With a bright, catching smile, Rousie dances with the other women to the music, which comes from her phone. She has dyed dark red strands in her hair, is wearing jeans, t-shirt, sneakers. Sometimes she goes to the cinema with her friends. Her 20th birthday she has celebrated in a small, local restaurant from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.. Then she had to be back home. It doesn’t suit a woman to be out after dark.

Rousie studies tourism in her fifth semester. Granted for many women, it is a privilege for her. Rousie is Nepalese. For her family it is a big financial burden to pay for their daughters’ university. They give a home to volunteers from all over the world to be able to afford the life in Kathmandu. In her village at the foot of the Himalayas Rousie would not have had the chance of an apprenticeship not to mention academic studies. It was self-evident for her family, that her older brothers study (even abroad). Rousie owes her studies to a part scholarship. A woman in Nepal does not study. She gets married and cares for her husband, children and home.

Men in Nepal mean no harm, if they see the duties of a woman in that sector. They just have never seen it another way. For generations this image of women rules especially the rural parts of Nepal. Nepalese women officially have the same rights as men. Underage marriage is forbidden officially. The same with forced marriage. Nevertheless, the old traditions are deep-rooted in peoples’ mind.

Nepal is an extraordinary beautiful country, which varies from impressive mountains to rank jungle areas. Hindu temples alternate with Buddhist stupas. Traditional rural life even shows up in the metropolis of Kathmandu. People spend much time outside, they meet for chatting, laughing, celebrating. Over the last years, a new medium has found its way into Nepal, which we would often consider annoying: the smartphone.

Almost every young adult has one and for people in Nepal it is a blessing. On the internet they see, that it is not self-evident to be in an arranged marriage. They read blogs of women who study, who work, who, even if not married with thirty years, stay part of society.

That is what gives women in Nepal, who anyway never lost their pride, back their self-consciousness to fight for an independent, self-determined life; for a life, where married women not only are responsible for washing and cooking, but have equal rights to work and earn money.

Rousie, her mother Shanti and their friends meet on a hill above Kathmandu for picnic. They listen to Nepalese pop music, dance lively, laugh and drink red wine. The latter is frowned upon, but the women don’t care. They show an unbelievable power. They are intelligent, eager to know, fighting, even if they are not (yet) allowed to show that at home. But their mind, their strong headed nature is contagious, it also awakens women, who so far have submitted themselves to their faith, have accepted it as given by nature. Rousie’s aunt now has seen the chance of the evening classes she visits. She tries hard to learn reading and writing. She stopped seeing her duties exclusively in cleaning the house and cooking for her family, she now meets the other women. She’s one of them.

Rousie wishes to lead another life than her aunt’s. She also wishes for a life different from her mother’s, who got married very early, who had to quit school on demand of her parents in law, but who silently fights against the traditional role of women. She hopes, her daughter’s life will be different. Rousie studies, a first step in the direction of a self-determined life. Nevertheless, 80 percent of Nepal’s female students will not be able to have a job after graduating. They will get married. After marriage, their parents in law decide on them.

After university it is Rousie’s big dream to find a work, with which she can contribute to improve social structures in Nepal. She would like to marry a man whom she loves and who respects her as the person she is: a strong, intelligent woman, who wants to go her own way. Yet there are still many obstacles along that way. But Rousie’s not the person who avoids obstacles.

Rousie’s mother would have loved to continue going to school and learn a profession. Her daughter’s got the chance to study. Even if Rousie won’t make it to make all her dreams come true against society’s resistance, she at least as put aside some obstacles for the next generations.

Times they are a-changing, even in Nepal.