

SIVA'S WILD AND WAYWARD CALF
THE GODDESS VATSALĀ - HER TEMPLE
AND YĀTRĀ

Axel Michaels

PROLOGUE*

Large, black letters on the faded, light-grey T-shirt of the small, frail woodseller at the government-owned concession for (cremation) firewood in Deopatan proclaim: 'Saint Tropez Vacations'. And beneath this message sketched in red: the image of a happy surfer on his board.

The man smiles. In his flimsy hut made of rotting boards a fire, fueled by scraps of damp bark, sputters and smoulders. Dust and ashes trickle down from above out of the rafters where the billowing smoke collects. Outside, thousands of pilgrims who have journeyed from near and far move on past and worship Paśupatinātha. It is Sivarātri, the year 2038 Vikram Samvat, 1982 of the Christian era. The woodseller coughs, and then begins to laugh. He whispers: "You should come back in the month of *Caitra*, on the 11th. That's when you oughta come. Then the place is really jumping". Wrinkling his forehead, he pokes

Preliminary note: In principle, Nepālī has been transliterated following the system of Turner. The only deviation from his practice is that the inherent *a* is also written if not excluded by a *virāma*. In connection with proper names borrowed from Sanskrit, only occasionally is any consideration given to locally customary peculiarities of pronunciation and orthography (example: Bāgmatī instead of Vāgmatī).

around excitedly in the glowing fire. He talks about the Vatsalādevīyātra; and listening to him you understand that that's when you can see who Deopatan really belongs to, and not today -- Śivarātri -- when all the strangers come and bring along their festive holiday mood.

Deopatan -- that is Paśupatinātha, the protective deity of Nepal. Since the ancient Licchavi era, numerous rulers have again and again declared themselves to be favored by Paśupati's sacred feet,¹ and even today, His Majesty the King concludes official speeches with the formulaic phrase: "May Paśupati protect us". Descriptions of the temple area concentrate on what remains forever inaccessible to the *mlecchas*, the non-Hindus.² And non-Hindu outsiders, always trying to find some vantage point that might provide a better view of people and events, easily forget that they can observe the scene only from the margin of what is happening, namely from the other bank of the Bagmati.³ The poorly-known history of Deopatan mainly tells a tale of various different royal houses repeatedly laying their claim to Paśupati, either in the form of donations or by means of extensive renovations and the like.⁴ The royal seat of government of the Licchavi kings is also supposed to have been located in Deopatan, but exactly where is not known, and even this is disputed.⁵

1. Slusser, 228; Petech, 15.

2. Majapura/Majapura, 146 ff.; Wiesner, 208 ff.

3. Wiesner, 211: "This area is inaccessible to the visitor; he can, however, look down into the temple courtyard from the opposite bank of the Bagmati".

4. Wiesner, 209; Slusser, 226 ff.

5. Slusser, 112 ff.

It is in the shadow of this light radiating forth from Paśupatinātha then that -- unnoticed by the many -- that Vatsalādevīyātrā⁶ takes place of which the woodseller spoke. Reason enough to give credence to his words and follow his advice was the sly and cunning undertone in his laughter, the cheeky expression on his face, his impious TMo. cover, and impudent T-shirt. Since this yātrā is indeed of interest to the scholar, we feel justified here in reporting what we have witnessed and discovered.

VATSALĀ'S TEMPLE

On the 11th day of the dark half of the month of *Caitra* (late March/early April), the woodseller is already waiting at the railing of the bridge over the Bāgmatī south of the Vatsalā Temple. And because he is standing there, waiting, we'll give him a name -- let's say 'Raju'.⁷ "He-heh", he says by way of greeting,

6. None of the authors of the descriptions of Nepalese festivals known to me, namely Anderson, Goodman, Jośi, Deep, Shrestha/Singh, Vajracarya and Véziés, make mention of the Vatsalāyātrā. Majapurīa/Majapurīa also contains no reference to this festival.
7. The woodseller, although he exists, is not a real person. Rather, he represents that aspect of field observation which is generally shortchanged in scholarly publications, namely the pleasant and fascinating dimension. Later on, at the analyst's desk, he can indeed be removed by the cleaver of thought, but not in the midst of events. Here he becomes a part of the methodology -- in his capacity during the flow of action to direct momentary observational attention toward specific events -- as well as a part of the form. Both empirical-descriptive ethnology as well as historical research have, for a long time, given precious little thought to the question of forms (including aesthetic form). The woodseller is intended as an attempt to change and redress that situation a bit. But, as mentioned, what he says is garnered and fashioned from many bits and pieces one hears while on the edge of events, and is not always verbatim or his own.

and what he means is: 'so, there you are!' He asks for a cigarette, but stays silent, as if he were waiting to be spoken to first. It's still light out, even if the sun no longer is a source of warmth.

The Vatsalādevī Temple, also known as Vatsaleśvarī or Vatsalā Temple for short, is located to the south of Paśupati-nathā⁸ on the west side of the two bridges over the Bagmati.⁹ It is a temple on a square-shaped groundplan constructed in so-called 'pagoda style'.¹⁰ Though it has a height of approx. 9-10 meters, it gives the impression of being small and forlorn, because of the fact that it is situated in a depression surrounded by the rising slopes of the Kailāśa and the Śleṣamāntaka Grove. Most people and not only the non-local visitors who come to Deopatan for the daily worship of Paśupatinātha -- take little or no notice of the temple, especially since the customary path to the west and main gate of Paśupati does not lead past the temple. A few isolated street vendors can be seen ensconced around the temple, and now and then one spies a beggar dozing on its steps. In front of the temple, stray dogs and monkeys romp and frolic over the five small stone-hewn *Nandis*, set up in a row and each flanked by two lions and a pillar stump, the latter probably dating from the Licchavi period on the basis of the dwarf figures carved into their base.

On the south side, suspended in a stone frame, there hangs a bell, donated in V.S. 1986 (*Āśvina*, 10) by the older wife of the *suvedāra* Mīna Bahādura Ṭaṇḍan, as well as his oldest son and

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8. I designate the deity and/or his temple as Paśupatinātha; Paśupati is used for the temple precincts inaccessible to non-Hindus; Deopatan designates the larger area around Paśupati, approx. in the boundaries of its extension as a current administrative sub-district.
 9. Plates in Tucci, 63 ff.; localization: Slusser, Vol. 2, map 5.
 10. On the questionable nature of this expression, see Slusser, 129; Korn, 66.

the latter's wife, for the greater glory of Vatsalā.¹¹ But now at best only children play with it, or on rare occasion a pilgrim. Its tone when struck is bright and resonant, and there is a weak echo sounding back from the opposite bank of the Bagmati.

The two brass roofs of the temple give off only a dull shine in the shadowless light. The chains of small bells (*kiñkinīmālā*) produce a soft tinkling sound when brushed by the cool wind, and the *kalāśa* jugs swing suspended from the corners of the lower roof. In its structure and iconography, as well as in many details, the temple reflects the classic Newar temple style.¹² The *sanctum*, located in the center, rests on a square-shaped base of heavy stones, surrounded by walls made of baked bricks which have been painted with red earth. The temple is open on all four sides -- and this indeed is its special feature in Deopatan -- i.e., it has neither doors nor doorwings or door grilles.

"Vatsalā used to demand human sacrifices once", says Raju as he takes a slow and satisfied puff on his cigarette, "but the locals got more and more dissatisfied with this, so that the Bhūmi Ācāryū, who was a great Tantric of the left hand, soon forbade her to do this. He was able to, because he had supernatural powers. But Vatsalā didn't listen to him. So then he fought against her. When it looked like she was going to lose, she said she was ready to accept giving up and going without human sacrifices. But she said: 'I wish to have a temple here, between the *ghāṭs*, at the cremation sites (Āryaghāṭ and Bhas-

11. The complete inscription reads: *suvedāra Mīna Bahādura Tandan lāhurī chetrikā jethī patnī Līladevī ra thinkā jetho choro sājanī Thākura Prasāda Tandan lāhurī chetrīle patnī sahita bhāi 1986 āśvina 10 gate 7 mā Vatsalēśvarī prītikā lāgi ghantā cadāeko ho.*

12. On typology: Korn, 69, Temple Type C.

meśvaraghāt). And I want it to be without doors or windows, so that I can refresh myself on the fragrance of the burning corpses'." "That's the way it was", Raju adds, rolling his eyes just a bit as he says this. And indeed, the smoke from the cremation fires¹³ now wafts up from Aryaghat and Basmeśvaraghat temple.

The Nepālamāhātmya¹⁴ sounds far more peaceable and pacific in this connection; according to it, Vatsalā is that which her name originally implies, namely an innocent small calf:

*mama vātsalvato yasmāt sthātum icchasi pārvati
tasmāt te vatsalā nāma bhaviṣyati varānane. (I. 39)*

*mamāgneyyāṃ sadā tiṣṭha mamājñāto maheśvari
vāgmatvāḥ payasi snātvā drṣtvā tvāṃ vatsalam śive. (I. 40)*

drakṣyanti māṃ narā ye vai te syuḥ kailāśagāmināḥ (I. 41 ab)

"Since you, Pārvatī, whose face is (so) beautiful, wish on the basis of (your) devotion to remain, your name will be Vatsalā (the devoted one, the tender one, lit. small calf). Maheśvari, remain on the basis of my command for always to my southeast. Those people who, having bathed in the waters of the Vāgmatī (and) seen you, Śiva, as Vatsalā, will behold me, they shall in truth be such as shall go on up onto Kailāśa".

Both legends, as contradictory as they may appear when juxtaposed, may only reflect the familiar coincidentia oppositorum in the mythology of Śiva and Pārvatī. To find Pārvatī in her peaceful and quiet form side by side with her terrifying form -- say in the guise of Durgā or one of her manifestations -- would not in itself be anything unusual, if it were not for

13. On the significance of cremation fires as fragrance (*dhūpa*): Slusser, 329.

14. Ed. Uebach. The variant readings there reveal no serious peculiarities.

the temple, which on closer inspection reveals a clear and unmistakable character: for the four tympana (*torana*) mounted at an angle above the spaces for the doors bear the carved image of the Durgā-Mahiṣāsūramardīnī motif, which is repeated laterally on the wood of the portal. In supreme triumph, the many-armed Durgā drives her spear through the already vanquished buffalo-demon lying prostrate on the ground under her feet; a demon who has terrorized the world, for which transgression Durgā in turn demands the sacrifice of buffalo or other animal sacrifices. Manifestations of Durgā, namely the eight mother deities (*aṣṭamātrīka*), have also been carved into the eight struts supporting the roof, surrounded by the customary allegorical figures and couples in sexually explicit positions.¹⁵ Eight frescoes have been painted on the external walls, which -- aside from two animal figures on the eastern wall -- portray demon-like creatures (*vetāla*, *piśāca*), a skeleton (*Cāmuṇḍa*), a headless figure (*Cinnamasta*), an ascetic (?) with protruding tongue, along with a nude female figure holding a skullcup in her hand. These images quite clearly bear a strong similarity to those on the external walls of the temple of Naksalbhagavatī¹⁶ -- they probably even originate from the same family of artists.

Thus, even at first glance, much would appear to indicate that the temple is consecrated to Devī in her Tantric-orgiastic form. But how can such a corresponding cult exist in Deopatan, where even animal sacrifices and alcohol, let alone other things, are actually forbidden? And if such a cult can indeed exist, then in what form?

The woodseller Raju shuffles across the vestibule area and indicates with a gesture of his arm that we should wait. He

15. Plates in Tucci, 63 ff. The *mātrīkās* have been carved into the struts of the upper roof, the eight Bhairavas have been carved into those of the lower roof. Cf. also van Kooij, 18.

16. Plates in Tucci, 130 ff.

turns his attention to friends. Slowly, the courtyard area fills with people, but nothing -- aside from an empty processional car (*ratha*) readied in the northwest corner -- gives any inkling of the events to come. There is still a bit of time to glance into the interior of the temple.

In the center lies the *sanctum*, a round, worked stone (*piṭha*) lying in a square-shaped elevation covered on its sides with white tiles. The floor is laid out in a floral-shaped tiled mosaic. Small bells and oil lamps hang suspended from the walls in the corners. It is a soot-covered room that smells of the odor of burned oil. A small square baldachin (Nep. *canduvā*) located above the *piṭha*, originally of purple-red material, is now discolored and almost black, and is scorched. There is a small hole leading down into the depths located on the north side, and a narrow groove-shaped trough leads from the eastern gate down to the Bāgmatī. Situated above the south entrance is a soot-covered copper plate dated V.S. 1989, on which one can still just make out the information that a certain Kājimān Daṅgul pledged an annual donation to Vatsaleśvari for her support.¹⁷

But what deity does the *sanctum* contain? Doubts that it was also originally dedicated to Vatsalā are supported, among other things, by the fact that nothing is known about a special

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17. The complete inscription, though difficult to decipher, reads as follows:

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- [1] samtt 1989 sāla mārga vadi gate 26 roja ādītevāramāḥ śrīvachalasvari
- [2] prīti gari uprānta bhatkuni tola garu kṣeśne kaji vī-
- [3] snuvī kājimān daṅgule cadhāyako lupattā 1 khala
- [4] 11 khamu cāmankāle cadhāyako kiśvānāro kāji
- [5] mana tulasimān tulasidās saṃsasim hāku
- [6] bhīmasim āsamāna vasanārā bhagata
- [7] bahādura

Vatsalā cult in Nepal. There are apparently no iconographic representations of Vatsalā in the Kathmandu Valley.¹⁸ Of interest, however, is a link to the Vatsalā temples in Bhaktapur,¹⁹ especially since these are located in the immediate vicinity of the replica of the Paśupatinātha Temple. In Bhaktapur, we note that Vatsalā is worshipped as Siddhilakṣmī, though the same is also true in Deopatan, as can be learned from the priests of the temples of the mother deity. Siddhilakṣmī is, among other things, considered to be the protective deity (*iṣṭadevatā*) of Bhupatindra Malla (1690-1722 A.D.), who supposedly had her installed in the Nyātapola (which he had built).²⁰ In addition, the time of the Vatsalāyātrā, which falls together with the Bhisketyātrā²¹ in Bhaktapur, as well as the circumstance that in both processions a ritual-dramatic confrontation is staged between Śiva (Bhairava in Bhaktapur) and Pārvatī/Sakti (Bhadrakālī in Bhaktapur), give rise to questions regarding the historical connection between the two temples and *yātrās*. An answer to these questions may serve to shed revealing light on a Vatsalā/Siddhilakṣmī cult.

For the present, all that can be stated with certainty is that Siddhilakṣmī is a female deity with a Tantric cult,²² a deity who has nothing more in common with that charming Purāṇic Vatsalā of the Nepālamāhātmya. Yes, one can even assume that the Siddhilakṣmī cult merged with more ancient local mother-

18. Winkler, 115 (picture caption, 119) supposedly shows a Vatsalā sculpture, but iconographic identification is not attested.
19. Macdonald/Vergati-Stahl, 97 and Fig. 49; Bernier, 100; localization: Slusser, Vol. 2, Fig. 3.
20. On this question, see Gutschow/Kölver, 38, fn. 2 as well as Macdonald/Vergati-Stahl, 97.
21. Gutschow/Kölver, 46 ff.; Gutschow, 81 ff.
22. On the cult, cf. for ex. the Kālānalatantra, described briefly in Goudriaan, 90.

goddess cults, a process which can frequently be demonstrated to have been the case in the Kathmandu Valley.

Of course, it is precisely Deopatan which is so completely infused with and dominated by the complex of ritual events surrounding the patron deity Paśupati¹nātha, and the mere fact of proximity to his sanctuary influences the other temples located there and their associated cults,²³ especially since there has also been a close ritual link between political power in the country and the principal sanctuary over the centuries. Thus, the names of the local deities undergo Sanskritization, the cults and forms of worship are legitimated by South Indian Brahman priests (Bhaṭṭas), or must in some form or other refer to this; the temples, *pīṭhas*, shrines, etc. are taken over territorially by Purāṇic myths and legends. The fact that the Vatsalā temple (and other sanctuaries in Deopatan) have been taken over and appropriated for a Hinduistically 'proper' form of worship²⁴ is made abundantly clear by the Nepālamāhātmya as well as the small pamphlets in Hindī sold in the Pasupati environs, pamphlets which, in any event, draw largely on the Nepālamāhātmya. In one of these, for example, it is stated that the worship of Vatsalā completely serves the highest objectives of classical Hinduism.²⁵

To be sure, this superimposition of the Sanskrit Great Tradition on the local cults has not been complete and total, and has not occurred according to the usual pattern, as the days yet to come while the *yātrā* unfolds should make increasingly clear.

23. A similar phenomenon is touched on by Gonda, 11.

24. For a general description, cf. Majupuria/Majupuria, Ch. 17 (Methods of Worshipping).

25. Acarya, 14: *Śrī Vatsalā devī kī pūjā-ārādhana karme se dharma-
artha-kāma-mokṣa ye caturvarga puruṣārtha prapta hota hai.*

In this connection, it is also rather easy to overlook the fact that the mother deities are indeed represented in quite large numbers in Deopatan. The Rājarājeśvarī Temple with a Navadurgā group is situated in the south, the Jayavāgiśvarī Temple -- with its presumably very ancient *aṣṭamātrkā* group²⁶ -- is located in the west, Bhuvaneśvarī is situated in the center and, not to be forgotten, Guheśvarī in the northeast, to mention only the most important ones. Just as frequently, one also fails to note the significant fact that the population of Deopatan is overwhelmingly Newar in ethnic composition -- this naturally has some impact on the forms which cults and *yātrās* take on as they develop.

It is quite certain that the *pīṭha* is more ancient than the Vatsalā Temple. This is supported by the more recent Nepālī chronicles.²⁷ According to the Bhāṣāvamśāvalī, the cultic emphasis placed on the *pīṭha* is attributed to Dharmadatta (ca. 450 A.D.),²⁸ one of the many legendary shadow-kings of the Licchavi period, who are not attested in the source documents. Incidentally, the Bhāṣāvamśāvalī also reveals that a stone *kalasa* (containing a *yantra* inside) is supposed to lie buried beneath the *pīṭha*.²⁹ But this is vehemently disputed by a Bhaṭṭa priest, who maintains that Lukumahādeva is underneath the *pīṭha*. If one bears in mind that the time of the Vatsalā-yātrā is also that in which the festivities for Lukumahādeva

26. Slusser, 312.

27. Bhāṣāvamśāvalī (BhV), 82 f.; Hasrat, 41; Wright, 126 f. In these three chronicles, only the short sections mentioned refer to the Vatsalā Temple or the Vatsalāyātrā. In the following, reference is made as a rule to these passages when no more detailed indications are given; the two translated chronicles (Hasrat and Wright) are -- for the sake of simplicity -- cited according to their translators.

28. BhV, 83, 1. 8.

29. BhV, 83, 1. 12: ... *bhitra yantra gupta garī* ...

occur, this bit of information is quite intriguing, and we will return to its consideration later on below.³⁰ The Wright and Hasrat chronicles say nothing either about the building of the temple or the setting up of the *pīṭha* but both associate the *yātrā* with Śivadeva I (590-604 A.D.), while the *Bhāṣāvamśāvalī* indicates that this *yātrā* is likewise supposed to have been initiated by Dharmadatta.³¹

Such statements should naturally be viewed with scepticism if they cannot be substantiated by other sources. Nonetheless, the great antiquity of the *pīṭha* must be regarded as highly probable in connection with several factors still to be discussed. Also of significance in this regard is the fact that the *Bhāṣāvamśāvalī* emphasizes that the *pīṭha* of Vatsalā is more ancient and important than that of Guyhesvarī.³² In the *Devamālā*³³ -- which otherwise follows the Wright and Hasrat chronicles -- the Vatsalāpīṭha is called a "*bahut tejasvī ugra pīṭha*", and is generally designated in the more recent chronicles as the most important one.³⁴ Moreover, the Hasrat chronicle mentions Vatsalā as one among the first four *Kālīs* in the Valley, along with Mahākālī, Dakṣiṅkālī and Guhyakālī.³⁵

VATSALĀ'S SISTER

"Come on", Raju says, interrupting the train of such

30. See below, p. 7.

31. BhV, 83, 1. 14 ff.

32. BhV, 83, 1. 12: *yas samayamā śriguhyeśarī prakāśa humu bhayākī thiinan. guptai virājamāna thiin.*

33. *Devamālā*, 47, 1. 6.

34. BhV, 83, 1. 8: *pheri nepālī pitha Vatsalā mūla mūrti ho bhani jānī adhikā sthāna pāyā (Dhramadattale)*; Wright, 126: *Bacchlā Devī*, the principal deity of Nepāl, ..

35. Hasrat, 24.

thoughts for a while, "I wanna show you something". He descends down the steps to the Bhasmeśvaraghāṭ and then walks along the bank of the Bāgmatī. The sweet odor of burning corpses mingles with that of the stagnant water along the edge of the river. Raju proceeds on through the inner courtyards and narrow lanes he knows so well. He heads directly toward a remote spot located in a direct line south of the Paśupatinātha Temple, below the new, wide bypass road (Ring Road) that encircles Kathmandu, under which -- hardly perceptible -- there is a tunnel for pedestrians. "This is the Piṅgamāī", he says proudly, and points to an altar with various statues worn smooth by time. "This is where the *yātrā* actually begins". And then he goes on to explain why the shrine of Piṅgamāī is located in such a strangely hidden manner beneath the road running up above: "A few years ago, when they built this road, they wanted to shift the shrine a little more to the south. Everyone who lives here and all the inhabitants who worship Piṅgamāī, but the *pūjāri* more than anybody, they all were against this. But nobody listened to them, and especially not those Chinese who were building the road. Finally a Chinese construction worker came along with a big caterpillar and rammed into the tree over there. At that very instant, two snakes came out of that tree and they started to hiss and show their fangs. And so what happened then? Well, three days later this guy was dead. He died in terrible pain. It was a difficult situation, see, so King Mahendra and Mao Tse-Tung had to get together in order to figure out what could be done. So they agreed to leave the goddess here where she is and to build the road on over her place". And while Raju tells this story -- which soon may be a myth of sorts -- the trucks and buses thunder on past overhead above Piṅgamāī on their way to the nearby airport; Piṅgamāī, whose Sanskrit name Vajreśvarī is also quite common in Deopatan. Her altar contains a triple group of female deities, supposedly Brāhmaṇī, Rudreśvarī and Vaiṣṇavī (others

say Mahālakṣmī, Mahākālī and Mahāsarasvatī), an aniconic Navadurgā group, two Gaṇesas, and a Nandi along with other, hardly identifiable deities.

"Vajreśvari is the *didi* (older sister) of Vatsalā", says Raju. "Once a year the sisters meet here. This here is the spot where all the sisters congregate, the *mahāpīṭha* of all *pīṭhas*. Actually it's Mahālakṣmi's *pīṭha*, and she calls her sisters over here. This is where the *didis* also met and deliberated in order to defeat the demon Ghaṇṭakarna. As people know, that wasn't all that easy.³⁶ Eight days before the Vatsalāyātrā, the sisters celebrate here, they drink and eat. Once a Jyāpu (Newar farmer) by the name of Kachila noticed this. He came on over on the sly and hid himself behind a tree, from where he could see that one leaf-plate too many had been prepared. But the sisters had already spotted him and they called the fellow over. They let him share in the meal just as if they had been expecting him. So out of gratitude he asked them their permission for a Vatsalāyātrā. They started to laugh and answered: 'you'll have to ask Paśupatinātha for permission for that, that very same Paśupatinātha who rejects us because we are celebrating here with drink'. Kachila then went to Paśupatinātha and got the permission. This is why, even today, the Mūlabhaṭṭa (the main priest of Paśupati) has to invite the gods to the *yātrā* from this spot".

This legend already contains a motif that will show up again, namely Śiva's rejection of the drunken goddess(es). But this is not only the familiar mythological conflict between Śiva and Pārvatī, but rather is also a ritual conflict between two different cult forms, namely the Indian-Brahmanic and that of the Newar. For this reason, it is noteworthy that

36. On related festivals: Gutschow, 104 ff.; Slusser, 363 f.

37. O'Flaherty, 224 ff. et passim.

the invitation to the Vatsalāyātrā must be presented to the gods by the representative, so to speak, of Śiva, the Mūlabhatta, since this reflects a certain powerlessness on the part of the Indian-Brahmanic priest vis-à-vis the power of an indigenous cult of the local population.

Where, however, should the local -- and possibly pre-Hindu -- origin of the Piṅgamāī deity be sought? For one thing, there is her Newāri name. The etymology given by a Bhaṭṭa priest, who sees New. *piṅgana* as a number ('forty') with associated classifier and would like to relate this to 40 *yoginis*, is interesting, but probably questionable, among other reasons because the number of *yoginis* customarily is 64. In contrast, one might well understand New. *piṅ*, 'outside' and *gan* (Skr. *gana*), 'group' family', as a compound pointing to the meeting of the sisters at a spot located outside the area. And, as a matter of fact, the altar of this goddess does lie outside the city limits of Deopatan,³⁸ and thus in an area where customarily the dangerous local deities have their abodes.³⁹ On top of this, the Poḍetol -- situated southeast -- is in proximity to Piṅgamāī, and such a close connection to the Poḍe (casteless street-sweepers), who offer *nityapūjā* to Piṅgamāī, is frequently an indication of an indigenous origin of the deities involved. Moreover, the Poḍe are the determinant participants in a Piṅgamāīyātrā which takes place simultaneously with the Vatsalāyātrā; these are both celebrated during the last days of the Newar calendar year, i.e., around *piśac-caturdaśī* (New. *pācare*), a date which Mary Slusser correctly links up with the "chthonic forces and the indigenous 'root' manifestations of deity in the Valley".⁴⁰ This is also

38. A hand-drawn map of Deopatan from the year V.S, 2008 by a certain Ratnalāl Citrakār records the ancient defense towers (*killā*) and thus the more narrow limits of the town. It indicates the elevation of Vanakāī (localization: Slusser, Vol. 2, map 5) as the southern cornerpoint.

39. Slusser, 326.

40. Slusser, 343; Regmi, 641.

the date for the Lukumahādeva festivals,⁴¹ in the course of which Mahādeva -- at a meal of the mother deities -- is exposed to such sumptuous pleasures of the type he rejects at his own temples: animal sacrifices, alcohol, onions, garlic, etc.⁴² If one takes up once again the assertion of the Bhaṭṭa priest -- admittedly contested by the Newar priests (*ācāryū*) (see above), namely that Lukumahādeva is located beneath the Vatsalāpītha, then we are confronted with a parallel to those festivities, and it would be conceivable that the Vatsalāyātrā might have developed from this, especially since the conflict between the Indian-Brahmanic worship of Śiva and the Newar-Tantric mother-deity cults is even more pronounced in this *yātrā*.

Raju is impatient and would like to get back to the Vatsalā Temple. He has no sympathy for such analytical thoughts. "Look, it's all just *śakti*", he grumbles, "has always been!" He doesn't utter a word on the way back, but now and then he glances to see, more embarrassed than really checking, if he's been left or not. Dusk has arrived. Smoke from the evening fires settles on in over Deopatan. Evening comes, but things are busy, as if the day were only just now really beginning.

The Piṅgamāyātrā⁴³ -- and this must be reported despite

41. Anderson, 264 f.; Slusser, 232 (in contradistinction to what is stated there, the date falls on the 14th *kṛṣṇapakṣa* (dark half) of the month of caitra).
42. Noteworthy in this connection is the legend of Kachila related above, in the course of which he likewise becomes a guest at a meal of the mother deities. In Paśupati, prohibition of alcohol, animal sacrifices and certain food appeared during the reign of King Yakṣa Malla in the 15th century A.D., see A. Ray, The Śiva Cult in Nepal, in: Śrī Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma Commemoration Volume, p. 259 (quoted after Unbescheid, 61).
43. Since it at times takes place simultaneously with the Vatsalāyātrā, I was only able to observe this festival in part.

Raju's impatience -- begins the second day after the Vatsalā-yatra and lasts only two days. Her icon is carried to the *pīṭha* of Piṅganmāī from the newly-reconstructed Amal Guṭhī house, located to the east across from the Jayavāgīśvarī Temple, where it is kept during the year. Next the participants, after having placed the icon on the *ratha* to be carried by approx. 10 men, go on to the Vajraghar and from there to Jayavāgīśvarī. Then the way proceeds on through the Nabaliṭol to Tāmresvaramahādeva on the west side of Deopatan and back again to the Jayavāgīśvarī Temple, from where the participants then make their way on to Paśupatinātha through the Dathuṭol and Pācaṭol. After worship there, the procession moves on to the Bhuvaneśvari Temple, and the *ratha* is finally set down on a newly-erected *dabali dabu* in front of the likewise new building of the Paśupati Kṣetra Vikās Sammiti. It remains there overnight while the participants celebrate and make music. The following day, the festive procession proceeds once again, this time more-or-less at random, through Deopatan until reaching Poḍeṭol. From there, the procession returns around noon or in the afternoon back to the above-mentioned *dabali*. The *yātrā* is terminated by bringing the *ratha* to a new house, which was recently shifted to a spot 50 m to the south in the course of the renovation work being done there and which is considered to be the house of the *guṭhī* responsible and established for the *yātrā*, as well as by returning the icon once again to the Amal Guṭhī.

Generally speaking, this *yātrā* is hardly given any particular notice, especially when compared to the Vatsalāyātrā, apparently also because of the fact that it is principally dominated by casteless individuals or those from lower castes. Nonetheless -- and this is why the side-trip to Piṅganmāī is, in our view, justified -- the chroniclers (and their revisers and translators) have on certain occasion quite obviously confused the two processions or equated them. Hasrat, for example,

mentions the *yātrā* of Vajreśvarī, but clearly means the Vatsaleśvari-yātrā.⁴⁴ And Wright mixes up the two goddesses when he translates: "He [Śivadeva] also caused burning ghats to be built, for the dead bodies of each caste, to the east of Bajreshvari Bachla Devi, on the banks of the Bāgmati".⁴⁵ Wright assumes that the temple involved here is that of Vatsalā. But there are no burning ghāṭs situated east of it, but rather at best only to its north (Āryaghāṭ) or south (Basmēśvaraghāṭ). And one is also safe in assuming that a cremation *ghāṭ* never existed at this spot in the past either, due to the location of the water gutter leading down from the temple to the river (whose importance will be underscored later on below), as well as because of the course of the river and the existence of the bridge at this point. A cremation *ghāṭ*, however, did indeed exist -- right down to the most recent period -- to the east of Vajreśvarī or Piṅgamāī, as inhabitants of Deopatan can still vividly recall. Only a few years ago was it forced to yield to and make way for the Ring Road, when the course of the Bāgmatī was also altered.

One possible reason for confusing the names of the *yātrās* and/or the *pīṭhas* may lie in their analogous pronunciation. Indeed, one must listen very carefully in order to notice the difference, although everyone in Deopatan is quite familiar with the distinction between the two goddesses. It remains unclear, however, what type and manner of historical linkage between the two places is involved. But darkness is falling and perhaps we may be permitted a bit of speculation: Mary Slusser suspects the presence here of a possible seat of the Licchavi king Śivadeva (Kailāsakūṭa) on the basis of information in the Wright and Hasrat chronicles, namely in an area called

44. Hasrat, 41.

45. Wright, 126 in connection with fn. 1.

madhyalakhu; she identifies this as a section of field in proximity to the Vajreśvarīpīṭha, i.e., south of the Ring Road.⁴⁶ The previously mentioned map⁴⁷ confirms her conjecture to a certain extent, since it also shows a similarly designated area in the south, though admittedly southeast of Poḍeṭol at the riverlet Tilgaṅgā. But it is now possible, with a certain degree of certainty, to exclude the possibility that a Licchavi palace was ever located there, since extensive excavations took place in this area which were necessary for construction of the airport, and these excavations did not unearth any further corresponding archaeological finds. Nonetheless, the equating of *madhyalakhu* and *manilakhu* (as it is called today) in the immediate vicinity of the Vajreśvarīpīṭha contains a certain plausibility which should not be overlooked, no matter where the exact location may be. If one then takes this hypothesis, together with the few figures in the Vajreśvarīpīṭha attributable to the Licchavi period and the corresponding statements in the chronicles regarding its antiquity, one is quite justified in assuming that the pīṭha of Piṅgamāī can be dated back at least to the Licchavi era. This would also be in accord with the fact that Vajreśvarī is mentioned in first place in the Hasrat chronicle when it reports about the arrival of Navadurgā in the Valley.⁴⁸ But it is better to lose one's way in the noise and tumult of the events soon to transpire than in the tangled confusion of Nepal's early history. A few Licchavi sculptures do not make a Kailāsakūṭa, because then there would have been many of those, in Deopatan and elsewhere.

46. Slusser, 113.

47. See note no. 38 above.

48. Hasrat, 25.

VATSALA'S FESTIVAL

Day No. 1

The *yātrā* has already begun before the Vatsalā Temple. The Vatsalā icon (that's what happens when an observer strays from his post and topic...) has already been brought over and set up. It is so heavily adorned with flowers and red cloths that you can hardly recognize it. Three silver decorative cuffs, each with Navadurgā group (?), have been placed on the actual sculpture. The icon has been put on a small *ḍabali* stone located to the southwest of the Vatsalā Temple; this stone is normally no different from the paving-stones of the square, but has been specially prepared for the occasion by treatment with cow-dung, *yantras* etc.

"Vatsalā was brought from the house of that Karmacarya over there", Raju explains, pointing to an inconspicuous man standing at the edge of the crowd. This is a house [New. *dyo-che*] located in Nabalitol which collapsed a few years ago, so that the sculpture is now in safekeeping with a responsible *guthīyar*. A customary *kṣamapūjā* takes place before it is carried from there to the Vatsalā Temple.

The square meanwhile has filled with a few people. Their numbers are still quite limited, but the faces familiar around town are not missing from the scene: Siddhimahārāja, the old Aghori ascetic, who is always seen rambling absent-mindedly about Deopatan and who is shown considerable veneration on his rounds, principally by women; the gawky, slightly impudent young man, who plays a small fiddle for tourists during the day and encourages them to buy something; the simple, fairly imbecilic woman, who is sent out by her family to beg in the streets with a small note written in English; the young boy, who ran away from home and now lives in a small Liṅga shrine

on the opposite bank of the river; and the dark-complexioned Poḍe, always laughing, who sells wreaths of flowers every morning on the steps leading down to the Āryaghāṭ -- they've all come and they are feeling happy. And the respectable townspeople are also present, the merchants, teachers, Vaidyas, administrators and their ilk. It's been dark for quite some time. A few lamps around the square give off a mottled light rich in shadow and modulation. Two priests (Karmacāryas), recognizable from their long red shirts and white *dhotis* as well as their shaven heads, worship Vatsalā.

A bit later a group of people approaches from the west. They are carrying a small statue of Śaṅkara, which is normally kept in the house of a Karmacārya living in Pācaṅṭol. They place it on a small stone located to the northwest of the Vatsalā Temple which has been correspondingly prepared for the occasion. There now lies between Śiva/Saṅkara and Pārvatī/Vatsalā that which separates them: a rectangular paving-stone known as a *jambudīpa*, on which sacrificial animals -- already standing in readiness tied to the oil-lamp balustrade of the temple donated by Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇa -- will soon be slaughtered. These are usually black billy-goats or small water buffaloes, on occasion also roosters or drakes or even white rams, the latter involving a special circumstance, as will be explained later on below. The animals are normally slaughtered in the Vatsalā Temple, though -- as already mentioned -- before the statues of Śiva and Vatsalā have been set up in position there. The Vaidyas are allowed to sacrifice on the following day as well, but have to do that outside of the temple. The dramatic-ritual portrayal of the negative attitude taken by Siva toward the animal sacrifices is given added emphasis by the fact that the sacrifices in or at the Vatsalā Temple always must be offered from the west, while *pūjās* take place from the north, i.e., in the direction of the Paśupatinātha Temple.

After the animals have been sacrificed and the head offered to the goddess Vatsalā, Kusle prepare a sacrificial meal. For this purpose, large pots are placed on the *jambudīpa* and fires are lit beneath them. They bubble and steam and cook for hours, and the hot vapors envelop the square. In the meantime, people come and go, take a brief look to see what's going on and kill time until the meal is ready. Because this meal is to be presented later that night to a number of young girls who have in the meanwhile taken up position and sat down in Poḍepāṭi to the west of the Vatsalā Temple. They are happy children who repeatedly break out in giggles and fool around, acting silly. They are seated in the arbors of the Poḍepāṭi on woven mats. The *Bhāsāvamśāvalī* states that the sacrificial meal is meant for the *mātrkās*,⁴⁹ although the chronicle relates in another passage that the meal is placed before a *kaumārīgana*.⁵⁰ The Wright chronicle speaks about "unmarried boys and virgins".⁵¹ One cannot deduce from the dramatic course of events to just what extent the group of girls represents a *kumārīgana*, which might be viewed in connection with the Kumārī cult, or even represents the *mātrkās*. But it is readily evident that the meal-taking occurs demonstratively in front of the statue of Śiva, who is thus required in this way to tolerate, so to speak, the ritual feeding. A further jab aimed at Śiva in the role given to him here as the protector and guardian of classical Dharma-Hinduism can perhaps also be seen in the circumstance that the girls must be expressly drawn from all four caste groups (*varṇa*), as is also confirmed by the *Bhāsāvamśāvalī*.⁵²

49. BhV, 85, 1. 10: ... *mātrkā kramale ganakana[bh oja]ṇale (sic!) saṃtuṣṭa garī...*

50. BhV, 83, 1. 6.

51. Wright, 126.

52. BhV, 83, 1. 5: ... *caturvarṇa jammā garī*

After the girls have been fed, the priests bring the statues of Vatsalā and Śiva into the temple. Vatsalā is placed on her *pīṭha* and tied down with rope so that she does not get knocked over and fall down should the small inner chamber of the temple become overcrowded during the ensuing hours, as is often the case. Śiva is placed in position behind her back, facing toward the south. Now one can see that the statue is clearly smaller in size. Once again, Śiva and Vatsalā are worshipped in a complicated and lengthy manner, and major attention is concentrated on Vatsalā. It is now approaching dawn and has turned quite cold in the meantime. People warm themselves over the glowing fires. Their numbers have thinned. Once more there is a long period in which nothing exciting takes place, and this affords us a good opportunity to deal with a ticklish and tricky point.

The sacrificial meal was prepared on a *jambudīpa*, whose name can be translated as the 'light of the jackals'. But what do jackals have to do with this sacrifice? All the chronicles report that human beings were sacrificed to Vatsalā.⁵³ This is a statement which repeatedly has prompted scholars from the West to engage in certain speculations.⁵⁴ The human sacrifice, says the *Bhāsāvamaśāvalī*, is offered by the hand of an *Ācājyū*, namely *narasivā kolāhale garī*. The Wright chronicle picks up this phrase again at another point, where it reports that King Viśvadevavarman declared the human sacrifices to be "a piece of cruelty", whereupon the *narasivā* made a loud racket.⁵⁵

53. BhV, 83, l. 15: ... *narabali nara sivā kolāhala garī* ...; Wright, 126: He [Śivadeva] instituted the custom of sacrificing a human being every year to Bacchlā, ...; Hasrat, 41: ... offered a human sacrifice to Vatsalā-devī...

54. Slusser, 337 ff.

55. Wright, 130.

Wright remarks: "Literally 'man-jackal'; perhaps the sacrificing priest. The pandit [Shri Gunānand⁵⁶] cannot explain this passage". Mary Slusser rejects Wright's conjecture and prefers to think in terms of a "*lākhe* dancer, whose special role this seems to have been".⁵⁷ Yet Wright indeed was on the right track, as the *yātrā* -- of whose existence neither he nor Slusser appear to have known anything -- proves. Because in the early hours of the morning, Ācājyūs suddenly kneel down at the four corners of the temple, take street-dogs between their legs and then proceed to howl like jackals. But something important has taken place before this: Śiva and Vatsalā were removed once again from the temple and placed separated on the stones mentioned earlier! This evidently because such a howling of jackals -- and what it stands for -- is incompatible with a situation where the two deities are together peacefully side-by-side. For it is indeed probable that the sacrificed humans were placed before the jackals. In any event, this is what is portrayed by those two frescoes on the east side of the temple, which were mentioned above in passing the frescoes contain jackals (or jackal-like animals), from whose snouts protrude the remains of human extremities. Jackals, in any case, are frequently associated with cremation ghats.⁵⁸

The Hasrat chronicle substantiates that there must have been numerous jackals in the area around Paśupati.⁵⁹ It relates that to the southwest of Paśupati -- i.e., in the Vanakālī forest area,⁶⁰ which was quite thick at that time -- the howling of the jackals was so loud that those who heard it became deaf.

56. Wright, p. V (Preface).

57. Slusser, 338.

58. Slusser, Vol. 2, Plate 562.

59. Hasrat, 56.

60. Cf. Hasrat, 41; BhV, 82, l. 3 from bottom.

The Wright chronicle also narrates that the Kirātīs, when they killed the jackals near Gokarṇa, drove the animals to Guptesvara⁶¹ and erected a *jambuka dobhani*, a so-called 'jackals' hill', between Gokarṇa and Paśupati.⁶²

But why is it called 'light (*dīpa*) of the jackals' (or 'for the jackals')? Several explanations present themselves for consideration. The initially plausible interpretation that *jambudīpa* should actually be *jambudvīpa*, thus referring to the continent of India which is so designated (and represented microcosmically in Deopatan), is vehemently disputed by all priests participating in the festival. And they are quite aware of the difference; one even cites a Sanskrit verse from which this is clearly evident,⁶³ although the language of the verse is somewhat peculiar. On the other hand, the dominant role of the jackals in the entire complex of events is far too great for *jambu* -- as in *jambudvīpa* -- to be conceived of as a certain type of tree, so that one probably must proceed from Nep. *dīpa* ('light'). Then one might think of the light given off by the fires, meant to signal to the jackals the imminent presence of human sacrifice. Raju points to another possibility: he goes over to the Pañcagaṇeśa altar located to the north next to the Vatsalā Temple and points out a solitary oil lamp standing on a base, on one side of which there is a flat hand shaped in the stone. This, Raju says mysteriously, is a symbol for a light that arises when witches burn one of their fingers in order to achieve a perfection of their arts; when they do this, he adds, they also sacrifice their own husband or son... Finally,

61. The Gupteśvaramahādeva is located at the end of the eastern stairway to the Paśupatinātha Temple.

62. Wright, 112.

63. *namas te tārā/
tripurasundarī devī jambudvīpanivāsini/
ādiśaktī mahāmāyā vatsalā tum namas tu te //*

it should be noted that the Bhāsāvamśāvalī relates that during this night of the Vatsalāyātrā a fire burns throughout the entire night in the direction of all the Mahādevas.⁶⁴ What is interesting about this statement is that it provides another parallel to the Lukumahādeva festivities, during the course of which Śiva -- who has been fetched from a pile of refuse -- is indeed celebrated with lamps which burn throughout the night, and whose soot, incidentally, is a popular cosmetic for women and children.

But now it is early morning; slowly it begins to get light outside while thick clouds of fog wend their way through the temples and shrines and retreat before the approaching dawn. Now is the time when the Ācāryūs offer a *pūjā* in which the *pītha* is washed and bathed with water and alcohol,⁶⁵ so that the holy water flows off through a water-groove and through a water-spout (*makara*) in the Bāgmatī wall down into the river. In the river-bed down below -- flat at this time of year -- a few men and women stand; placing themselves beneath the emerging stream of water, they let it flow over their bodies, since it is said that this mixture has a healing power. The brandy is poured through the horn of a slaughtered water buffalo; subsequently, the priest then blows through this horn in order to celebrate and pay homage to the goddess and the king.

Isolated sacrifices continue throughout the day. But otherwise it is quiet. Only the now coagulated patches of blood on the pavement and the ashes of the fires bear silent witness to the previous night's events. Vatsalā's icon remains tied up on its *pītha*. The customary scenes and rhythms of life return to the *jambudīpa*. It is time for *ārām*, for relaxation.

64. BhV, 83, l. 6: ... *deśamādhye mahādevasthānaprati akhanda rātribhara agni jagatī* ...; Similarly Hasrat (... while fires are kindled before images of Mahādeva throughout the city) and Wright (... a fire was kept lighted all night wherever there was an image of Mahādeva.).

65. Something similar occurs in the Harasiddhi, likewise associated with human sacrifice. Cf. Slusser, 339.

Day No. 2

People meet again in the evening, in the deepening dusk. Slowly more and more come together once again. Once more there is singing and laughter, dancing and teasing, discussions and talk. The girls giggle, and a few men are already (or still) drunk. But nothing is happening yet. The heavy processional car (*ratha*) is still standing in the northwest corner of the square; it resembles in appearance the Vatsalā Temple, and was set up on the preceding day. It rests on two beams some seven meters in length, onto which large metal rings have been fastened; later on, chains will be hung from these rings, attached to thick bamboo poles running at a right angle to these beams, and will serve to help carry the *ratha*. But, at the moment, all one notes are children swinging on the chains. Now various groups of musicians approach from the west carrying lanterns and umbrellas; they are also accompanied by the *pūjāris* of the Bhuvaneśvarī Temple and Jayavāgiśvarī Temple. But before reaching the square in front of the Vatsalā Temple, they first enter the precincts of Paśupati and emerge once again after about 30 minutes on the east side of the Āryaghāṭ. They proceed immediately to the Vatsalā Temple and enter it from the west side. There they perform a so-called *bicārpūjā*, a *pūjā* which serves to stimulate 'thought and reflection' about the solution to the conflict between Vatsalā and Śiva. Before this, during the late afternoon, says Raju, the Mūlabhaṭṭa had already performed a similar *pūjā* on the *ḍabali* in front of the Amal Guṭhī by dispatching a *linga* statue there from the Paśupatinātha Temple.

A short time later, the Mūlabhaṭṭa arrives accompanied by two Bhaṇḍaris, two carriers of sceptres and two policemen. He is wearing a white *dhoti* and white turban, as well as an elegant Kashmir shawl. In this way, he is clearly distinguished from the Newar priests; though not only by his dress, but also by his composed and dignified facial expression, which also expresses

a certain indifference to the outward proceedings. He walks at a quick pace to the Vatsalā Temple, though he does not yet enter the temple, but rather first pauses to worship almost all the other deities in the square one after the next: Pancagaṇeśa, Anantanarāyaṇa and Yamarāja. He proceeds to the left around this group and then enters the Vatsalā Temple from the north. Shortly thereafter he moves on quickly to Maṅgalagaurī in the south and Nīlasarasvatī to the southwest, until finally he sits down on a mat positioned in a specially illuminated arbor of the Poḍepāṭi; here he converses for just under an hour -- almost a little bit bored, jokingly -- with the Bhaṇḍaris. The sceptre carriers stand flanking on both sides, and the policemen help clear him a path, although most people around do not even take note of his presence. He, for his part, pays no attention to the *pūjā* in the Vatsalā Temple.

It was noticeable during his circuit of the square that he did not worship the Ākāśabhairava located to the south next to the Vatsalā Temple. This might have its reason in a legend which Raju has been trying to tell the whole time... "Once Pārvatī was so angry and upset about Siva's escape into the Śleṣamāntaka Grove⁶⁶ and the discord it caused between the gods that she set up four Bhairavas at the four corners of Nepal.⁶⁷ In addition to this, she changed all the gods in the Valley into sheep, Śiva included. But since Śiva had disappeared, the world was in disarray, and Brahma and Viṣṇu din't know what to do. Finally Viṣṇu dreamed up a plan to sneak into Nepal. He flew down into the Valley from the heavens (*ākāśa*) in the form of a small child (*baṭuka*) as Ākāśabhairava (!). That's why he's also so small here". (And, as a matter of fact, the Bhairava sculpture is extremely low, hardly 30 cm in height.)"... Pārvatī,

66. Cf. *Nepālamāhātmya*, 1.6 ff.

67. Cf. Hasrat, 41; Wright, 125.

who naturally noticed this right away, was very pleased and asked him what he desired. Viṣṇu said: 'I want a sheep as a sacrifice'. 'Which one, then?' asked Pārvatī in reply. 'That one there', Viṣṇu said, and he consciously chose Śiva from the lot. So Pārvatī felt she'd been found out, and she changed the gods back into their original form and allowed Ākāśabhairava to stay next to her". The reason for the slaughtering of the sheep thus presumably lies in this legend, but it is also conceivable that Baṭukabhairava has something to do with the human sacrifices, especially if one takes into account that it was usually children which were sacrificed.⁶⁸

A bit later on a Newar priest calls over the Mūlabhaṭṭa, who then proceeds -- slowly and with a measured pace -- to the Vatsalā Temple, where he gives permission for the *yātrā* to commence. Only then is it permitted to place the Vatsalā icon on the *ratha*. Strictly speaking, however, the permission he grants is for the so-called *sindurpūjā*, i.e. the festive and exuberant portion of the *yātrā*, which now follows. The manner in which this takes place -- namely, very quickly and almost casually -- awakens the impression that this formal consent on the part of the Mūlabhaṭṭa has the makings of an inserted or later appended scene, even if it takes up once again the motif of the Kachila legend (see above p. 6-7). Perhaps the dramatic-ritual portrayal of the granting of permission is only necessary because of the simple fact that Paśupati is the deity dominant in Deopatan, a deity which actually rejects the form of Vatsalā worship and the *yātrā*. Indeed it is not only conceivable but rather likely that the religious authorities of Paśupati had once rejected this cult form, but later on had to yield to pressure from the local population to such an extent that the authorities were obliged to demonstrate their assent in public.

A short time later, the priests and their assistants bring the Vatsalā icon to the *ratha*, tie it in place and then decorate

68. Slusser, 339; Vézies, 137 ff. (Trisūlyātrā).

the icon. They position the small Śiva icon once again behind Vatsalā's back. Meanwhile, Ākāśabhairava is also venerated. Since he must follow Vatsalā's procession, a small statue has in the meantime also been brought over; normally, this statue is placed for safekeeping with a responsible *guthīyar* for one year on a rotating basis. Ākāśabhairava is taken care of by a separate *guthī*, made up predominantly of Daṅguls. Numerous Jyāpu -- (or Daṅgul-) girls have taken up position surrounding Ākāśabhairava; they are decked out in their traditional black saris with the red border, and are wearing a white shawl. In their hands they hold *pūjā*-plates with flowers, cinnabar, rice, joss sticks, coins, etc., as well as torches which have not as yet been ignited.

While this is going on, some 30-40 young men, some of whom are very drunk, lift up the *ratha*. They place the thick bamboo poles on their shoulders. They are rewarded for their efforts -- an exhausting haul over three full days, with only very little sleep -- by the *guthī* responsible for the *yātrā*.⁶⁹ With groans and moaning loudly they run spiritedly toward the Sarasvatipati at the south end of the square and ram the longitudinal supports of the *ratha* up against a Kśetrapāla-stone from the Licchavi period which has been walled up in its foundation.⁷⁰ Nothing untoward happens to the *ratha* porters in the process, since they stand between the beams, but the spectators are forced to jump aside quickly in order not to be hit by the force of the impact. Raju can tell of many accidents which occurred in years past. The Newar priests sit up on top of the *ratha*-- the Mūlabhaṭṭa has, almost unnoticed, returned once more to Pasupati -- and egg the porters on. These then turn around, switching the bamboo poles to their other shoulder, because now they proceed to run to the north in

69. It was 5,000 Nepalese rupees in 1983.

70. The Wright chronicle (127) expressly states: "The Āchārs, after invoking the principal deity of Nepāl, propitiated Kshetrapāleshwarī..."

order to ram up against the row of houses there. All in all, they repeat the ramming procedure twice in the south and once on the north side, though Raju thinks it was one time too little.

Afterwards, the *ratha* is carried in a long procession to the *ḍabali* situated in front of the Amal Guṭhī across from the Jayavagīśvari Temple. Generally, the porters only swing back and forth, and in order to make any headway they need the more-or-less chance occurrence that all happen to swing forward at the same time. Of course, there is a man bathed in sweat who untiringly shouts out words of encouragement to fire them on and spark them to a concerted action, but as a rule this is completely in vain and without avail. Nonetheless -- or perhaps precisely for this reason -- all the men are in good spirits. A Kāmi musical group proceeds on out in front ahead of the *ratha*, followed by a group of the Damāi, which is distinguished by the fact that it also is allowed to have a reed-pipe flutist. A priest carries Ākāśabhairava behind the *ratha*, passing through a cordon of Jyāpu girls, who by now have ignited the torches and joss sticks. Ākāśabhairava, however, is not carried beyond Bhuvaneśvarī, but rather is brought back to his house. The virgins also return home then. While the processional group files on past the *deo-chē* of Piṅganmāī, where the participants in that *yātrā* have just assembled, nothing occurs which might hint at any link between the two *yātrās*.

The *ratha* remains overnight on the *ḍabali*. "It's having a rest", Raju comments with dry humor. There is music-making throughout the night, and again and again inhabitants of Deopatan who have not otherwise taken part in the *yātrā* come to worship Vatsalā and Śiva. Since Śiva is now on the *ratha* as well, sacrifices are no longer allowed. Once again, it's gotten late.

Day No. 3

The morning of the third day of the *yātrā* there is a normal morning *pūjā* at the *ratha*. In the course of early morning the porters also show up once more, and after a while they transport the *ratha* on toward the west, passing Jayavāgīśvarī, to the Siphaltol -- the 'playground' (*tāpahkhel*) of Vatsalā, as Raju says -- where the old city gate of Deopatan leading toward Kathmandu stands. This is rammed twice, but only very gently, since it is already quite cracked. By so doing, Vatsalā demonstrates that she wishes to leave Śiva and Deopatan, and that she is insulted because of his rejection of her pleasure-loving character. She tarries there a while, until the Mūlabhaṭṭa -- acting for Śiva -- sends one of the priests under his authority around noon in order to call her back. Immediately after this, the *ratha* is carried through Deopatan in a procession which lasts the entire day. Again and again, the *ratha* is set down at intersections and in front of houses whose owners have made known their wish to worship Vatsalā by tracing out a rectangle purified with cow-dung. This procession takes place in an extremely luxuriant and rich form: countless wreaths of flowers, pieces of cloth, umbrellas, cakes and the like are piled up onto the *ratha* which becomes more and more colorful, but heavier as well. Streamers have been strung across the lanes announcing welcome and salutations to the goddess. People throw cinnabar at each other, and the musical groups play on and on. The procession now takes a way different from its path the night before. It leads through the older, stony street, which -- according to Raju -- once upon a time was paved with gold (to which, among other things, Deopatan owes its other name of Suvarṇapuri): it is the lane leading across Pācaṭol.

The festive group reaches the Paśupatinātha Temple in the evening. Now the mood is even more excited. In anticipation of what is to transpire, many people have gathered immediately in front of the west gate to the Paśupati precincts. The vendors of flowers and devotional articles have cleared away

their street-side stands, but business is brisk in the sweet-shops and tea-houses situated to the side. The center of the street is kept free; only occasionally does a drummer dance across it or a policeman try in vain to demonstrate his power. The *ratha* is set down for a last time approx. 100 meters in front of the portal. Although it was previously hardly ever carried more than 10 meters at one haul without interruption because of its great weight, now the porters summon up all their remaining strength and run shouting the last stretch of the way toward the portal. The low timbers ram up against the steps before the portal so that the place trembles with the impact. A great shout rises up from the crowd. It is the playful expression of anger about the fact that Śiva is now refusing Vatsalā admission to his temple, because the wings of the portal door are symbolically half-closed. Śiva, now as before, is horrified about the sacrifices, the alcohol, the mixing of the castes. The porters once again ram the threshold of the entrance as before. But then they all turn around, and the *ratha* is quickly brought back to the place where it spent the previous night. Lamps have been placed in the windows and doors of the houses. It is the day of the family and the festivities of Lukumahādeva, which is celebrated everywhere in Newar households. But they take a different way back, leading this time past the Bhuvaneśvarī Temple, where there is a short pause.

"Late at night the sisters of Vatsalā come to the Jayavagīśvarī Temple in order to celebrate with her and console her", says Raju, and he mentions Naksalabhadra and Śobhābhagavati, among others, but there is still nothing to be seen of all this, except that delegations now depart to make their way to the two goddesses. "Early in the morning Chabahilgapeśa also comes", Raju continues, "in order to assist Vatsalā, his mother, and to offer her a place to stay. But it depends on the inhabitants of Chabahil [a village located approx. 1.5 km northwest of Pasupati] whether they can get together enough people to carry the heavy *ratha* there. This year they weren't

able to, but last year, and many a year before that, the *ratha* was taken there".

Day No. 4

On the morning of the fourth day, the Mūlabhaṭṭa or one of his representatives goes around Deopatan in order to search for Vatsalā. This time she is finally called back in a gesture of reconciliation, because Śiva is filled with a sense of repentance and lover's woe. He wishes to forgive her. And now a day begins in Deopatan on which one and all celebrate and pay homage to the goddess. She is venerated now in the manner described above before almost each and every house, and the procession proceeds along the same path of the previous day through Pācaṅṭol. She is praised and celebrated everywhere, so that it takes the entire day until the *ratha* at dusk once again returns to the square before the precincts of Paśupati. With a last burst of energy, the porters again ram the threshold of the portal,⁷¹ this time beginning their approach three times from afar. The large crowd relishes each approach run -- lasting nearly half-an-hour -- with visible and apparent pleasure. On the third approach, the Mūlabhaṭṭa stands in the door and receives the goddess by worshipping her, although but briefly, and by placing a piece of red cloth around her, representative of a *sārī*. The reconciliation has then been completed and the actual *yātrā* proper is terminated with remarkable repidity, since most of the spectators soon return to their houses so as to take the evening meal they have long waited for. The *ratha* is brought to a *ḍabali* located some 70 meters to the west of the portal, there to be taken apart in the coming days and to be stored for one more year in the Sarada

71. Different from the collision between the processional cars in the Bisketyātrā in Bhaktapur (Gutschow/Kölver, 46), the ramming cannot be viewed here as a ritual portrayal of a primary act sexual procreation, since it also takes place earlier, when Śiva and Sakti are separated.

house next to a small secondary school. However, the statues are brought by the *guthīyars* responsible back to their own houses. A short time later, the *naike* meet at an inconspicuous, small niche south of a small Gaṇeśa shrine at the top of the wide street leading to the Pasupati temple precincts. There the *guthīyars* present the *naike* -- one after the next in the order of their age -- with a goat's head that has been divided into eight pieces; this goat must be slaughtered beforehand, because it is not permitted to sacrifice any animals after the reconciliation has taken place. It is presumably also for this reason that the head of the goat is divided up at this 'neutral' spot.

The *yātrā* is now finally over except for a small episode, in the early morning hours of the fifth day, when the Vatsalāpīṭha is covered over by the Newar priests with cooked rice. It is said that this represents the skin of a sheep, and in addition that the goddess now is hungry. Naturally, this is also once again a reference to Vatsalā's prank, namely the transformation of the gods into sheep (see above p. 17). The Kusle and others who helped with the *yātrā* are then subsequently given the rice. The Vatsalādevīyātrā is formally concluded when the priests inform the other gods that the *yatra* has come to an end.

EPILOGUE

Raju, who is also not missing on this day, asks us once again to enter his hut of boards and invites us to join him for a hot cup of milk tea. He is still wearing that T-shirt with the happy surfer. He doesn't talk much, pulls up the collar on his heavy overcoat, and squats down before the fire, warming his damp fingers by stretching out his arms in a wide arc. Sitting in the acrid smoke, his eyes pinched shut, he says with

casual pride: "Well, that was it. But the Triśūlyātrā, that one's even wilder".⁷²

Though the first thing everyone who was involved these past days can wish for is some sleep. Maybe then there are quite a few -- exoticism of the Himalaya ! -- who dream of surfing in Saint Tropez, where one could certainly take a break and be spared from the kind of reflections and questions that follow.

A central element of the *yātrā* was the dispute and reconciliation between Śiva and Vatsalā. One is indeed tempted to connect a historical event with this dramatic-ritual sequence, and the one which offers itself most readily for consideration is that conflict between Buddhists and Sivaites which the chronicles deal with shortly before the reign of that Śivadeva who is supposed to have founded Deopatan or Paśupati anew as Suvarṇapuri, and who is supposed to have been the initiator of the Vatsalādevīyātrā. This conflict is said to have reached a cruel and horrible highpoint with the coming to Nepal of Śaṅkara as a reformer.⁷³ It is reported, for example, that the Buddhists continually cast their leftover bits of food (*uccīṣṭha*)⁷⁴ onto Paśupatinātha. It is stated that Śaṅkara militantly forced them to cease this activity, thus liberating Paśupatinātha. In so doing, he also is reported to have burned the books of the Buddhists, and several Bud-dhamārgis are supposed to have been killed. From that time on, it is said, the Deccan-Brahmans maintain sacerdotal rights over Paśupati.⁷⁵

72. The author is preparing a study on this *yātrā*.

73. Hasrat, 38-40; BhV (Pt. II), 18; Wright, 118-121, 125, 159.

74. On the pejorative meaning of *uccīṣṭha*, cf. Wezler, 79 *et passim*.

75. Wright, 121. The Lukumahādeva festivities also have a connection with Śiva/Buddha in the Viśvarupa legend: Slusser, 232.

To be sure, it does not have to have been the historical Śaṅkara himself, but a movement based on his ideas most certainly did not make its entry into Paśupati without some sort of conflict, especially since -- according to some chronicles -- the Buddhists exercised power over Paśupati before this, an assertion which takes on a certain degree of credibility as a result of numerous art-historical and archaeological relicts in Deopatan. The motif to the effect that the Buddhists were pushed out by the Śivamārgis, who thus liberated a Lord Śiva covered by refuse, was also contained in the above mentioned Lukumahādeva legend (see above), and the Virūpākṣa legends -- likewise just as numerous and diverse⁷⁶ -- tell of a Śiva in distress. The basic core of the legends told about the Virūpākṣa shrine on the Āryaghāṭ in Paśupati is as follows: Virūpākṣa unknowingly had sexual intercourse with his mother. When he learns of this, he turns filled with deep despair to Śiva, requesting from him penitential exercises in order to be freed from his guilt (*pāpa*). Śiva prescribes several exercises for him, but all these seem to Virūpākṣa to be impossible to carry out. Thus, for example, Śiva demands of him that he murmur his name in prayer with the aid of a iron rosary (*mālā*) until the beads have been worn away. Virūpākṣa performs this *japa* for 10,000 years, but the beads of the chain still show no sign of any wear, whereupon he becomes furious with anger and attempts to kill Śiva. Śiva flees, filled with great fear of the unbridled fury of Virūpākṣa, until Buddha grants him protection beneath a pile of refuse -- or, as a legend related by Mary Slusser would have it⁷⁷ -- beneath his crown; this is why the Liṅga in the Paśupatinātha Temple is adorned with Boddhisattva's crown once every year on the eighth day (*mukhāṣṭamī*) of the bright half of the month *Kārttika*.

Another legend in which Śiva -- in extreme and dire distress -- once again hides beneath a pile of refuse (this time,

76. Additional legends given in Sanadya, 26 f.

because he is threatened by the demon Bhasmāsura) is told as the legend of origin for the Bhasmeśvaraghāt situated to the south of the Bagmati bridges.⁷⁸

If one also takes into account the statement that -- according to the chronicles -- Śivadeva gave the *ācāryas* the rights over the Devīs (and thus presumably to the Tantric -- Buddhist 'masters of the *vajra*' /*vajrācārya*/), as well as the fact that the date of the Lukumahādeva festivities coincides with that of the Vatsalāyātrā, then there are a number of pieces of evidence which serve to place the dispute between Śiva and Vatsalā in such a close thematic and temporal linkage with the Lukumahādeva rites that a common origin seems likely. It will neither be necessary nor possible to disentangle this complex of Śivaitic, Buddhist, Tantric and mother-deity elements into its component strands and elements. Because this would mean schematically subordinating the Vatsalāyātrā to the -- in any event quite questionable -- process of 'Sanskritization'; according to this process, a local cult form seeks to legitimate itself by imitation of the so-called Great Tradition. This theme undergoes variation, at the very least, in Paśupati, because in the Vatsalāyātrā it is not a myth of the Great Tradition which takes over and appropriates a local cult form, but rather it is this cult form which shapes a new and largely uncustomary myth; this because it is not -- as is so common -- the seductive Pārvatī who rejects Śiva on account of his ascetic attitude, but it is rather Śiva who rebukes her, because she accepts blood sacrifices and alcohol and allows the castes to mix. And this time it is not he who triumphs; rather, if anyone does, then it is Pārvatī/Vatsalā, who does not enter his temple even after the ritual reconciliation, because this reconciliation takes place (only) at the entrance gate to his sanctuary. The two gods do come closer, but a union and fusing does not occur. Thus, the dispute is not resolved in a funda-

78. Anderson, 264 f.

mentally inclusivistic manner, but rather is staged anew each year. An inclusivistic resolution might be to have Siva simply present in the *yātrā*, say, for example, by being on the *ratha* (represented either in the form of an icon or by a priest), but without Śiva himself taking up a role and position of his own in contradiction with the local tradition. As it is, the various power functions of the Indian-Brahmanic and Newar priests are clearly separate and nonetheless bound up with each other. And it is only the outside and alien observer who is able to force the wedge of his separating and analytical thoughts into this unity -- so artful and laboriously achieved -- between Śiva and Vatsalā.

Raju, in any event, is satisfied with a useful consoling thought: "So what !" I mean, even Mahādeva's scared when it comes to women..." And he lies down on his wooden bed and pulls the blanket over his head.

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