

Cultural Significance of Jyapu Marriage Traditions

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Abstract

Among the various traditions performed in the Jyapu community, marriage tradition is a fundamental one. Specifically, in the life of a Jyapu woman, three distinct types of marriages are performed - Ihi, Bahra, and Ihipa. These marriages constitute various rituals, customs, and practices. However, there has been minimal academic research on the significance of these traditions, especially with an analysis towards its cultural implications. In this study, this gap has been substantially bridged by conducting a literature review-supported, interview-based ethnographic study. By conducting 62 field-based interviews and analyzing the responses, this study examines the rituals, customs, and practices of Jyapu marriages in depth and analyzes their cultural significance. For instance, it was identified that the Ihi and the barha traditions allow a girl to understand the transitions in her body and her role in society. Similarly, the Ihipa or the actual marriage is the most significant tradition in a Jyapu community where not only two people are established in a union, but also their families are integrated. Furthermore, an interesting finding is the significance of gwe (betel nut) in Jyapu marriage, where it symbolically represents the transfer of responsibilities and the communication of decisions. Hence, through its presentation and analysis of the various rituals, customs, and practices of Jyapu marriage, this study contributes to the documentation, interpretation, and preservation of an important ritualistic aspect of Jyapu cultural heritage.

Keywords: Jyapu community, marriage traditions, *ih*, *Bahra*, *ihipa*

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Introduction

Jyapus are one of the indigenous groups of people residing in Kathmandu valley, who are mostly known for their occupation in agriculture (Bista, 1972; Shrestha, 2010; Slusser, 1982). Jyapus are the working people whose name 'Jyapu' was itself formed from the unison of the Newari words 'jya' meaning 'work' and 'fu' meaning 'able to do' (Awale, 2022; Dangol, 2025). Traditionally, they are the ones who cultivate crops, look after cattle like cows and bulls, and help other Newar communities in festivities, child birth, and death (Bista, 1972; Shrestha, 2010; Slusser, 1982). The Jyapus of Kathmandu district are spread across 32 traditional neighborhood units called *twaaha*: in Newari language ("Jyapu" Panch, 2000; Pant & Funo, 2002).

Like with the Newars as a whole, religious traditions have been significant cultural aspects of the Jyapu community as well. Since Jyapu community comprises of both Buddhist and Hindu people, observing the traditions of both the religions is common (Dangol, 2025; Gellner, 1992). A person has to go through numerous traditions throughout their life. Once they are born, they have to go through the rituals of cleansing, naming, weaning, coming-of-age, and marrying. Even after death, they are not spared from the web of traditions; the mourners of the dead have to perform several rituals to advance their souls to afterlife (Pandey, 1949; Srivastava & Barmola, 2013).

Among the numerous traditions people have to follow during their life, marriage is one. Marriage is an institutional association between two people where they decide to live together, ensuring the formation and continuity of family life (Aryal, 2007). Marriage traditions have served as a tool to strengthen a society (Crouse, 2012) and a gateway to give birth to children (Pandey, 1949). From a cultural perspective, marriage presents a symbolic license to parenthood, by which people contribute to the continuity of human civilization in general and their own genetic line in particular (Fineman, 2001). Marriage has been a significant aspect of livelihood throughout different historical societies and civilizations including the Nepalese society (Khatun & Islam, 2023). According to Aryal (2007), marriage is a vital aspect of Nepalese family life as a significant cultural and social sanction of sexual acts. Marriage and its associated traditions play an indispensable role in the social life of Jyapu people of the Nepalese society as well.

Marriage in the Jyapu community comprises different traditions throughout the duration of the marriage ceremony. Many researchers from Nepal and abroad have studied the marriage traditions of Nepal in general. Pandey (1949) discussed different Hindu traditions including the marriage rituals. Regmi (1960) wrote about the cultural significance of *Ihi*. Nepali (1988) detailed the marriage traditions of Newar people. Bajracharya (1989) highlighted some of the marriage traditions of the Jyapu community. Lévi (1992) discussed *Ihi* as the primary marriage of Newar people, highlighting its significance. He wrote about

different Newar marriage traditions in the context of Bhaktapur district. The author underlined the prohibition of Jyapu people to marry within the same *twaha*. “Jyapu” Panch (2000) briefly wrote about *Ihi* and *barha* traditions while describing the activities performed during and after marriage. Vaidhya (2001) detailed Newar traditions while writing about *Ihi*, *Bahra*, and *Ihipa* as well. Anderson (2005) briefly wrote about *Ihi* traditions while discussing the festivals of Nepal. Maharjan (2007) discussed *Ihi* and *Bahra* as significant traditions of the Newar society. Toffin (2008) also highlighted the same. Gellner (2008) described some of the Newar marriage traditions. Recently a few articles have been published on Newar society and traditions of the society. Some have also mentioned about marriage traditions of the Jyapu community. However, it is observed that there is a significant research gap in understanding why the different traditions are actually performed. Hence, using a literature review-supported and interview-based ethnographic approach, this study examines Jyapu marriage traditions and analyzes their cultural significance.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To study and document the marriage traditions prevalent in the Jyapu community through ethnographic studies.
- To analyze the cultural significance of rituals performed in marriage traditions of *Ihi*, *barha* and *Ihipa*.
- To examine pre-marriage, marriage, and post-marriage practices followed in the community.

Research Methodology

In this study, a narrative literature review was used to identify existing work on the research topic. An ethnographic study methodology was also used to gather primary data through self participation and interviews.

A 5-step narrative review was conducted based on the process given by (Ferrari, 2015), which includes activities such as literature search, defining the search terms, establishing the selection criteria, performing a critical assessment of the literature, and crafting the text.

As much literature in the research topic is available in physical form rather than digital, physical literature sources such as books and articles from institutions such as the Central Library of Tribhuvan University, CNAS, the Indian Library, and Kaiser Library were collected. Search terms such as “Jyapu”, “marriage”, “wedding”, “Newar”, “tradition,” and “culture” were used to search for relevant literature. Those literature that included

information on Jyapu marriage and weddings were selected for full review, whereas those that did not were discarded. During the assessment of the selected literature, detailed notes on each which included information on the marriage and wedding traditions and why they are performed were kept.

To validate the findings of the literature review and add information to the pool of data, an ethnographic exploration was conducted, where the Jyapu marriage traditions were studied to gather information from the field itself (De Fina, 2019) (Wilson & Chaddha, 2010). The *twaaaha:s* of Kathmandu district span across 16 wards of the Kathmandu metropolitan city. The researcher participated, as a guest and an observer, in eighteen Jyapu marriage ceremonies held across the 16 wards. The study employed a qualitative, semi-structured interview-based research to validate the findings of our literature review (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Adams (2015) provides a 4-step guideline on how to conduct a semi-structured interview. The guideline includes steps such as selecting and recruiting the interview participants, drafting the interview guide and the questions to be asked, establishing the way of conducting the interview and conducting it, and finally, analyzing the information gathered from the interviews.

Based on purposive sampling method (Campbell et al., 2020), sixty-two people were interviewed which included married Jyapu individuals and experts who had the required knowledge (*Refer to Table 1 and Appendix A for the demographic details*). Then, the interview questions were drafted based on the findings from the literature review. The interview questions pertained to the traditions and customs followed during a wedding and their reasoning behind why those traditions and customs were performed. The interviews were performed in an informal, casual manner in Newari and Nepali language. The interviews were conducted on the participants' voluntary will while ensuring anonymity and confidentiality to them.

Demographic profile of interview participants (N = 62)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	33	53
	Female	29	47
Age Group	30–40	8	12.9
	41–50	23	37.1
	51–60	19	30.6
	61–70	7	11.3
	71+	5	8.1
Religion	Hindu	47	75.8
	Buddhist	15	24.2

Findings and Discussions

There are three phases of marriages of a *Jyapu* marriage, namely, *Ihi*, *barha*, and *Ihipa*. A girl has to go through these three types of marriage throughout her life whereas a boy is married only once traditionally. The cultural significance of these phases of marriage are detailed in sections below.

Ihi

Ihi tradition is distinct to the Newar community, including the *Jyapu* community. It is the first phase of marriage that a girl has to go through which represents a spiritual marriage with the god Vishnu or Shiva. As a representation of the god, she is married with a fruit called 'bel' (Toffin, 2008). This phase of the marriage is conducted during the childhood of the girl. This marriage is said to be done to prevent the girl from widowhood if her mortal husband dies since it is regarded that a god is immortal (Gellner & Pradhan, 2008). Furthermore, Dumont states that *Ihi* also makes her eligible to marry someone from the so-called "lower class" as she has already married a "higher" being, the god. Similarly, *Ihi* also allows women to divorce later in life and not have that considered negatively in her life (Dumont, 1966).

The *Ihi* ceremony is also regarded as the ceremony that introduces a girl to the society, which gives her an identity as part of the society. Until the *Ihi* ceremony is performed, a girl is considered a child. For instance, she does not have to mourn if someone dies. Furthermore, there is also a custom of worshipping girls and performing *kumari puja* before they undergo the *Ihi* ceremony as virgins. After *Ihi*, a girl is considered to have "matured," thus increasing her recognition in the society. Additionally, she has to start following all the societal rules after undergoing the *Ihi* ceremony. In fact, this ceremony occurs alongside the girl's physical and mental transformation.

Ihi is often conducted in a group, thus allowing the girls to understand the idea of living together with each other by keeping girls of the community together and performing marriage rituals in coalition. During this ceremony, the girl is given *ihī parsi* (a black, yellow and red saree with a red stripe) symbolizing the "changing of attire of childhood." It is intended as she realizes that she no longer is a child and feels as a grown up. The *Ihi* ritual builds up the foundation for other phases of marriage - the *barha* and the *Ihipa*.

Ihi prepares the girl to make her mentally and physically strong since she is supposed to fast before the tradition begins. The fasting is performed as in the future, the girl might have to go through situations where she has to remain hungry for a long period of time. It is regarded that *Ihi* has "trained" her to overcome the difficulty of being hungry. Thus, *Ihi* becomes a symbolic aptitude test by keeping her hungry to make her able to cope with such difficult times in the future.

In the Jyapu community in particular, there is a custom of giving alms in the name of the girl undergoing *Ihi*. These alms are given in the hope that there would not be any obstacle in the girl's life in the future. Another custom that is practiced only in the Jyapu community is to make the girl perform *ka wayekegu* (thread making) on the first day of the ceremony. This is done so that the girl can be self-sufficient in making garments in the future if required.

The second phase of marriage is the *barha Tayegu* or *barha Chwanegu* ceremony. This signifies the marriage of the girl with the Sun god. The word *barha* is a Nepali term for the number 12. However, the ceremony itself is called *gufa rakhne* (*gufa* meaning cave) in Nepali language. There is a connection between these two words as a girl is practically kept in a cave for 11 days and taken out of the "cave" on the 12th day of the ceremony. In modern times, the "cave" is just used as a metaphor; instead she is kept in a dark enclosed space away from everyone else. Since the girl is deprived of seeing the sun for 11 days, and allowed to see the sun on the 12th and marries the Sun god, the word "*surya darshan*" (meeting the Sun) has come into use as well.

Barha

Barha ceremony is performed after the girl's *Ihi* and usually before her first menstruation. Usually, the girl is considered suitable for *barha* during her adolescent years. This ceremony is performed at her adolescence since her hormones start to change at this time and knowing about menstruation and sexual changes is vital for a girl. Menstruation can create a kind of fear, annoyance, and awkwardness in the girls (Roberts et al., 2002). During the eleven days the girl is kept in the *barha* room, she is taught about her reproductive organs and given sexual education so that she can be prepared for the future. However, in the past, sexual education was not given to girls in schools in Nepal. Hence, this could have been the reason for the inception of the *barha* ceremony altogether.

On the other hand, being kept inside a dark room for 11 days allows the girl to become independent. This further allows the girl to mature and make her feel as an "adult". While staying indoors, she is allowed to play, sing, and dance with other girls. Thus, she gets to understand maturity and the consequences it brings while having fun.

In the Newar community, it was previously customary to get married as soon as these rituals were completed. At that time, the ritual was performed at the husband's house after the onset of menstruation. After the ritual, the girl's mother would come to her family to feed her with *chusyamusya* (peanuts), but over time, this custom disappeared and the age of marriage also became later.

Ihipa

Ihipa refers to the traditional marriage between an woman and a real living man (Pandey, 1949). Various traditions are conducted before, during, and after the marriage

ceremony. Especially in the Jyapu community, there are numerous marriage traditions. These traditions exist due to various underlying meanings. The traditions and the significance they hold are described below.

Traditions Before Marriage

In a traditional marriage, talks of marriage are instigated by a '*lami*' (Rajbanshi, 2008). In the Jyapu community, the *lami* is usually a woman who brings a list of potential partners to the family of the groom and the bride. A tradition called *mha swayegu* (literal phrase for "looking at the body" in the Newari language, referring to a ritual of mutual appraisal between two individuals) is performed so that the boy and the girl can meet their potential partner. After meeting and acceptance from both families, *kwa chhiyegu* is performed, which means "to settle matter" in the Newari language. This signifies the confirmation between the two families for the marriage to happen. During this, dates for different marriage programs including the wedding day, are corroborated.

In traditional Jyapu marriages, there used to be a custom of getting financial assistance from the groom's family in case there is shortage of financial means to carry out the wedding feast and other programs at the bride's house. This is called *lakha kayegu* (to take a loan, in the Newari language) by the bride's family. This type of arrangement exists only in the Jyapu community. This tradition helped the families which were not financially well-off to get their daughters married.

Another tradition called *gwe lakha kayegu* exists among the Newars, including the Jyapus, involving getting varieties of goods from the family of the groom. The most important component of this gift is twelve betel nuts or *gwe* in the Newari language, which are given to the bride's father by the groom. The bride's father takes ten and returns two to the groom, which signifies the transferring of responsibility of the bride to the groom. This also symbolizes the reinforcement of finalization of marriage (Rajbanshi, 2008). If the bride's side returns remaining ten betel nuts to the groom's family, it is understood that the marriage has been broken off on their part, while if the groom's side takes the betel nut back, it is understood that the marriage has been broken off on their part. Betel nuts play a crucial role in the Jyapu marriage tradition because it is through betel nuts that the relationship is concretized. Likewise, if the bride does not want or cannot stay in her husband's house after marriage, she places a betel nut, the same her family got before marriage, under her husband's pillow, signifying an automatic separation in traditional terms. This custom is only practiced among the Jyapus of the Newar community. This reflects the freedom of Jyapu women in separating with her husband at her own will.

About a month before the wedding day, a tradition called *laika chiigu* is held by the families of both the groom and the bride. This represents a kind of meeting or consultation

that allows the families to decide on matters of programs, things to purchase, menu for the wedding feast, and so on.

Conventionally, a few days before the wedding day, the families of the bride and the groom discuss among the respective members of their families regarding who should be invited to the wedding feast and make a list of the guests known as *pahan dhala*. Upon deciding the guest list, their families go to the guests' houses and invite them themselves. The guests are also given gifts or *lakha* (*lakhamari*, a traditional Newari sweet along with other gifts) while being presented with the invitation. The guest who comes to the feast must also bring a return gift as "dowry" equivalent to the *lakha* they received.

In the Jyapu community, like in other Newar communities, it is customary to host a wedding feast for the bride's relatives and other friends. A day before the feast is organized, the bride's family perform *nanimukhi shraddha* which symbolizes the invitation to the souls of their ancestors in the hopes of a successful marriage ceremony, completed without any problems. The same is done by the groom's family as well. In a traditional Jyapu marriage, the wedding feast, *payanbiya bhwe*, is organized outside the house or in an open area nearby. The guests feast while sitting on a long and wide straw mat called *sukul*. The guests present the bride with wedding gifts while getting ten betel nuts in return. Again, the significance of betel nuts in a Jyapu marriage is highlighted.

Traditions on the Day of the Wedding

Traditionally, on the day of marriage, the groom does not go to bring the bride home. This is one of the distinctions of Jyapu marriage tradition compared to other Newar marriage traditions. It is customary for the mother-in-law to go to the bride's house to gift her *shagun* (an auspicious token), religious items, fruits, pairs of clothes, jewelry, and other gifts for the bride. This tradition is known as *nika: khya wanegu*. The mother-in-law, along with aunts, uncles, and *lami*, go to the bride for this purpose. This gifting tradition to the daughter-in-law by the mother-in-law, being the matriarch of the groom's house (*thakalini*), signifies that the bride is considered as the goddess of the house. It is observed that a bride has an immediate relation with her mother-in-law since she is the one who teaches her the lessons of household life. After *nika: khya wanegu*, the mother-in-law returns to her home and comes to fetch the daughter-in-law away to her new home later on. Therefore, the mother-in-law coming to take the daughter-in-law away to her new home signifies a special recognition of the bride by the groom's family. This tradition is unique to the Jyapu community. The power of the mother-in-law, a female member of a family in a patriarchal society of Nepal, depicts a solid stance of the Jyapu woman in the community.

On the day of marriage, relatives of the groom, priest, neighbors, friends, a group of traditional Jyapu instrumentalists, and other guests assemble at a pre-decided location. This custom is known as *janti munkegu* in the Newari language, which means the assembling

of the groom's guests. Unlike other Newar communities, in the Jyapu community, it is customary to feed every guest before leaving to bring the bride home. This illustrates the hospitable nature of the Jyapu community.

After *nika: khya wanegu* and *janti mungegu* traditions, *janti prasthan* is held, which is a traditional procession of the groom and the guests from groom's side to the bride's home. In Jyapu marriages, it is not compulsory for the groom to join the *janti*. However it is customary for the groom's mother or the matriarch of the family to join the *janti* to fetch the bride from the bride's home.. If the groom is going to join the *janti*, the matriarch puts a religious red mark called *tika* on the groom's forehead, garland, and presents him with *shagun* comprising of eggs, alcohol, lentil pancake known as *bara*, fish, meat and blesses him by sprinkling *lawa* (popped paddy) on him. After that, the groom leaves the house through the gate, where two water jars topped with curd are placed on either side. These traditions are performed to bring good luck.

Before the procession of the groom is at an approachable distance from the bride's house, the members of the bride's family and relatives keep waiting for the *janti*. Traditionally, it is done so that the bride's family can confirm the *janti*'s arrival. This was done due to the fear of the bride's family that the groom's *janti* will renege on their commitment to the marriage and not come for the wedding.

When the groom reaches the bride's house, he is welcomed with a grand reception. The father-in-law of the groom holds the groom's hand to bring him inside while the mother-in-law worships him by putting on a *tika* and garland on him. Other family members of the bride welcome the groom by showering *lawa* and flowers. After this, the groom, the groom's family and other members of the *janti* are given *paan masala* which comprises paan (a betel leaf mouth freshener treat) and dry fruits. At this time, alcoholic beverages and snacks such as beaten rice, meat dish, ginger, soya beans, eggs, *bara* are served to signify a lavish welcome to the guests.

If the *janti* comes at night to fetch the bride, few people from the *janti* usually stay overnight and are served with snacks and food. This tradition is known as *chaa sii nakegu*. It is also customary for the bride's family to serve Himalayan black salt and other digestive powder along with food. This custom, which is practiced only in the Jyapu community, signifies the importance of digesting food in their culture. In other Newar communities, such as the Shrestha community, the bride's family is expected to provide whatever is requested by the groom's party. However, this custom does not exist in the Jyapu community, which suggests that the burden of preparing numerous food dishes is not placed on the women of the bride's family. This is a notable feature of the Jyapu community.

In modern times, the groom often goes to fetch the bride himself. So, the *swayambar* (derived from the ancient tradition of a bride choosing her groom) tradition is held where the bride and groom put garland over each other's necks. As the priest chants mantras, wedding rings are exchanged and the groom applies *sindoor* (vermilion) on the bride's forehead. This tradition puts a seal of confirmation on their marriage. The five deities - Ganesh, Surya, Shiva, Vishnu, and Bhagwati are worshiped during this tradition. This signifies the presence of the gods during swayambar and hence their approval. After swayambar, the bride bows to the groom. As in the *barha* ceremony, where the girl is married to the Sun god, bowing to the groom similarly reflects her marriage to the god himself. All the relatives sprinkle *lawa* over the newlywed couple as a symbol of blessing and celebration.

In the Jyapu community, there are two types of swayambar - traditional *swayambar* as described earlier and *swayambar* marriage where the marriage is performed in a temple with the deity as a witness. After the swayambar, there is a farewell betel nut offering program which is called *gwe sayekegu* in Newari language. After *swayambar*, the bride is brought to the program venue to offer betel nuts to her family as an act of bidding farewell. She sits with the *lami* who instigated the marriage. To bid farewell to the family, the bride gives a betel nut to the deities, parents, siblings, and other relatives and asks for their approval to leave. The family and relatives give her useful gifts in return so that her new family life can run smoothly. This farewell signifies the bride's goodbye to her family home, culture, and tradition and her adoption of a new home and its own culture and tradition. At the end, amidst the chanting of the priest, the bride's father places the betel nut in the daughter's hand and the mother pours water and gives it to the *lami*. The *lami* gives the same betel nut to the groom upon reaching his house. The meaning behind this is the transferring of responsibility of the bride from parents to the *lami* and then again to groom.

After the bride bids farewell to her family, *sabjwa nakegu* ceremony is held. It means serving the newlywed couple *chaurasi byanjan* meaning eighty-four dishes in Nepali language, symbolizing that they are symbolically served every dish available on the earth. At this time, they do not really eat but only pretend to eat. Another plate of food offerings are sent to be thrown at the crossroad near the bride's house. This tradition is held to please the goddess *Chhwasa Ajimaa* who is said to be present at the crossroad. Another unique act during this tradition is that the bride's mother is given fruits, nuts, and fish as a form of repaying the debt of her milk (breastfed milk when the bride was a baby).

After the *sabjwa nakegu* is over, the bride's *anmaunu* or *pita biyegu* is held, which is sending away the bride from her home to her groom's home. The mother-in-law of the bride holds the bride's hands for her to stand up in order to leave. This custom is only observed in the Jyapu community, which again signifies the respect given to the women of the Jyapu community. Once the bride comes outside, her maternal uncle, brother, or father carries her on his back to the car (traditionally, a palanquin was used which is called *du* in the Newari

language) that has arrived to take her away. The bride is placed inside after going around the vehicle three times as number three signifies balance or completeness in Hinduism. After that, the patriarch from the groom's family covers the vehicle with a red piece of decorative cloth known as *dufanga*. The meaning behind this is to cover the vehicle in which the bride is seated, so that the honor of her new family is protected. In the Jyapu community, the bride's aunt from either maternal or paternal side is often sent as a companion to the bride. The companion is known as (*samelu* and she helps the newlywed bride to accommodate at her new home. This is done so that the bride does not feel shy in the new environment. This tradition depicts the consideration of feelings of the bride and women as a whole in the Jyapu community. As the vehicle reaches a temple of Lord Ganesh, priests and patriarchs from both the families have a discussion with Ganesh as the "witness". The bride's family symbolically transfers responsibility for their daughter to the groom's family and asks them to care for and protect her. Following this, the two sides exchange torch-like sticks known as *tin pwa*. This tradition, called *mi pwa hilegu*, is another unique feature of Jyapu marriage. During the procession of *janti* back to the groom's house, the patriarch from the groom's side often wears *bhulaya ga* (a type of shawl) which used to symbolize wealth in the past. This shows the bride's family that they are wealthy and their household situation is optimal for the bride.

Upon the bride's arrival at her new home, the newlywed couple are welcomed, which is called the *lasakus* tradition. To welcome the new bride, papers with names of gods, Pancha Buddha (if the Jyapus are Buddhists) or papers with names of deities, Mahadev, Parvati, Ganesh, Kumar, Brahma, and Vishnu are pasted on the main door of the house. This indicates the presence of gods at the wedding. As soon as the bride reaches the groom's house, the groom's sister takes the bride's hand and takes her out of the vehicle and makes her stand on the left side of the groom who has already gotten out. The matriarch of the groom's family sprinkles dust of beaten rice over the bride from head to toe, washes the bride's feet with red wine, considering her the symbol of Goddess Laxmi. After this, the bride is touched from head to toe with mustard seeds and *chaku* (a Newari confectionery) and the seeds are sprinkled in all directions. This signifies the removal of negative elements and energy that might have come along with the bride on the way. The couple are given tika and then sprinkled with *lawa* and flowers to welcome them inside. The matriarch, usually the mother of the groom, brings the new bride inside while holding one end of a key and making the bride hold the other end. In this way, the act of giving the key and taking her inside is the *lasakus* tradition. Making the bride hold the key symbolizes that she is being entrusted with the key to the house, which is given only to family members, and thus signifies that she is now part of the family as *grihalakshmi*.

After the newlywed bride is welcomed to the house, she is introduced to her new family. This tradition is called *gwe sayekegu*. The bride receives money and other gifts from

the family members and relatives while she gives them *gwe* (betel nut) in return. While introducing her mother-in-law, the betel nut brought from the bride's family is given to the mother-in-law. It is observed that a betel nut is given when the bride leaves her home and again a betel nut is given when the bride is introduced at her new home. This further highlights the importance of betel nut in Jyapu marriages.

In the other Newar communities as well as the Jyapu community, an important tradition after *gwe sayekegu* is *hwonkegu*, the literal meaning of which in the Newari language is "to unite". *Hwonkegu* symbolizes the making of a flower garland by adding one flower at a time. Thus, the tradition signifies the bride's integration into her new family, where she becomes a new addition, just like each flower added to the garland. The newlywed couple worships the gods and the house. Then both of their heads are joined together and sprinkled with *lawā*, fruits, and flowers three times. This signifies the unification of the couple as one.

In the Jyapu community, like in other Newar communities, a wedding feast is served to the newlyweds. This is also called *sabjwa nakegu* but from the groom's side. Small quantities from all the dishes are offered to the ancestors, symbolizing a feast to the forefathers. Here, the bride must eat a portion of what the groom has already eaten. This signifies that everything will be shared among the newlywed. A plate of feast is again offered to the goddess *Chwaasa Ajimaa* at a crossroad near the house. This is done to take the blessing of the goddess for the arrival of a new family member. After this, the *lami* gives betel nuts that were given to her earlier by the bride's father to the bride's mother-in-law. This means that the *lami* has been released from the responsibility of the bride and the mother-in-law has taken over the responsibility. At this time, it is customary in some families to give two eggs, two pieces of *bara*, and fish as *shagun*. It is given in pairs suggesting the pairing of the bride and the groom. After the *shagun* ceremony, the matriarch picks up the bride and the patriarch takes the son to the room.

A room is given to the newlywed to live together onward. The newlyweds touch *kisli* (a small clay bowl filled with uncooked rice, one betel nut, and one coin) to their heads and keep it by the window of their new room or their pillow. This is done as an offering to Lord Ganesh for his blessing for a good child to be born by the newlyweds (Rajbanshi, 2008).

In the Jyapu community, the main wedding feast is celebrated at a time and place convenient to them after the wedding ceremony. The feast is celebrated just like the *payanbiya bhwe* before marriage at the bride's house. At this time, the bride gives betel nuts to the close relatives. If someone does not accept the nut, it is understood that they have not accepted the marriage and they do not want any relationship with the bride.

Traditions After Marriage

In the Newar community, even after the main marriage ceremony is completed, the entire wedding is not over. It is believed that marriage is not just a union between the bride and groom, but a union between two families, two households. In accordance with this, there are traditions to be followed within a year of marriage, with cultural exchanges continuing between the two families. Some of these traditions are completed within a short period of time after the wedding, while others continue throughout the year.

In the Jyapu community, it is observed that the *khwa swayegu* tradition is done before the *wanjala wanegu*. This is opposite to what the rest of Newar communities do. “*Khwa swayegu*” has the literal meaning of “looking at the face” in the Newari language. The bride’s family visits her to see her face and inquire about her well-being, bringing fruits, sweets, dry fruits, perfumed cotton flowers, and other gifts. Cotton flowers are traditionally used since they add decoration to the gifts and lasts longer than a real flower would. A pair of clothes and a pair of shoes are also given to the bride. As a welcome gift, everyone is given dry fruits and paan by the groom’s family. Then, everyone who has come for *khwa swayegu* gives jewelry or money after they “look” at the bride’s face. The tradition of *khwa sawegu* symbolizes the wish fulfillment of the bride’s family to see their daughter after she has been to her new home. It depicts their curiosity of the well-being of their daughter in the new environment. On this day, the people who come to see the bride are given a feast. In other Newar communities, it is customary to take the daughter back to their family for a reunion, but in the Jyapu community, they do not take the daughter back on the day of *khwa swayegu* but only after the tradition of *wanjala wanegu*.

On the next day of *khwa swayegu*, the newlyweds go for *wanjala*, which means visiting a temple together as a couple for the deity’s blessing. Mostly, the Jyapu community has a custom of going to the Bijeshwari temple for this. The patriarch and matriarch of the family, along with the parents of the groom, *samelu*, the groom’s sisters accompany the newlyweds. They bring *puja* (an act of worship) items, vermilion, red cloth, *shagun*, and food items. The groom applies sindoor on the bride’s forehead, as done during *swayambar*, this time with the goddess as their witness. This tradition is called *sincha chhayekegu* in the Newari language. Reapplication of sindoor signifies that the relationship between husband and wife is now further solidified with the goddess’ blessing. The newlyweds are given *shagun* with *bara*, eggs, fish, meat, and alcohol. The rest of the family also have *shagun* and return to home after having a feast.

The *kotha bicha* tradition may be held before *wanjala* or after it. If *kotha bicha* tradition had already been done before *wanjala*, the bride returns to her own home after *wanjala*, and if not, she goes back to the groom’s house. The bride goes back only after *wanjala* or after the *kotha bicha* tradition held on the day of the wedding feast hosted by the

groom's family. This is also distinct to Jyapu marriages. For the tradition, family members and relatives of the bride visit her at her new home, with gifts to check upon her. Hence, the significance behind *khwa swayegu* and *kotha bicha* tradition is the same. At this time, it is customary to bring a pair of clothes, a box of sweets, and other *shagun* to the bride. The guests are sent off by the groom after a feast.

Another marriage tradition after the main wedding ceremony is *jilajan duchaekegu*, which means "bringing in the son-in-law" in Newari language. In the Newar community, just as the newlyweds are welcomed into the husband's house with traditions such as *hwonkegu* and *gwe sayekegu*, it is customary for the Newars to introduce the new son-in-law to the relatives of the bride. In the Jyapu community, bringing in the son-in-law is done at the bride's house. The day the son-in-law is due to meet, he himself goes to the family of the bride with a friend and lami. The bride, on the other hand, has already returned to her family after *wanjala*. On the day of the *jilajan duchaekegu* tradition, the bride's family and relatives, one by one, get introduced to the groom while getting a betel nut. The betel nuts are also offered to the gods for their blessings. Relatives give the groom cash gifts in return. At this time, the patriarch and matriarch, mother-in-law are given betel nuts wrapped in a special red cloth made of satin or velvet while the others are given only plain betel nuts. The use of special red cloth signifies that their relationship is sacred. The newlyweds, the family, and the guests are given *shagun* with eggs, fish, meat, curd, and alcohol. In contrast to marriage in other Newar ethnic communities, the guests are not sent off after a feast but a portion of the feast is sent to their homes on the same day or the next day. If the feast is accepted, they must also invite the son-in-law to their homes but if they do not accept it, they do not need to invite the son-in-law. This signifies whether those relatives accept the new son-in-law or not. It is customary to send off three kilos of beaten rice, one kilo of minced meat, twelve pieces of *maas baara* (black lentil pancake), one liter of alcohol, one liter of jaggery, etc. to the son-in-law while sending him off. These are gifts for the groom in the hopes that their daughter is kept nicely by her husband. If the food items are not gifted that day or sent on a later date, it symbolizes that their daughter will only be able to visit her family at later dates. The daughter goes back to her husband's house on this day without the *samelu* now. It is understood that she does not need the assistance of *samelu* at her new house - she can manage things on her own. While returning, the son-in-law and daughter are given a pair of clothes each, and the daughter is sent away in a different pair of clothes.

In the Jyapu community, after a few days of the *jilajan duchaekegu*, the bride's family brings their daughter back home. This tradition is called *liladhu wonegu*. On this day, the family members send *samelu* to fetch their daughter. The new bride should go to her family only with the permission of the matriarch of her husband's house. On this day, relatives and friends of the groom's family are called to send the daughter-in-law for the tradition. There is an original custom to the Jyapu community, according to which, the

matriarch, the patriarch, the mother-in-law, the father-in-law, uncles, brother-in-laws and other close relatives give clothes and jewelry to the daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law goes to her family wearing the same. The relatives involved in the marriage are invited to the groom's house in the morning and the bride cooks nice food for them. They are sent Newari sweets - *aithamari* or *joprasad* when they return to their respective homes. This is a way of thanking those who helped to complete the marriage ceremony. When the daughter-in-law goes back to her family, there is a happy reunion. According to the custom, the daughter stays with the family for three to four days and returns to her husband's home. This tradition is significant to the bride and her family so that they can see each other and talk about joys and sorrows experienced at her new home.

In the Jyapu community, as in other Newar communities, since marriage is not just a union of the bride and the groom, but the union of both families, the tradition of meeting of the in-law's is very significant. This tradition is called *samdhi swakegu* in the Newari language, which is held on an auspicious event like *Satyanarayan Puja*, *Guheshwari Puja*, or any other auspicious day. Both the in-laws bring gifts such as sweets and fruits for the other party. This tradition signifies that the newlywed's new life becomes auspicious onward with the blessing from both the families.

Realizing the fact that any newly married woman may face difficulties adjusting to a new environment, the Jyapu community makes special arrangements to help the newlywed bride adapt. Accordingly, the tradition of feeding the newlywed daughter by her family is also one. To inspect the conditions of the daughter, her mother goes to her house carrying a tray of sweets, fruits, along with the customary requirement of peas. Hence, the tradition is called *kachhe nakegu* (feeding peas) in the Newari language. The peas are taken since they are highly nutritious and low-calorie legume beneficial for a new bride.

In the Jyapu community, another tradition is to check whether the married daughter has settled in her new home is *maka: kunke chhowegu* where *maka:* means a traditional fire container, used as a heater, in the Newari language. When the winter arrives, within the year of marriage, it is customary for the bride's mother to bring gifts such as a pair of *maka:*, warm blankets, thick clothes, along with food items.

Likewise, there is reunion of the bride and her family during the traditional mothers' and the fathers' day festivals known as *maa bicha*, and *baau bicha*. In the Newar community, it is customary for newlywed daughters to bring *puja* items, sweets, fruits, dry fruits, and clothes to see her parents. Additionally, in the Jyapu community, the daughter should also bring cooked vegetables such as cabbage, greens, and peas. Distinct to the Jyapu community, *yomari* should also be brought. Relatives of the daughter's family are invited on this day to check out what the daughter has brought and this is called *nhu ku sawegu* in the Newari

language. This tradition also helps the bride's family to get an understanding of the daughter's well-being in the new environment.

As in the mothers' and the father's day, there is a Newar tradition of the newlywed bride sending *puja* items, fruits, sweets and such for *mha puja* and *bhai tika* traditions which occur during *Tihar* festival in Nepal. The items in the collection are called *ku* in the Newari language. If *mha puja* falls on a day before actual marriage but after it has already been confirmed, the groom-to-be has to send *ku* for his bride-to-be. But if the marriage has already been held, the family of the bride has a tradition of sending the *ku* to both the newly married daughter and the son-in-law. If the day of *mha puja* falls when the bride is staying with her family, the groom should send *ku* to the bride's family. This tradition signifies the mutual responsibility and care that both families extend toward one another.

Similarly, in the Jyapu community, during the first year of marriage, it is mandatory for the newly married bride to visit her brothers at her parent's house for *bhai tika*. During the years following that, such a visit is not mandatory but *bhai tika* can be celebrated at either the bride's new home or her parent's home. When visiting the family on the day of *bhai tika*, the married sister must bring items for *puja*, *shagun*, fruits and sweets, and feast. Her husband's sisters also come along to the bride's house to perform *bhai tika* on their own brother. The reason for which they go to the in-law's house is to help their sister-in-law in *bhai tika* celebrations.

Another Newar tradition where the roles of the newlywed bride come into play is the *degu puja* where it is customary to worship the family lineage deity once a year. On this day, the newly married daughter-in-law is welcomed to the *degu puja* of the new family. It is observed in the Jyapu community that only daughter-in-laws originating from the Jyapu community itself are welcomed. The significance behind this tradition is to introduce the new bride to the family god. Without this introduction, it is believed that she is not fully a part of their family and their community. The items required for *puja* are sent by the family of the bride. They also send a goat to be sacrificed to the deity and other food items for the feast after *puja*. For the welcome, just like in the marriage ceremony, the matriarch of the family brings in the bride to the deity by holding one end of the house key and other end held by the bride. It is customary for the bride to use *puja* items sent by her maternal home to her new family for the worshiping of the deity. Others also worship the deity using their own *puja* items. After *puja*, the whole family has a feast at the temple. The worshiping and the feast continue on the next day as well. For the third day, the bride's family again sends food items for a feast. It is customary to let the new bride cook rice for dinner that day. Having eaten rice cooked by the bride signifies the family's acceptance for the bride. If someone doesn't eat the rice, it is understood that the bride is rejected in the kitchen. The *puja* and feast continues till the fifth day and finally, the *degu puja* is over. The day after it is over, a portion of meat of the goat sacrificed during the *degu puja* is sent to the bride's family along

with other food items. This exchange suggests the presence of a good relationship between the two families. This tradition is also unique to the Jyapu community. In this way, the post-marriage traditions are also completed.

Conclusion

From this study, it is observed that Jyapu marriage traditions are not being practiced in their community as mere customary rituals, but these traditions have deep cultural significance for their commencement. These traditions help guide individuals through transitions through their life. The *Ihi* tradition helps girls acknowledge their growth. The *barha* tradition, on the other hand, allows the girls to understand about physical transitions of the body, helping them to cope with menstruation and to comprehend their roles in the society in future.

Likewise, the *Ihipa* or the main marriage traditions have their own significance for their occurrences in the Jyapu community. The symbolic use of betel nuts in these marriage traditions depict instances like transfer of responsibilities, introduction to families and friends, and enforcement of relationships. The acceptance of betel nuts given by the newlyweds to the family and relatives symbolizes their acceptance into the family. Likewise eating rice and food cooked by the new daughter-in-law approves of her in the kitchen. There are also symbolic activities like songs and dances to portray roles of a woman as a wife.

The study depicts significant participation of women in the Jyapu marriage traditions. The role of matriarch in sending off the groom, bringing the bride home and welcoming her into their house highlights the significance of women in the Jyapu community. Likewise, the newlywed daughters are given much care and support for her to adapt to the new environment of her new family and new home. The family, especially the mother of the bride, participate in numerous traditions to ensure their daughter's well-being.

It is observed from the study that marriage happens not only between the bride and the groom but it happens between two families. The continuous acts of gift exchanges and feasts among the two families suggest the mutual respect, responsibility, and care for the other in the Jyapu community.

Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of Jyapu marriage traditions as it examines the meanings attached to different rituals, customs, and material elements, while also highlighting the roles of the newlyweds and their respective families. Therefore, the study may serve as a useful reference for future researchers and other interested individuals seeking to explore the cultural meanings embedded in Jyapu marriage practices.

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Appendix A

Distribution of interview participants by twaaha: (N = 62)

<i>Twaaha:</i>	n	%
Ansa	2	3.2
Iu tu nani	1	1.6
Kilaghah	4	6.5
Konaytvaa	2	3.2
Kohiti	2	3.2
Kwavahaa	1	1.6
Khicha Pukhu	4	6.5
Tokan Vahaa	1	1.6
Tyauda	2	3.2
Tyangaa	2	3.2
Thanvahi	2	3.2
Nyata	7	11.3
Pachon	1	1.6
Bhalnani	2	3.2
Bhotahiti	1	1.6
Makhan	4	6.5
Mahaboudha	2	3.2
Maaghah	3	4.8
Yatkhaa	5	8.1
Yangaaa	1	1.6
Vaka Chen	2	3.2
Vrahmutwaah	2	3.2
Om Vahaa	2	3.2
Others	7	11.3
Total	62	100

Note: "Others" includes respondents belonging to expert group.