It rises to the level of art by its poetic celebration of the Newar lifestyle, enlivened by the author's love of his own culture and its children.

TRANSLATION*

1. *On the Lap*

Look! From the first time that we rested our child on mother's lap and whenever we held him, we said "son" as we hugged and kissed him. The child looked up at the mother's face and it laughed and gurgled, suckling one breast while playing with the other. Watching

* *Jhī Macā* ("Our Child") by Chittadhar Hṛdaya (Varanasi: Dharmodaya Sabha, 1947)

the dance of the mother and child, the father's face showed how pleased he was and revealed his heart's message.

2. *In the Room*

There was a baby in the mother's room and it has a small cushion to sleep on. The mother tried to wake him up, but he said, "Ūṃ," turned over, and did not get up. And so the mother gathered him in her arms and said "Get up, dear. Look over there and see that the sun has come up. You would like some *pāpā* ("sweet bread"), wouldn't you?"

Hearing "sweet bread," the child started to open his eyes. He abruptly stood up and looked all around. Eyeing the *pāpā* in the basket, the child said, "Give me!"

The mother brushed off the child's clothing, patted its shoulders, and said, "Go on, quickly go defecate, come upstairs and then I will give it to you."

Thinking of the sweet bread, the child looked in the basket and left the room. The mother took the basket and went upstairs.

3. *On the Fourth Floor*

The mother put the basket into a wall niche. The child crawled up the stairs, hurried before his mother, put out his hand, and said, "Māmā, please give me."

The mother showed him the water pot and said, "You still have sleep dust in your eyes. How can you ask for it if this is so? Go on over there, take the water pot, and wash your face. Then come here and I will give it to you."

The child ran over, washed his face, and then returned. The mother took the end of her shawl, wiped off his face, and said, "Āhā, how nice you have made your face! Your nose is not running, your eyes are clean: see how good you look! Look once in the mirror here at how nice and clean you are."

And so the child peered in the mirror and saw himself. The mother put some flattened rice and sweet bread on a plate and gave it to the child. He felt very happy and went to sit in the sun.

4. *On the Balcony*

From the balcony, the sun was still not visible. The child sat on the small woven rice-stalk mat and began eating the flattened rice. While eating, the boy felt chilly, but when the first sunrays of the day finally arrived, he made a *namaskār*⁵ to the sun and said:

Come on, come on Sunlight!
 Lock it! Lock it!
 At mirrors, windows bowing
 I beg the sun-giving deity for sun
 And bow to Jana Bāhā deity's⁶ two feet.⁷

Then the sun fully rose. Over on top of the wall, two pigeons came cooing " Ghū ghū " and landed. The child called to the pigeons:

Oh Elder Sister pigeon,
 Come and I'll feed you!
 Inside of each paddy is a grain!
 Come! I'll not trick you.

As the child sat and prattled, from every which way came the crows. Saying " kvā kvā," one snatched the *pāpā* and flew off. The child then cried out, " Yo Mā! Look! He took it!" and started to weep. The mother ran to the child and said, " Why my son?" The boy sobbed and said to her, " He took my sweetbread."

The mother drove off the crow sitting on the corner of the roof and said, " Once before a crow did just this and flew off with your sweetbread. Whenever a crow sees something, it will try to take it away. To keep them from seeing it, you must cover it with the basket. It is too late now, so go on into the kitchen."

The mother took the sobbing boy's hand and went into the kitchen.

5. *In the Kitchen*

In the kitchen, the mother blew on the fire while the child stood behind her. Then two mice came out of a hole and made a noise like " chvī, chvī." The child held onto the mother and said, " Mother, look! A mousie, a mousie! And they too have come out to steal the sweetbreads!"

The mother laughed and kissed him. " They will not snatch it like the crow did. But if we do not look out, they will steal it and eat it. We must keep it covered up in such a way that they cannot get it."

At that very moment, a meowing cat appeared at the kitchen door. The two mice scurried into their hole. Seeing this, the child felt afraid and cried " Yo Mā!" He went to his mother and buried his head in her lap.

Seeing the child's fright, the mother hugged the child. " No need to be afraid, son. Look! The cat will not do anything. It came to catch the little mice and it would like to eat them. Therefore they were afraid and scurried away."

The child very slowly looked at the cat and asked, " Is it true that

he eats mice that are alive? Do they get hurt?"

"What to do, son? Once one is captured, he will not free it. They do make lots of noise and so the mice run right away after seeing the cat."

The child asked again, "If the cat does not catch mice, what will it eat?"

"The things we leave out: milk, rice, meat, all edible things they steal and eat. Therefore, in the kitchen we must keep the doors and everything else closed. Go over there, sit on the mat, and I will dish out some rice for you right away."

The child ran over to the mat and sat. The mother dished out some rice and put it before him.

6. *At the Window*

One day in the afternoon, the boy was sitting at the window and looking down. His mother was standing behind him. In the street below, a herd of cows was coming. The child looked around, held onto the mother's shawl, and asked, "O Mother, where are all of these cows going?" Stroking the child's head, she answered, "Yes, they are coming to browse in a distant field. Hey, can you count them?"

The child counted, "One, two, three, four, five—Oh, are there five cows?"

The mother laughed and said, "Yes, my child, you know how to count."

Soon thereafter came a flock of sheep led by a Tibetan hollering "gyū, gyū" at them. The sheep jumped along and ran ahead, baaing. The child held on to the window bar and said, "Here they come! Oh how many sheep!" as he was jumping up and down excitedly.

Pointing at the sheep, the mother said, "Yes, Yes, many have come. And can you count them? How many sheep are there?"

The child counted, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten . . . oh ho, there are so many more. I cannot count them all! Where are they all coming from? Oh, so many sheep!"

The Mother said, "Yes, They are driving them to the *tinikhyal*.⁸ Oh son, if you cannot count, I will teach you and you count along with me: one, two, three one hundred."

7. *Saturday*

One day while sitting in a room, mother was grooming herself. The child came up from behind and crowded her while she was looking in the mirror. The mother nudged the child aside and said, "Go off now, it is late. Why are you getting in the way?"

The child moved off a little and asked his mother, "Where are you going now, mother?"

"Today is Saturday, isn't it? I am going to do *pūjā*. Stay with your father today."

Scratching his temples with both hands, the child continued to pester her and said "I will also come along."

The mother replied: "I cannot carry you. You are to walk now."

The child laughed and replied, "Yes I will walk."

After applying her makeup, the mother dressed the child. While putting his hands in his shirt, he asked, "What does 'Saturday' mean?"

"It is the name of one day."

"What is a day?"

"A day is from when the sun rises until it rises again. A day passes between these."

Again the child asked, "How many days are there in a week?"

"In a week there are seven days. They come in order. Listen and I will tell you. Remember these well: "Sunday, Monday, . . . Saturday."

The child laughed and said, "Yes, Yes."

8. *In the Garden*

They had a garden with flowers blossoming. One day, the mother went with her son there. While the mother was picking some, the child said, "Beautiful, beautiful roses," and went here and there saying this and playing.

As she picked one flower, the mother said, "Look child, the rose not only looks good, but a nice smell also comes from it." She gave one to the child. He smelled it, felt happy, and said:

Beautiful rose flower, beautiful,
 How very, very bright is your face.
 As you smell so nice
 You deserve to be called
 King of all flowers.

Hiding in the early morning,
 Having thorns all around as your guard,
 The dragon bee also comes to you
 On your inviting wind-borne scent.

In the meantime a very beautiful butterfly came and landed on the

fragrant flower. The child ran over in order to catch it. The butterfly flitted over to another flower. The child again went after it but could not catch it. Then he went running over to his mother and said, "Mother, give one butterfly to me."

While still picking flowers, the mother said, "Son, we should not catch butterflies. If we catch it, it will die. Just watch it as it goes from place to place. Look at how beautiful its wings are! While looking at it, how much it seems like a flower itself."

The child said, "Ūṃ," and held on to his mother's shawl. Then a sparrow came there and captured the butterfly. The butterfly struggled and its wings were torn off. The child took the wings and showed them to his mother: "Look mother! Here are its wings."

Mother: "Ghā, tisk, tisk. This evil sparrow has killed such a beautiful butterfly. Look, I say we should not capture them. Lets go now, it is done."

So the child and the mother went away.

9. *In the Courtyard*

There is a large courtyard. After arriving there, the child let go of his mother's hand and ran up along the side of the courtyard. Half of the courtyard was dark; seeing the other was light and turning around to look, he saw a rounded moon right above the distant mountaintops. Feeling happy, he just stood looking up at the sky. But when he did not see many stars, he felt sad. He held on to his mother's shawl and asked, "Oh mother, yesterday's stars which were so many—where have they gone today? Today there are not very many. The moon is not very round, either. How has that happened?"

"Today is not *punhī* [full moon]. Therefore the moon is not circular. Only during *punhī* will it be so. When the moon is bright, the stars will not easily be visible. But all of the stars are still there."

"What is meant by *punhī*?"

"*Punhī* is a special time. When the moon becomes round, one says this."

"When the moon is not full, then what do we say?"

The mother explained, "The fifteen days when the moon comes to be a full circle [the waxing fortnight] is called *tho*; the fifteen days when it wanes to be a mere line [the waning fortnight] is called *gāḥ*. At the former [i.e. *tho*] time, the days are called *pāru*, *duṭṭiyā*, *ṭṭīyā*, *cauthi*, *pañcamī*, *ṣaṣṭī*, *saptamī*, *aṣṭamī*, *navamī*, *daśamī*, *ekādaśī*, *dvādaśī*, *trayodaśī*, *caturdaśī*, *punhī*—these are the 15 *tithi* [lunar days]. During *gāḥ*, the names are the same before *caturdaśī*, [and then come] *caḥre* and *āmaiḥ* these are the fifteen designated days. Do you understand

this well, my son? ”

The child said, “ Yes, I know. I know this well.”

10. *The Fireflies*

One day the mother and the child reached the main door. Two, then three fireflies flitted around them. Pointing to them, the child asked the mother, “ Oh Mother, what are these things that twinkle just like the stars? ” Mother answered, “ These, son, are called *phuti-phuti-kerā*. Look at how beautiful they are. If you like them, call them over.”

The child jumped, clapped his hands, and then called them to him: “ Come here, fireflies! ”

The mother laughed and said, “ To have them come here you must call them in the right way. I will teach you how to call them:

Fireflies come here, right here!

If you want to eat milk and beaten rice,
Come quickly!

Blinking, come over to us!

Like a star shining in our bedroom
Just below the stars in the sky.

Though you cannot shine bright

Come where you are needed!
Just come once into our room!

11. *Eveningtime*

One day in the evening, the mother was making cloth wicks [for *pūjā* lamps]. The child was sitting with the mother and playing with the wicks she had placed in the basket. Sometimes he put one wick on the floor, sometimes he counted two, before putting them down into the basket. Then the mother said to him, “ Here—how many wicks are there now? ”

The child answered, “ In the basket . . . three; on the floor, two; here in your hand, one.”

Mother asked, “ In the basket, three, on the floor, two, and in your hand, one. In all how many? ”

The child counted on his fingers and said, “ Six, isn’t it . . . six? ”

The mother then showed the child two more wicks in her hand and asked, “ And if you add these two . . . ”

Child: “ Eight.”

Mother: “ And if there are another three? ”

Child: "Eleven."

Mother: "And if there are four more again?"

Child: "Fifteen."

The mother put down the cotton ball in the basket, held the child's hand, and asked, "How many fingers on your hand?"

Child: "Five."

Mother: "On the other hand?"

Child: "Five, too."

Mother: "How many fingers do you have on both hands?"

Child: "Ten."

The mother said, "Well done, son" and hugged him.

12. *At the Mother's Brother's House*

In the evening of another day, the child held onto his mother's hand and came inside the room. After the mother had finished changing her clothes, the child drew near and asked, "Mother, what does it mean when others say the word *pāju*?"

The mother sat next to him and replied, "He is my younger brother. Just as here your father's elder brother is called *ābā* and your father's younger brother is called *kakā*. [Here] all the mother's younger and elder brothers are called *pāju*.

The child said, "Ah . . . my paternal aunts [*nini*] are there, but are there no [such] aunts now at my *pāju*'s house?"

Mother: "But have you not seen *tadhīmām* or *cidhīmām*? Your father's sisters are called *nini*, but here my elder sister is called *tadhīmām* and my younger sister is called *cidhīmām*. So there [at the *pāju*'s] you will not find any *ninis*.

The child replied, "There are *ājā* and *aji* [grandfather and grandmother] there and here also. How is that?"

Mother: "The father's father is *ājā* and the mother's father is also *ājā*. And so both father's and mother's mother is called *aji*. Therefore, grandfathers and grandmothers are in both places. Did you know this?"

The child laughed, went to his own bed, and went to sleep.

13. *In the Morning*

One day in the morning, the child heard the sound of the *bājan*, stood up unsteadily, and looked out. Looking from the window, he heard from a distance the sound of drums, a clarinet, and a trumpet. He then went inside to his mother and asked, "Today where has the *bājan* gone?"

The mother replied, "Yes, from today and throughout [the month

of] Guṃlā, it will go to Svayambhū to do a *pūjā* and come back.⁹

Child: "What is Guṃlā?"

Mother: "Guṃlā is a month and thirty days make up this month."

Child: "What are the months, mother?"

Mother: "In one year, there are twelve months. Just as the *bājan* is played for Guṃlā, so the *mwāli* [horn] is played for Bacalā month and so then is the *digu pūjā* done.¹⁰ It is very hot in Tachalā. The rice is planted in Dillā. The *bājan* is played in Guṃlā. Indrajatra¹¹ is held and lamp worship¹² is done in Yamlā. During Kaulā, there is the Mohanī festival. *Mhaḥ Pūjā*¹³ is held in Kachalā¹⁴ and *yomarhi*¹⁵ is baked in Thinlā. Full moon frost comes in Pohelā. The Māhra festival is during Sillā. Holi¹⁶ is held in Chilā. Going to Lhuti for bathing¹⁷ is in Caulā. That is twelve, is it not?"

The child: "I don't know . . . was it twelve? This is the first time I've heard all this."

Mother: "Listen . . . [says the twelve again in order]. That is twelve, isn't it?"

The child: "Yes, Yes."

14. *Saunti*

During this festival, lamps were lit in all places. Seeing them, the child with some pastry in his hand felt very happy. His mother called for him many times but he never heard her. With his neighborhood friends he was singing loudly:

Come, come Lakṣmī, come to our place!
Do not go there, to another place.

Jhili-mili, jhili-mili go the burning lamps
Come right here to our dwelling's special room;
Mother will feed you a good feast indeed.

If you eat the tasty baked pastries,
We will give you *sagam* after making a *maṇḍala*;
New clothing we will also wear.

My father will give you money if you want
I'll ask him for a coin to give you too
If not all of my treasure,
I will give my yo-yo and my marbles too.

15. *Mother and Child*

One day, the child sat in his mother's room with a book. His

mother asked him, “ Do you know our [Newari] script yet? ”

Having shown his book to her, the child said, “ Why, I do not know it. Are not all these our letters? ”¹⁸

The mother made him understand: “ This indeed is not our writing. This is in fact *devanāgarī* script. Do you see the large letters in your other book? ”

Child: “ Yes, yes. There are many round vowels in them, are there not? ”

Mother: “ Indeed, that is our writing. So far, you have learned the vowels and consonants. Would you like me to teach you some others? ”

Child: “ Yes, why not. ”

Mother: “ For the K, if you place a flag on it, will it become a KE? ”

Child: “ If you place one line above it, it will become a KE. ”

Mother: “ In our writing, if you do this it does not make a KE. ”
Only if you make a “ turban ” in this fashion will it become a KE. ”

Child: “ And KAI, mother? ”

Mother: “ If one makes a line like this, then it will make a KAI. And so if one makes a wavy line above and a line straight down on the right, one gets KO. A slanting line above that straight line gives a KAU. And so what is the way to write KaKāKiKi? ”

(The text ends with the completion of the script lesson)

NOTES

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Newari words and Indic terms are rendered phonetically as they appear in the text according to Sanskrit rules (MONIER-WILLIAMS 1899). There is as yet no comprehensive Newari-English dictionary and no consensus among scholars on orthographic protocols.

In the translation, I have retained the author’s paragraph divisions.

2. For this reason, the first edition of *Jhī Macā* was published in Varanasi (Benares).

3. *Motherland* 6/15/1982

4. *Mahākavi* means “ Great Poet ” in Sanskrit; this title was bestowed upon him by literary society in Kathmandu in his later years. The author’s lifelong pen name was simply “ Hṛdaya,” meaning literally “ The Heart,” or perhaps more poeti-

cally, "The One with Heart."

5. A gesture of respect with the palms joined at shoulder height. For honoring deities and individuals of higher status, *namaskāra* (also called *namaste*) is common across the Indian subcontinent. This is the very first gesture a Newar child is taught.

6. The Buddhist celestial *bodhisattva*, Avalokiteśvara, who is also called "Ka-ruṇāmaya" ("Compassionate-hearted One"). The chief shrine for this deity in Kathmandu city is in a courtyard called Jana Bāhā, hence the appellation. See LOCKE 1980.

7. The exact meaning of this very old children's verse is somewhat unclear today among modern speakers.

8. The *timikhyal* is a common grazing area outside all traditional Newar towns.

9. Groups gather to play drums and sing devotional songs for an entire month before important temples during this season. For elaborate notes and documentation on these festivals in Kathmandu, see LEWIS 1984, Chapter 7. Another source is ANDERSON (1971).

10. Each family worships its own clan deity, called *digu dyaḥ*, at this time.

11. A five-day festival in the monsoon. Traditionally, the Newar king was thought to entertain Indra, the Vedic king of the gods, who would visit Nepal for many sorts of entertainment.

12. A month-long fall festival when families suspend a lamp from a long bamboo pole for worshipping a deity thought to reside on a Himalayan peak to the northeast of the Kathmandu Valley.

13. Called "Dasāin" in Nepali and "Daśara" in northern India, this festival is dedicated to the goddess Dūrgā.

14. *Mhaḥ pūjā* ("body ritual") is the high point in the Newar celebration of Saunti. Also called "Tihār" in Nepali and "Dīpāvali" in northern India, devotees celebrate this festival by lighting lamps dedicated to Lakṣmī, goddess of wealth. (This is also the subject of the next episode.) For *mhaḥ pūjā*, families gather to make offerings to all the deities that can insure each individual's health and well-being for the upcoming year.

15. A full month festival when special sweets are eaten to gird the body for winter.

16. The well-known festival of northern India for which everyone plays pranks in honor of the Hindu deity Kṛṣṇa.

17. A temple to the *aṣṭamātṛkā* ("Eight Mother [Goddesses]"), located on the Viṣṇumatī river outside the northwest gates of the old city.

18. Here the author accentuates Newar linguistic identity within the Tibeto-Burman family, especially in possessing its own unique scripts, one of which is *raiṅjanā*. This is in contrast with the Paharis who speak a language derived from Sanskrit and use a classical Indic script, *devanāgarī*, for writing.

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