

MUSIC FOR THE ROYAL DASAI
(GORKHĀ AND NUWĀKOT)

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One month before the festival of Dasai commences, the distinctive music of the season -*mālaśrī*- can be heard blaring forth from Radio Nepal right across the country. This is one of the early warning signs that Dasai is approaching, and from this time - the *aṣṭamī* two lunar cycles before *mahāṣṭamī*- until the end of the festival, music groups all over the country¹ perform *mālaśrī* at their local shrines. Music also plays a central role in the Royal celebration of Dasai at Basantpur, Gorkhā Darbār and Nuwākot, and the official music groups employed by the Royal Court perform not only *mālaśrī*, but also a number of ritual and sacrificial musical items which are specific to certain Dasai rituals. The same types of music are employed at both Gorkhā Darbār and Nuwākot, and the Dasai musicians fall into two main groups. The musicians of the first group are 'auspicious women' (*maṅgalinī*), household ritual singers of the Royal Family who sing auspicious songs (*maṅgal gīt*), for the most part inside the shrines. By contrast, the musicians of the second group are all men, whose music is played out-of-doors only and has - or once had - militaristic associations. They include the drummers of the military band, and the various shawm and kettledrum ensembles (*nagarā bānā*, *pañcai bājā*, *ḥor damāhā*) of the Damāi caste of tailor-musicians. The contrasting musical styles of these two principle groups of musicians suggests an association with the two main aspects of the Mother Goddess - her warlike, bloodthirsty side, which is paramount during *navarātri*, represented by the raucous and martial sounds of the Damāi and military bands, and her benevolent, life-affirming side, which assumes

¹Including *bhajan* groups, Newar *dāphā khālah* and the *pañcai bājā* bands of the Damāi tailor-musician caste.

predominance on *vijayā daśamī*, represented by the singing of the *maṅgalinī*. This paper will explore this relationship, by introducing the musicians, their music and ritual duties, and looking at their historical backgrounds, in order to account for the central role played by music during Dasaī rituals. The data were collected in Gorkhā in 1987-8 and Nuwākot in 1990, funded by the British Academy (1987-8) and the Leverhulme Trust (1990).

Maṅgalinī

Maṅgalinī - 'auspicious women' - are household ritual singers of the Rāṇā² and Śāha. The Śāha *maṅgalinī* are based at the old Royal palace at Basantpur, Kathmandu. They have the duty to sing auspicious songs (*maṅgal gīt*) during the life-cycle rites, festivals and daily worship (*nitya pūjā*) of the Royal household.³ Most of their duties are performed in Basantpur Darbār, but during the Dasaī festival, three *maṅgalinī* sent to Gorkhā Darbār and five to Nuwākot Satali Darbār, postings which are rotated annually.⁴ In addition to singing ritual songs, the *maṅgalinī* have several other duties, including sewing together leaf plates for offerings and feasts throughout the year, and preparing all the plates of offerings required for each Dasaī *pūjā*. During Dasaī, the most senior of the *maṅgalinī* of ficiating at Gorkhā, Nuwākot and Basantpur have the duty to escort the sacred *kalaś* (water pot) during the *phūlpāṭī* procession, and they are known by the honourable title *kalaśinī*.

²The tradition has been maintained by only one Rāṇā family - that of the late Brigadier General Aditya Shamsheer Rana. In his household, two old Tamang women are the last survivors of a once thriving Rāṇā *maṅgalinī* tradition. They reminisce that in their youth, twenty or more women would sing at Rāṇā life cycle rites.

³In Hindu ideology, the concept of "auspiciousness" is central to life itself, being the fundamental prerequisite for health, happiness, success, prosperity and general well-being in society. It is a divine blessing which makes life possible. Auspiciousness should not be confused with purity - these are completely separate realms of idea (Tingey 1994:5-6; Marglin 1985a; 1985b).

⁴*Maṅgalinī* are also in attendance at Lamjung Darbār during Dasaī, but these are young local girls. Lamjung Darbār has been both a Śāha and a Rāṇā stronghold in its time, and the *maṅgalinī* tradition here could have been inaugurated by either family.

There are sixteen *maṅgalinī* employed at Basantpur Darbār. They do not live in the palace, but are all married women living with their husbands and families. Their posts are not hereditary (most of the women being put forward by fathers working in government posts), and their payment is in the form of a monthly salary, like that of other civil servants. The age range of the *maṅgalinī* is from early twenties to mid-forties, and most of them have had the job from their late teens or early twenties. Their caste backgrounds are similarly varied, including Brahmin, Chetri, and mid- to high caste Newār.

According to both Rāṇā and Śāha *maṅgalinī*, their tradition dates back only to the mid-nineteenth century, from the time of Rāṇā rule. At that time, they were known as the *nārāyaṇhity nani* (Nārāyaṇhity girls), Nārāyaṇhity being the palace of the Rāṇā prime ministers. The *maṅgalinī* relate that the tradition was adopted by the Śāhas after two *nānī*, dressed in gold, had been sent to sing at the King's palace, but it is not remembered when this took place, or for which king they sang. Certainly, the Rāṇās were responsible for the introduction of many musical innovations (Boonzayer 1991:40-5) and Dasaī ritual practices, and against this background, their assertions seem probable.

Both the Śāhas and the Rāṇās trace their ancestry to Rajasthan, and the *maṅgalinī* tradition could be based on a Rajput model. Wealthy households (*haveli*) in Rajputana patronized women ritual singers from a number of castes, including *ḍholi* and *maṅgāniyār*, and all family life-cycle rites, *pūjā* and festivals demanded their participation (Erdman 1985). Alternatively, the Rāṇās may have copied the tradition from the Moghul courts, where classically trained women singers were employed.

There is no documentary evidence to contradict or support the women's account of their history. As the *maṅgalinī* are attached to households, rather than temples, there are no inscriptions referring to them, as there are for other ritual musicians. There are several pre-Rāṇā references to 'auspicious songs' and household entertainments, however, which could relate to household singers, although *maṅgalinī* are never mentioned specifically. For example,

Yogi's collection of historical documents and inscriptions includes the following reference to Drabya Śāha's capture of Gorkhā in 1559 (source not provided):

When Drabya Śāha claimed the Tallokoṭ throne, there was the playing of music, the singing of *maṅgal gīt* and the recitation of the Vedas, after which he went on to capture Upalokoṭ (Naraharinath VS.2022:681).

The *Gorkhā vaṃśāvali* includes two interesting musical references in this context. The first one depicts the scene of the state entrance of Rām Śāha (reigned 1606-36) into his palace at Gorkhā, presumably on the completion of the building of his new residence, the first *darbār* at Gorkhā:

In Gorkhā, people of five different castes celebrated with auspicious music and auspicious song and dance, each according to their caste, after which there was a *sīdur jātrā*, and at the auspicious moment, King Rām Śāha entered his palace. (Naraharinath VS.203 1).

Although *maṅgalinī* are not mentioned specifically in the state expense account of Narabhupal Śāha (1716-42), there are entries for gifts (*bakas*) and food given to singers of *kirtan* (sacred songs) (Panta V.S.2043:513), which perhaps relates to such a tradition. Thus, there is evidence to show that *maṅgal gīt* had been a desirable commodity in Nepal well before the nineteenth century, and even though the advent of the *maṅgalinī* tradition cannot be dated precisely, they must be a (perhaps more recent) strand of an old established tradition of Nepalese 'auspicious' music.

Until 1987, there were only nine *maṅgalinī* but for the occasion of Crown Prince Dipendra's *vratabandha* (sacred thread investiture) in Cait V.S.2044 (March 1988), another seven were added. The court was concerned by what it considered to be inferior songs and a poor standard of singing. Thus, at this time, the *maṅgal gīt* were all revised, and put into standard Nepali (from their original Hindi-Nepali mixture)⁵ by the poet Nir Bikram Piasi,

⁵The texts of the Rāṅā *maṅgalinī* repertoire are still in a Nepali-Hindi mixture.

and the classical singer, Natraj Dhakal. The latter became the music tutor of the *maṅgalinī* coaching them in singing, *tablā* and harmonium for a period of over two years.

The revised repertoire comprises ten auspicious items, and the *maṅgalinī* divide these into two categories according to their texts - songs which are only for the Dasāī festival (numbering five) and five 'general purpose' auspicious songs for use during all other occasions. Two 'general purpose' items are also sung during Dasāī, however, so that seven of their ten songs are featured during the festival.

It should be noted that these songs are not the exclusive domain of the *maṅgalinī*. This repertoire has been tailored primarily from songs that are well known across the country. For example, the text of *Śrī Gaṇeś pūjā* is a virtually unchanged Nepalisation of the first song in a collection of Hindi texts entitled *rāg mālaśrī* published by the *durgā sāhitya bhaṇḍār* (Varanasi), which contains 25 songs to be sung to *mālaśrī* and a *bhagavatī stuti*. This booklet is widely available in Nepal during the weeks leading up to Dasāī, enabling devotees to sing *mālaśrī* at the shrines of the Goddess.⁶

For most of the Dasāī rites, a sequence of up to five songs is performed, the number depending on the length of the *pūjā*. For example, at Nuwākoṭ, the three goddesses Taleju, Bhairavī and Kālikā are honoured during Dasāī, and each morning during *navarātrī* there are *Gaṇeś* and *kalaś pūjā* and recitations of the *Caṇḍī pāṭh* at their shrines, for which the five-song-sequence is sung. The *maṅgalinī* split ranks, two singing for Taleju, three for Bhairavī, and then all five for Kālikā. The song sequence is also sung during the planting of *jamarā* (barley seed) on the morning of *ghaṭasthāpanā*, and for the *kalaś pūjā* which prefaces the *phūlpātī*

⁶For an account of Newar *mālaśrī* singing traditions in Kathmandu, which gives the appropriate song texts to be sung at specific shrines, see Darnal's article 'Rāg mālaśrī' (B.S.2045). This article also covers regional variation in *mālaśrī* (amongst Indo-Nepalese), with song text examples. Darnal's look at early references to *mālaśrī* in Malla and Śāha inscriptions and compositions is also of interest.

procession. At Gorkhā Darbār, the five songs are sung not only during rites on behalf of Kālikā, but also to accompany the recitation of the *Goraḁa Śāhasranāma* in Gorakhnāth's cave shrine.

The first song in the sequence is *Śrī Gaṇeśa pūjā*, sung to the seasonal melody *mālaśrī* (ex.1) during the propitiation of Lord Gaṇeś at the start of each Dasaī rite. It is also sung at the commencement of other Royal rituals, such as coronations, weddings and *vratibandha* ceremonies. The text juxtaposes the worship of Gaṇeś with the attributes of the Goddess in her warlike aspect, and is as follows:

R gaṇeśa pūjāū nadī kināramā candra vadana mṛga locanī

1 āu gaṅga jamunā trivenī saṅgamā madhya dāhine kālikā
caṇḁa pracaṇḁa.rupinī chattis vāhana sādhini

2 śankha cakra gadā padma khaḁga khaparū liera
lal lahāgā vīra gīt chattis bājā bajāera

3 bajāi ḁimī ḁimī ḁamaru ḁimī ḁimī khaḁga khaparū dhāraṇī
hā khaparū triśul lieki koṭī senā māme

R Let us worship Gaṇeś, on the river bank, with moon-coloured body and the eyes of a deer.

1 Please come, Gaṅgā, Jamunā, up to Trivenī, the middle of the confluence, with Kālikā on the right.
She with the terrifying appearance can control thirty-six vehicles.

2 Conch, discus, mace, lotus, sword and skull are taken.
Red *dhoti*, a song of bravery, thirty-six instruments are played.

3 Play *damaru* (with the sound) *ḁimī ḁimī*,
The keeper of sword and skull, having taken sword and trident in hand, kills ten million soldiers.

Jaya Bindya Bāsini (ex.2) is the second of the five-song-sequence, sung immediately after *Śrī Gaṇeśa pūjā*. Both the melody and the text contrast with the material of the former song, *jaya Bindya Bāsini* being a gentle offering to the Mother Goddess, in which aspects of her worship are mentioned:

jaya bindya bāsini timi⁷ bhavāni
pūjā leu mana lāera
jaya bindya bāsini timi bhavāni.
mother goddess.

Long live Bindya Bāsini, you mother goddess.
Take offerings readily.
Long live Bindya Bāsini, you

tan mana sārā āphno ṭimimā

I am offering all my body and heart to you.

gārdai chaū arpaṇā
gharkī durgā manaūchaū
hāni bārhai varṣa
jaya bindya bāsini timi bhavāni.
mother goddess.

Household Durgā,
We celebrate for twelve years⁸
Long live Bindya Bāsini, you

annaū phūlpāi caḁhaū ḁoli

We bring out the *phūlpāi*, we offer the litter,

bhandai jay jay kāli
veda jagāi janani āin
kāla rātri manāi
jaya bindya bāsini timi bhavāni.

Saying long live Kāli
Evoking the vedas, Janani comes,
Celebrating *kāl-rātri*
Long live Bindya Bāsini, you mother goddess.

The *maṅgalinī* sing *Bhairavi Devī* (ex.3) after *jaya Bindya Bāsini*, as the third song of the sequence that accompanies most of the Dasaī rites. As in the previous song, the text mentions aspects of the worship of the Goddess during Dasaī, as a gentle song of devotion to the Mother:

bhairavi devī, timro śaraṇamā
hāni āyaū, hāni āyaū, bhairavi devī
nuwākoṭamā sundar māndirbhita
basera āsan vādhī sandhyā kālma dipa jalāi
nagarā bajāi śabda sunāi, bhairavi devī.

Bhairavi Devī, I am your dependant.
We come, we come, Bhairavi Devī.
Having sat inside the beautiful temple at Nuwākoṭ,
We stay inside in the evening time, having burnt light,
Having played *nagarā* (kettledrum), having heard the word,
Bhairavi Devī.

⁷Use of the familiar *timi* rather than *tapaī*, indicates that the Goddess is like a close personal friend.

⁸Implies 'a long time', not necessarily a fixed period of twelve years.

Le le hānāu le le le (ex.4) is a sacrificial song, sung during all Dasai sacrifices, after *Śrī Ganes pūjā*. For example, before the *phūlpātī* is established inside the *pūjā* room (*Dasai ghar*) of the Taleju shrine at Nuwākot. and the Kālikā Darbār at Gorkhā, there are goat sacrifices at the doorways. During the propitiation, the *maṅgalinī* sing *Śrī Ganes pūjā*, and for the sacrifice, *Le le hānāu le le le*, and this pattern is repeated for the many blood sacrifices that ensue. The text reflects the violent nature of the rites it accompanies, and focuses on the fierce, bloodthirsty aspect of the Goddess. *Le le* is also sung after *Bhairavi Devī* as the fourth song of the five-song-sequence if the ritual is a lengthy one requiring additional music to cover its duration.

| | |
|---|---|
| le le hānāu le le le | Take, take, let's strike, take, take, take. |
| daityāsa māma khaḍga cyāpeki prakaṭa vikaṭa vadana rūpa caṇḍa muṇḍa māhalinī kāḷā kāḷā āṅkhā bhaekī sor arūṇa vāhana chamcham | She, having sword to kill demons, With unusual body appearance, Caṇḍa, Muṇḍa ..?... I-Iaving black, black eyes, The 16 sounds of the sky jangling as vehicles ⁹ |
| prakaṭa vikaṭa vadana rūpa unmata nayana lieki sor arūṇa vāhana chamcham as le le hānāu le le le take. | With unusual body appearance, With very angry eyes, The 16 sounds of the sky jangling vehicles Take, take, let's strike, take, take, take. |

The *Kālikā stotra* (hymn of praise) *dhanya dhanya* (ex.5) is a song of thanksgiving to Kālikā. It is an 'all-purpose' *maṅgal gīt* which is sung at coronations and Royal life cycle rites. During Dasai it may be sung after *le le hānāu le le le* as the fifth song of the series if the *pūjā* is long enough to require more music. The melody is that of a widely known *maṅgal gīt*, *bhajaū manle Nārāyaṇa*, a song which describes the ten *avatār* of Viṣṇu, which is performed by Gāine (itinerant minstrels) and Damāi at village weddings. The text of this version describes the beauty of the

⁹*cham cham* is the sound made by ankle bells during dance.

Mother Goddess, and lists some of the epithets by which she is known:

R dhanya dhanya dhanya mātā dhanya gujya kālikā
1 timīnai koṭī candra vadana, timīnai umā radhikā
tirmīnai tārā, timīnai sārā, timīnai gujya kālikā
2 siddhi kālī, siddhi janani, siddhi sarva pujani
dhanya dhanya dhanya mātā dhanya gujya kālikā

R Gracious, gracious, gracious Mother, gracious sacred Kālikā.
1 You have the brightness of ten million moons, you are Umā,
you are Rādhikā,
You are Tārā, you are all, you are the sacred Kālikā.
2 Siddhi Kālī, siddhi Janani, worshipped by all,
Gracious, gracious, gracious Mother, gracious sacred Kālikā.

The two other Dasai songs are both sung to *mālaśrī* (ex. 1). The contexts in which these songs are sung are more limited and clearly defined than those of the succession of five songs. *Jaya Devī Bhairavi* is sung as an *ārati* (evening hymn) for the sunset offering of light (*battī*) to the Goddess during *navārātrī*. It is also sung during the *phūlpātī* procession. The *maṅgalinī* have the responsibility of escorting the sacred *kalaś* (water pot) to meet the *phūlpātī*. Following the *kalaś pūjā* a length of red and gold cloth is attached to the water pot, and the ends are draped around the shoulders of the senior *maṅgalinī*, the *kalaśinī*. She is robed in red and gold brocade, and the others in their best red and gold saris, and they are shaded by a large fringed umbrella. The women do not sing continuously, but only at the start of the procession, midway, and again during the *phūlpātī pūjā* that takes place before setting off on the return journey. The text of *Jaya Devī Bhairavi* emphasizes the strength and beauty of the Mother, and links her with Gorakhnāth :

jaya devī bhairavi gorakhnāth
ambike jagadambike
jyotī jvālā viśāla āṅkhā bir gīt
kathī kathī
tāta thaiyā tātā thaiyā
nāc saṅga lī joginī

bhaktakā dukha haṭāu janani ambike jagadarnbike
jaya devī bhairavī gorakhnāth.

Long live Goddess Bhairavī and Gorakhnāth,
Ambike, Mother of the World,
Big eyes, full of flaming light, making songs in the mind,
Creating brave sons,
Tāta thaiyā, tātā thaiyā¹⁰
Dance in the company of joginī
Please relieve the pain of your devotees, Mother
Ambike, Mother of the World,
Long live Goddess Bhairavī and Gorakhnāth.

In the original version of this song (i.e. prior to revision by Nir Bīkrām Piasī), the penultimate stanza bestowed blessings on His Majesty Śrī Pañc Bir Bīkrām Śāha Dev. The texts of both *maṅgalinī* versions of *jaya Devī Bhairavī* are very similar to the second text in the collection *rāg malaśrī* mentioned above, which includes a reference to Śrī Rāṇā Bahādur in the penultimate line, and several other songs in this collection mention "*Tribhuvan maṅgal*" These royal references are typical of this genre of devotional song, frequently found in *bhajan* and Newār *dāphā*. Part of the original *maṅgalinī* songtext of *jaya Devī Bhairavī* is included here for comparative purposes, to provide an example of the literary style before revision by Piasī:

R jaya devī bhairavī gorakhnāth, bhairavī devī manāiye

1 aye prathama devī utpanna bhāi hai janma liye kailāsa ye
jyoti jagamaga he ai, jyoti jagamaga cahūdiśa devī
cauṣaṣṭi yoginī sathaye

2 aye jaya devī bhairavī bardāna pāye hai vakata bhayo nepālaye
khāṭa siṃhā sana he ai, khāṭa siṃhā sana jiti liye
bhāratīye saba deśaye

¹⁰ dance *bol*.

3 aye śira makuṭa caṇḍra sabita kuṇḍala jhala kata kānaye
śrī mahārāja dhirāja he, śrī mahārāja dhirāja birendra bira bikram
śaha dev
śira devī bara pāiye (etc.)

The song *kanya pūjā* is reserved for two rites, *kanya khuvāune* (feeding the young girls) and *kumārī pūjā* (worship of the living goddess), which take place daily during Dasaī at Gorkhā Darbār, but which at Nuwākoṭ take place only on *mahānavamī*. At Nuwākoṭ, nine young Brahmin girls aged between 2 and 10 are selected for *kanya khuvāune*. The ceremony is performed by a Brahmin priest in the Satali Darbār, beginning with a *Gaṇeś pūjā*, for which the *maṅgalinī* sing Śrī *Gaṇeś pūjā*. Then the young girls are worshipped as goddesses, having their feet washed, receiving offerings and the priest's obeisance, whilst the women sing *kanya pūjā*. The *maṅgalinī* also pay their respects to the girls, who are then feasted and given gifts.

The *kalaśinī* officiates for the *kumārī pūjā*, whilst the other *maṅgalinī* sing *kanya pūjā*. A young Brahmin girl is selected to be the 'living goddess', and she is worshipped as such during this rite, is feasted and receives gifts like those given to the nine *kanya ketī*. The text of *kanya pūjā* describes aspects of the worship of the Goddess, and is in the tone of a supplicant addressing the Mother :

he māi pañca kumārī bhaktakī timī pālani
uttar parbat himāl najik
timro sthān sabaitira
rāto vastra rāto candana pūjāna gardachaū
hajūrko bhakti bhāvana jāndainaū
ehi khusī hou praṇamale
he māi pañca kumārī bhaktakī timī pālani.

Oh Mother, five kumārī devotees serve you.
In the northern hills, near the mountains,
Your shrines are everywhere.

We offer you red clothes and a red canopy.
We do not know how to worship you.
Be pleased with our obeisance,
Oh Mother, five kumārī devotees serve you.

These songs are sung at Gorkhā Darbār, Nuwākōṭ and Basantpur without variation, although the range of ritual duties of the *maṅgalinī* varies between these locations. The fact that the entire repertoire of the *maṅgalinī* comprises just ten songs, seven of which are sung during Dasaī, of which five are performed exclusively within the framework of the festival, is one indication of the importance of 'auspicious' (*mangal*) music to the celebration of Dasaī.

Apart from the sacrificial song, *le le hānāu le le le*, the texts of the *maṅgalinī* Dasaī songs centre on the Goddess as the benevolent Mother, not as the terrifying killer of demons. *Jaya Bindya Basini*, *Bhairavī Devī* and *kanya pūjā* are gentle songs to the Mother, praising her, offering her full devotion, and describing aspects of her worship. *Kanya pūjā* has the tone of a child addressing her Mother, with an apology for the inadequacy of the supplicant's worship. *Dhanya dhanya* offers thanks to the gracious Mother, and describes her great beauty, and *Jaya Devī Bhairavī* addresses the strong Mother of the World, who brings forth brave sons. As a collection, these songs praise and offer worship to the Mother Goddess, in return for her care and benevolence.

Only during blood sacrifice do the *maṅgalinī* directly call up the terrifying aspect of the Goddess, in their sacrificial song *le le*, when the ritual context would seem to demand this. This side of her character does appear in *Śrī Gaṇeś pūjā*, but in the context of a *Gaṇeś pūjā* before battle. For the most part, the Dasaī songs sung by the *maṅgalinī* concern the Goddess as Mother and bestower of blessings, and through singing about her, the *maṅgalinī* themselves can be identified with the benevolent aspect of the Goddess. As female musicians, the *maṅgalinī* represent something of an exceptional case in Nepalese society, as public musical performance is normally the prerogative of men (Tingey 1994:8-9).

Even the performance of devotional songs at shrines is male dominated, although in Kathmandu (e.g. at Swayambhunath) some women are participating these days, and a relatively small number of women are involved in the Kathmandu Valley classical music scene.

The performance of *mālaśrī* (by men) is a very popular devotional activity during Dasaī. For example, at Gorkhā Darbār, each morning from *ghaṭasthāpanā* to *phūlpātī*, a group of Newar men ('*Shrestha*') from Gorkhā Bājār gather to sing *mālaśrī* hymns at the Darbār, accompanying themselves on *tablā* and harmonium, as part of their morning devotions. At Lamjung Darbār, even though *maṅgalinī* are in attendance, they do not participate in the *phūlpātī* procession, or in the procession to dispose of the *phūlpātī* on *daśamī*. This is the prerogative of male singers, who sing with great vehemence, often shouting the words and gesticulating widely, in a devotional frenzy. According to Marie Lecomte (personal communication), *mālaśrī* are usually sung in old Hindi by men, usually by Brahmins. Some of them even enter into a trance while singing.

Professional female musical performance is confined to the lowest castes (e.g. Bādi), and normally carries the stigma of prostitution. This is certainly not the case with the *maṅgalinī*, who are extremely respectable, and respected, high caste women, and thus, represent a unique category of Indo-Nepalese musician.

Apart from singing, the *maṅgalinī* have a number of other important ritual duties to perform during Dasaī, and these duties also align them with the benevolent side of the Goddess. For example, at Gorkhā Darbār during the afternoon of *daśamī*, they are the main protagonists in *phāgu khelne*, 'playing with colours', a rite in which they throw red dye and powder (*abir*) over the priests and their assistants (*susāre*). The women lean out from first floor windows, joyously drenching the men as they circumambulate the sacrificial courtyard below. After three circuits, the scarlet priests and their assistants storm the building, and a free tussle with the *maṅgalinī* ensues, until everyone is dyed completely red, in the manner of a *holi* celebration. The red dye represents Kālīkā's

menstrual blood, the paramount life-affirming blessing, which the *maṅgalinī* dispense liberally in this exuberant rite of renewal (Tingey 1994:Ch.7). Thus, the *maṅgalinī* become the Mother Goddess's handmaidens in a rite which bestows fertility and life during the coming year.

A few days later, on *puṇimā*, the *maṅgalinī* at Gorkhā must prepare and serve a huge feast for all the Darbār personnel, using the sacrificial meat that has been offered to, and thus blessed by Kālikā. Once again, the women are aligned with the benevolent, life sustaining aspect of the Goddess, providing food for her servants.

Lynn Bennett argues that the two aspects of the Devī are spiritual projections of the ideology surrounding affinal and consanguineal Indo-Nepalese high-caste women (1983:261-308), and although we are looking from a reverse perspective, still, we find some salient points. For example, Bennett says that 'we might characterize the gentle aspect of Devī as the pure (yet alluring), devoted wife and the gentle, nurturing mother' (1983:262), and that with regard to her terrifying aspect, 'despite (her) threatening image and the strong associations with blood, Durga is not directly connected with affinal women' (1983:262), two statements that are reflected in the *maṅgalinīs'* apparent alignment with the Goddess's benevolent aspect. Bennett maintains that worship of the Goddess in her various fierce manifestations is primarily a male activity, from which women may be barred (1983:264, 269), whilst females concern themselves predominantly with worship of her in her gentler forms, a type of *pūjā* which may be scorned by men (1983:307, f.n.11) - once again, a pattern that conforms to our categories of Dasai musician and their ritual domain.

The *maṅgalinī* say that they are 'auspicious women' because they sing *maṅgal gīt* (auspicious songs). In other words, they become auspicious through the songs that they sing. However, the concept of the auspicious woman occupies a central place in Hindu ideology, and stems from woman's life-giving powers as mother. Marglin comments, 'Women are the harbingers of auspiciousness, a state which... speak(s) of well-being and health or more generally,

of all that creates, promotes and maintains life' (1985a:19). Within marriage, the power of female fertility is controlled and directed for the good of society, and thus, marriage is an auspicious state, and the wedding is the most auspicious life-cycle rite. In such an ideological framework, widows are regarded as highly inauspicious, and it is interesting to note that all the Royal *maṅgalinī* are married (but not those of the Rānās), and if one of them becomes widowed, she must be pensioned off and replaced.¹¹ Widowhood deprives the *maṅgalinī* of their auspicious status.

The Mother Goddess is associated with fertility in its widest sense, encompassing both human procreation and agricultural prosperity, and these themes find expression in a number of Dasai observances. For example, the ten-day cultivation of barley seed must, as Bennett suggests, 'signify the fertility and prosperity - the "riches, grains and children" - which Durga bestows on her devotees when she is pleased' (1983:271).

In the human sphere, Gonda maintains that the association of woman and procreative power extends far beyond the realm of female fertility, to encompass agricultural productivity, for 'according to a widespread belief there exists an indubitable solidarity between woman and agriculture, an intimate connection between female fertility and the fecundity of the soil...' (1975:89-90). Whether or not this is true for the *maṅgalinī*, still there is an ideological parallelism between the auspicious life-bestowing attributes associated with the benevolent side of the Mother Goddess and the auspicious qualities inherent in her hand-maidens, the *maṅgalinī*, which may explain their alignment with this aspect of the deity during the celebration of the Royal Dasai.

¹¹The auspiciousness of the *devadāsī* of Puri stems from the fact that they can never be widowed, because they are married to a deity - Lord Jagannātha - and not to a mortal husband. They represent the 'wife whose husband is always alive... the woman who never becomes a widow, the one who is always auspicious' (Marglin 1985b:74).

Damāi ensembles

In the *Śrī Śrī Caṇḍī* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Śakti is glorified as the Mother Goddess who descends to earth as Durgā to rescue the world from demons. Chapter Two describes the terrific battle between the demon army and the forces of Good led by the Goddess, accompanied by the sounds of thousands of conches and the beat of war drums. The association of the warlike, bloodthirsty aspect of the Mother Goddess with bands of conches and drums explains the widespread use of shawms and kettledrums, often in combination with other martial-type instruments, at her shrines.

Kettledrums are the fundamental component of all three types of Damāi ritual music ensemble played at Gorkhā Darbār and Nuwākot - *pañcai bājā*, *nagarā bānā* and *zor damāhā*. This is not really surprising since the Damāi are named after one of their kettledrums, *damāhā*, the bass drum of the *pañcai bājā*.¹²

In addition to the ritual music ensembles, Damāi bandmen from the Nepalese army escort a company of soldiers in the *phūlpātī* procession, playing bass drums, snare drums and bugles. The early history of this type of band coincides with that of the traditional Damāi ensembles, which have not always been the humble wedding bands we know today, but were once prestigious state symbols and at the vanguard on ancient battlefields. In this section, the *pañcai bājā*, *nagarā bānā* and *zor damāhā* kettledrum ensembles will be introduced, and then their martial past will be demonstrated.

Pañcai bājā

'*Pañcai bājā*' ('five instruments') is a generic term for the mixed ensemble of shawms, kettledrums, cymbals and natural trumpets and/or horns played by the Damāi. The band is essentially a village ensemble, found across the mid-hills of Nepal, wherever Indo- Nepalese castes have settled. As the ubiquitous village

¹²The other type of large kettledrum played by the Damāi *nagarā*, differs from the *damāhā* in that it is played with two sticks rather than one, tends to be larger in size, and is only used in the context of sacred music at temples.

wedding band, it takes a variety of forms and rarely has only five instruments, nine being the optimum number.

The band is also in use at temples. At Gorkhā Darbār the *Pañcai bājā* consists of six instruments - *sahanai* (shawm), *damāhā* (large kettledrum), *ṭyāmkō* (small kettledrum), *ḍholaki* (double-headed drum), *jhyāli* (cymbals) and *kamāl* (long straight natural trumpet). The Damāi are employed by Gorkhā Darbār throughout the year to play during the worship of Kālīkā each *āṣṭamī*, and for other festivals. Previously, they were remunerated in land, and the posts were hereditary, but today, the Damāi receive a monthly salary.¹³

The repertoires of village *pañcai bājā* are extensive and varied, but that of the Gorkhā Darbār ensemble is confined to seven highly individual items, each of which has a clearly defined ritual context. Five of these seven pieces are played exclusively in the context of Dasāi,¹⁴ and these items demarcate the ritual succession of the festival. At Gorkhā, Dasāi falls into five ritual stages. During *navarātrī* there are two stages - the preparation for Dasāi, from *ghaṭasthāpanā* to *phūlpātī* (days 1-7), when the *pañcai bājā* plays *mālaśrī*, the music of the season (ex.6), followed by the sacrificial stage, from *bhadrakālī* (the seventh night) to *mahānavami*, accompanied by the sacrificial music, *navagā* (ex.7), (a condensation of *Nava Durgā*) and the *satar kaṭne bākya* (ex.8), 'big one's cutting tune'. The climactic tenth day marks the third stage - that of joyful celebration, which continues for four days (tenth-thirteenth), when the band plays *phāgu* (music of the month of Phāgun, ex. 9), to the partial conclusion of Dasāi, when the music switches to *cācari* (ex.10). The fourteenth day (*caturdaśī*) heralds

¹³At Nuwākot, Dasāi is on a much smaller scale than at Gorkhā, and the *pañcai bājā* has a less significant role to play. The band is specially formulated for the Dasāi festival, and its repertoire consists of just two items - *mālaśrī* (ex. 11), the music of the season, and a sacrificial musical item, the *mār hālne cāl* (ex.12). Nuwākot Damāi are still payed in land for their musical services.

¹⁴The othertwo items are *asāre* (relating to Asār), played during the rice-transplanting season, and *chasore maṅgal* 'auspicious six-sound', which is played throughout the remainder of the year.

the fourth stage - another day of blood sacrifice (with a reprise of the sacrificial music, *navagā*), and *purṇimā* ends Dasāī with the concluding rites (resumption of the all-purpose ritual music - *chasore maṅgal*, 'auspicious six-sound').

Mālaśrī inaugurates the Dasāī season at Gorkhā. It is played by the *pañcai bājā* first on the *āṣṭamī* (*bhaumāṣṭamī vratam*) thirty days before *mahāṣṭamī* during a ceremony in which the director (*hakim*) of the Darbār invites all the priests and other personnel to participate in the festival. This is the only occasion on which a full rendition of *mālaśrī* is played¹⁵. An abbreviated form of *mālaśrī* (given in ex. 6) is played for most of the rites up until the return of the *phūlpātī* procession on the seventh day of Dasāī. For example, on *ghaṭasthāpanā mālaśrī* is played during the sunrise move of Kālikā from her usual resting place to join other images in the *pūjā* room (*Dasāī ghar*). It is played again during the barley seed (*jamārā*) planting ritual, and for the daily offerings and *ārati pūjā* which take place until *phūlpātī*. Finally, it is played throughout the *phūlpātī* procession.

At sunset on *phūlpātī*, the second stage of Dasāī is heralded by a change of music from *mālaśrī* to *navagā*, the sacrificial piece (ex.7), which is played first to accompany the goat sacrifice that establishes the *phūlpātī*. From this point until midday on *vijayā daśamī*, and all day on *caturdāśī navagā* accompanies all the sacrificial rites (apart from the sacrifice of the biggest buffalo, the *satār*), including the ceremony for the sacrificial knives (*khargamāi pūjā*) during *bhadrakālī*, the propitiation of hundreds of sacrificial buffaloes and goats, the sacrifice of a large black goat during *kāl-rātri*, and of a white sheep during the rites on behalf of the King's horse (*reaūte pūjā*), and the skinning of the *satar*.

The *pañcai bājā* also plays *navagā* for other rites that fall within the sacrificial stage of the festival, for example, during the raising of new banners (*patāka*) for Kālikā and the hanging of a canopy (*canduvā*) above the sacrificial courtyard. In addition, it must be played during the preparation of the sacrificial courtyard

¹⁵ The *bhaumāṣṭamī vratam* rendition of *mālaśrī* is included on the CD.

(*paṭaṅginī*), which includes the spreading of cow-dung paste (*gobar*), the drawing of *maṅḍala* with rice flour (*rekhi*) and the placing of a lampstand (*pānas*), immediately prior to the sacrificing.¹⁶

At sunset on *mahānavamī* the sacrificial music (*navagā*) is interrupted by a special piece that accompanies the propitiation and sacrifice of the biggest buffalo (*satār*) - the *satār kāṭne bākya* (big one's cutting tune). The *satār* is dispatched when the sun is exactly half set - in other words, when it is neither night nor day. The *satār kāṭne bākya* is played just once more - for the sacrifice of the last and smallest buffalo, after which *navagā* is resumed.

Two other pieces are introduced on *vijayā daśamī*. The first of these - *phāgu* - is the seasonal music for the month of *Phāgun* (Feb-Mar), and is associated particularly with the celebration of the *Holi* festival, during which coloured powder and dye are thrown about (*phāgu khelne*). On *vijayā daśamī*, the *pañcai bājā* plays *phāgu* to accompany the *phāgu khelne* of the *maṅgalinī*, priests and their assistants. This piece is played again during Kālikā's return journey from the *Dasāī ghar* to a halfway resting place, and later, during the procession to dispose of the *phūlpātī*.

Once the *phūlpātī* has been ritually jettisoned, the *pañcai bājā* plays a new piece *cācari* - which marks a joyful relaxation of tension (Tingey 1994:89-90). *Cācari* is played during the return journey, interspersed with popular repertoire, and again upon arrival at the Darbār.

On the last day of Dasāī (*purṇimā*), the piece *chasore maṅgal* (auspicious six-sound) is reinstated by the *pañcai bājā* during the final stage of Kālikā's journey back to her attic room. This piece is played throughout the year (until the next Dasāī), and its

¹⁶ At two shrines in Dhading - Jamruṅ Darbār and Salyānkoṭ (Map 1), the mixed functions of *navagā* are divided between two musical items. A distinction is made between the music to accompany the preparation of a sacrificial area - the *rekhi hālne bākya* ('rice-flour putting tune') or *māru* ('death') - and the music to accompany the sacrifice - the *mār hālne cāl* ('death-giving *tāl*' or *kāṭne bākya* ('cutting tune')).

resumption marks the re-establishment of the status quo after the turmoil of Dasāi.

Nagarā bānā

At Gorkhā Darbār, for the veneration of Kālikā, the *pañcai bājā* is joined by a nine piece ensemble, also played by Damāi musicians. This band, the *nagarā bānā* (kettledrum ensemble), plays simultaneously with, and independently of the *pañcai bājā*. It is used exclusively in the context of the adoration of Kālikā, that is, for the bi-monthly sacrifices on *āṣṭamī* (eighth day of the lunar cycle), and at *caite* and *thūlo* Dasāi. It comprises a pair of shawms, *nagarā* (kettledrum), and a number of natural trumpets and horns in various shapes and sizes - *kamāl*, *dhop bānā*, *kāhal*, *bijuli bānā*, *bheri* and *sikhār*.¹⁷ The shawms (identical to the *sahanai* of the *pañcai bājā*) are called *rāsa*, after the single musical item which they play, an unmetred and rhapsodic piece.

The *nagarā* is the most important instrument in the ensemble, and the music is measured in terms of the number of drumming sequences (*murrā*) sounded by this resonant kettledrum, the relative importance of the various rites being marked by either five, seven, or most commonly, nine *murrā*. One Dasāi rite (*śaṅkha dhuni*) requires twenty-seven repetitions of three *murrā*. Essentially, one *murrā* consists of a drum beat which is gradually accelerated into a roll, after which the next *murrā* begins at a slightly faster tempo than the initiating speed of the previous one, so that there is an overall acceleration through the music. None of the trumpets and horns are used melodically, but each has its own distinctive fanfare on one to three pitches, which is inserted at intervals at the player's discretion.

¹⁷A related ensemble of five instruments is in daily use in the worship of Gorakhnāth. These instruments, one each of *rāsa*, *nagarā*, *karnāl*, *dhop bānā* and *kāhal*, are not used in any other context, or in combination with the other ensembles. The fact that these two ritual ensembles comprise nine and five instruments respectively is noteworthy, these numbers being particularly auspicious in Hindu numerology, and these numbers recur in many musical and ritual contexts.

Animal sacrifice involves two principle ritual stages - the propitiation (*manāune*) and the subsequent sacrifice (*kāṭne*) of the offering. Gorkhā *nagarā bānā* play for the cutting of the animals, rather than during their propitiation, supplying five *murrā* for each buffalo, apart from the biggest and the smallest, each of which get nine, and nine *murrā* for the start and finish of the mass sacrifice of goats (as many as fifty-four at a time). By contrast, the *pañcai bājā* plays *navagā* during the propitiation of animals and may or may not continue playing during their sacrifice. Thus, on *mahāṣṭamī* and *mahānavamī* the *pañcai bājā* and *nagarā bānā* play alternately during the continuous sacrifice of buffaloes (fifty-four animals over two days), the piece *navagā* being sounded until the *nagarā bānā* takes over, in a virtually unbroken cacophony of shawms and kettledrums.

The skin of the biggest buffalo (*satār*) is used for the kettledrums of the Kālikā and Gorakhnāth *nagarā bānā* the right half for Gorakhnāth and the left for Kālikā, and the musicians believe that depending on which side the buffalo falls during sacrifice, that side's *nagarā* will be blessed with a good tone for the coming year. In their myths, Damāi attribute the origin of their musical instruments to the dismembered body parts of a demon, and each Dasāi this demonic source becomes reality, when Mahiṣāsura is ritually slain, and the skin used for the drums. The skinning of the *satār* is the first ritual event of *vijayā daśamī* and is accompanied by nine *murrā* from the *nagarā bānā* and the sacrificial music of the *pañcai bājā*.

The skin remains in storage in the Darbār for a year until the new moon (*aūsi*) immediately prior to the next Dasāi celebration, when the two Darbār tanners, one each for Kālikā and Gorakhnāth, replace the heads of all the drums used in the Darbār ensembles. The skins of goats sacrificed during Dasāi are used for the heads of the smaller drums. Following the lacing of the *nagarā* heads, the tanners perform a *pūjā* of absolution, sacrificing chickens which are supplied by the Darbār. The lacing of the two *nagarā* is only tightened on specific dates - that of Kālikā's *nagarā* on the

mornings of *phūlpātī* and of Caite Dasaī, and that of Gorakhnāth on these two occasions, and again at *bhaṇḍara aūsi*.¹⁸

Jor damāhā

During Dasaī, the employment of Damāi to play additional kettledrums (*damāhā* or *nagarā*) at temples seems to be a fairly widespread practice. Sometimes single kettledrums are played, but frequently one finds pairs of kettledrums (*jor damāhā*), either with one player, or divided between two musicians. At Nuwakoṭ a kettledrum pair (with a single musician) plays several times daily during *navarātrī* at sacred locations (including Taleju and Bhairavī temples, the Satali Darbār and the *dhamī's* house), and a single *nagarā* is played at the vanguard of the *phulpatī* procession.

At Gorkhā, throughout *navarātrī* there are daily *pūjā* at Upalokoṭ and Tallokoṭ, the sites of Magar and Ghale fortresses captured by Drabya Śāha, on the hills rising to the east and west of the Darbār, and on *mahāṣṭamī* and *mahānavamī* there are blood sacrifices at these shrines. The rituals are accompanied throughout by a Damāi playing a *damāhā* with two sticks (ex.13).

At Gorkhā Darbār itself, for the first seven days (from *ghaṭasthāpanā* to *phūlpātī* of Dasaī a *jor damāhā* (with two players) sounds the ex. 13 rhythm five times daily at approximately 2p.m., 6p.m., 9p.m., 12a.m. and 4a.m., but these playings do not accompany any ritual activities. Many of the musicians believe that the function of the *jor damāhā* is to announce to the Gorkhā populace that all is well at the Darbār, but opinion is divided, some thinking that the kettledrums are sounded in Kālīkā's honour. On *phūlpātī*, this *jor damāhā* precedes the *pañcai bājā* and *nagarā bānā* in the procession that escorts the *phūlpātī* to the Darbār, playing a rhythm (ex.14) that foreshadows the *satār kāṭne bākya* of the *pañcai bājā*. Once the *phūlpātī* has been established, the *jor damāhā* amalgamates with the *pañcai bājā*, and does not play independently again. Apart from Caite Dasaī, when the *jor damāhā* augments the *pañcai bājā*, this pair is not played at any other time of the year.

¹⁸The *kul-devatā pūjā* of the Darbār's *kanphaṭā yogi*, during Śrāvan.

Historical background to the damāi ensembles

The origin of the various Damāi kettledrum ensembles is the Middle Eastern - Central Asian shawm and kettledrum band, *ṭabl* or *naqqāra khānā* (Tingey 1994:22ff). In the Abbasid Empire (750-1258), the periodic playing (*nauba*) three or five times daily of a kettledrum or a shawm and kettledrum band (*ṭabl khānā*) was the prerogative of the khalifs, a prestigious symbol of their power and splendour. From the second half of the tenth century, the band and the three- or five-fold *nauba* were honours which could be conferred on deserving generals, ministers and governors (Farmer 1929:207-8).

[The Mughals of Persia had] a monster kettledrum (*kūrka*) almost the height of a man which was played in pairs... It was part of the royal insignia and its tones accompanied the royal edicts. On the death of a sultan, after being played at the royal obsequies, it was broken to pieces (Farmer 1939:12-3).

This suggests that the kettledrums were inseparably linked with the identity of the sultan, so that their independent existence was impossible.

The *naqqāra khānā* was carried to North India by Turko-Afghan Muslims from Central Asia, and became very well established there by the fourteenth century. The function of the band included playing from balconies and terraces of palaces, fortresses and city gates to sound the hours of the day or to announce the arrival of visiting dignitaries.

In India, as in Central Asia, the *naqqāra khānā* was a prestigious status symbol reflecting rank and power, and could be conferred by the emperor. Consequently, the ensemble of greatest pomp and magnitude was that which graced the court of the emperor himself. That of Akbar was described by Abu'l Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari* of c.1590 as consisting of:

about 18 pairs of Luwa~ah or damānah (large kettledrums) 'which give a deep sound'

about 20 pairs of *naqqārah* (kettledrums)

4 *duhul* (double-headed drums)

at least 4 *karana* (natural trumpets) of gold, silver, brass and other metals

9 Persian and Indian *surna* (shawms)

some each of Persian, European and Indian *nafr* (natural trumpets)

2 brass *sing* (natural horns) 'made in the form of a cow's horn'

3 pairs of *sanj* (cymbals). (Abu'l Fazl 1875:211).

The function of Akbar's *naqqāra khānā* included sounding the hours of day and bestowing auspicious blessings on the emperor.

The arrival of the kettledrum band in Nepal is difficult to date precisely, but the ensemble appears to have been carried into Nepal from Rajputana by court musicians fleeing with their patrons from a succession of Muslim aggressors, from Ala-ud-Din (1303) to Akbar (1568), although it is impossible to determine during which wave of migration it arrived (Tingey 1994:24-9).

Musical activity at Nepalese temples pre-dates the arrival of the kettledrum in Nepal, however, dating as far back as the Licchavi period (A.D.300-750). Some Licchavi inscriptions survive, for example, those of Lele, south of Patan, dating from A.D. 605, and at Upalokoṭ, Gorkhā, dating from A.D.699, but these do not clearly identify the instruments in use, and leave much to conjecture. The most informative Licchavi inscription to mention music is that of Harigaṇ, north-east Kathmandu, dating from 'Samvat 30' (A.D.?), which lists payments to court employees, and includes *Jyāndīśāṅkhavādyoḥ* as payees, who received '25 pu' (Regmi 1983:V72). Regmi (1983:IV44) translates this as 'drummers and conch blowers (*Jyāndīśāṅkhavādayoḥ*), but Bajracarya (BS2030) gives a convincing alternative: *nandī (maṅgal bājā) bājāune ra śāṅkha phūknelāi 25 purāṇa'* (to the player of the auspicious instrument and to the conch-blower, 25 *purāṇa*). His translation of *nandī* as *maṅgala* (auspicious) is based on other appearances of the word *nandīvādyā* in a 7th century treatise - the *Harṣa caritra*. It is clear, at least, that the conch was in use in Nepal during the Licchavi era as a court and/or ritual instrument that was paid for by the royal treasury.

Much evidence suggests that an ensemble of conch and drums was prevalent in South Asia long before the arrival of the *ṭabl* or *naqqāra khānā*, and the conch often featured in auspicious ensembles of five types of instrument. Still, today, in many parts of South India, the conch functions in this capacity (Tingey 1994:20-2). On the Ancient Indian battlefield, the thundering of drums and blaring of trumpets and conches was essential, as described in the Epics (Shakuntala 1968; Homell 1915:13; Kapadia 1953).

The temple music ensembles of Central Nepal do not include the conch - it is a ritual object used by priests. However, frequently it is played simultaneously with, but independently of the *nagarā bānā* during daily rituals, the Brahmin playing conch from inside the shrine, and the *Damāi* playing outside. In India at least (perhaps also in Nepal?), conch-blowing has not always been the prerogative of the ritually pure, with Tamil barbers (Homell 1915:30) and other low castes (Sambamurti 1962: 19-20) having this duty. Thus, it is feasible that once the shawm and kettledrum band had arrived in South Asia, it quickly took over some of the ritual and martial functions of the conch, which is extremely limited as a musical instrument.

Drums with sacred or military functions have been in use in South Asia since ancient times. According to Shakuntala, the *R̥gveda* (VI, 47, 29-31) hails the drum *dundubhi*¹⁹ as 'accordant with gods', 'thundering out strength', 'filling the warriors full of vigour' and 'the first of Indra', and similar phrases are to be found in the *Atharvaveda* (V, 20 21). On the battlefield, the capture of *dundubhi* meant defeat, which indicates the high esteem in which it was held (Shakuntala 1968:6). Five types of instrument comprised the band that assembled on the battlefield of Kurukshetra at the outset of the *Mahābhārata* war (*Bhagavadgīta* I, 13), including

¹⁹The Vedic name *dundubhi* has been interpreted as 'kettledrum', but without positive evidence that such an identification is correct. According to Deva (1978:80), today paired *nagarā* are sometimes called *dundubhi*.

conch and drum (*bherī*).²⁰ The *Jātakas* include many references to the conch in combination with various drums. For example, the *Māga-pakka Jātaka's* description of the preparation for a royal journey in which a mixed ensemble of conch and drums forms part of the entourage (Cowell 1907:vi/14). The *pañcamahāśabda* 'five great sounds' of the *Jātakas* apparently included conch, horn, gong and drums (Fox-Strangways 1914:77; Dick 1984:83). Another ancient drum, a *bherī* mentioned in a Jain text, is said to have had medicinal properties, facilitating the cure of anyone that played it (Kapadia 1953:382-3).

A pair of huge kettledrums, the *dam nagarā* of Gorkhā Darbār provide the earliest evidence for this instrument in Nepal. They bear the inscription : *srī śāke 1531 māse 5 śrī mahārāj chatra śāhasya kṛtiḥ*, 'provided by King Chatra Śāha in the fifth month of 1531 Śāka Saṃvat (A.D.1609)' (Bajracarya and Srestha VS2037:1-8). These *nagarā* were installed at a time of political unrest, and it is probable that they had a military function - possibly they were used to sound the call to arms, or to summon people to hear a royal edict.²¹ Today, these kettledrums are part of the ritual furniture of the Darbār, which, like the cannon and the temple bells, receive offerings from devotees.²²

At least from the reign of Pṛthvinārāyaṇ Śāha (1743-75), the *nagarā-nisāna* 'kettledrum and standards' were honours which could be bestowed on senior servants of the Crown. A royal edict has survived, in which Pṛthvinārāyaṇ Śāha decrees that two of his senior administrators governing in the hills (the *bahrahā* and *umarāu*) were to receive this honour. These men, who were

²⁰*Bherī* is described in the early thirteenth century *Saṅgītaratnākara* as a double-headed barrel drum made of copper, played with a stick on the right face and hand on the left (Dick 1984:81, 94). However, the ancient *bherī* has also been identified as a kettledrum by several writers. Indeed, in present-day South India, *bherī* is a kettledrum (see Sambamurti 1969:263; Day 1891:139).

²¹However, there is some confusion as to chronology, as Chatra Śāha ruled for only seven months, from 1605 A.D. to 1606 A.D., and by the year of the installation of the *nagarā* (1609 A.D.), Rām Śāha was on the Gorkhā throne.

²² The *nagarā* is the most sacred instrument of the Damai ensembles. It is respected as one of the ritual possessions of the deity. See Tingey 1994:Ch.3.

'as strong as Indra's thunderbolt', conducted their duties in Salyan, Liglig and Dhāding in a very praiseworthy manner, and so won the honour of the King's authority to govern - the *nagarā-nisāna* - and annual salaries of 'twelve-times-twenty rupees' (H.M. Govt. of Nepal BS2025:14).

The honour of *nagarā-nisāna* may predate Pṛthvinārāyaṇ's era, however. In the *Gorkhāvamśāvalī* there is a reference pertaining to the early eighteenth century and concerning Udyot Śāha, a son of King Pṛthvīpati Śāha (1667-1715) by his third wife :

Udyot Śāha believed himself to be a Rajput. Taking his wife, sons, daughters and servants and with *nisāna* (banners) and the playing of *nagarā*, he crossed the Gaṇḍaki River and went to the east of the country.²³ (Translated from Naraharinath:VS 2031)

Here the *nagarā* and *nisāna* form part of the royal entourage carried as the emblems of rank and authority.

The title *nagarā-nisāna* existed at least until 1829, because by a royal order dating from this year, an incumbent of this privilege lost some of his land in favour of someone named Kṛṣṇa Jaisi (Naraharinath:VS2022: 311).

The *nagarā-nisāna* tradition recalls that of the honour of the 'three- and five-fold *nauba*' of the Abbasids, although there is no evidence in Nepalese sources to suggest that in this context the *nagarā* was used for periodic playing at set hours of the day.

However, today, during Dasai the *zor damāhā* is played five times daily at Gorkhā Darbār, in the manner of the 'five-fold *nauba*'. Thus, in a ritual context, the periodic playing of kettledrums was established as a Nepalese tradition. Perhaps the *zor damāhā* was introduced at Gorkhā as the *nauba* of the Śāha, and after the court had been moved to Kathmandu, the *zor damāhā* became superfluous, and in the course of time, its function was obscured.

²³ This exodus followed a dispute between Pṛthvīpati's sons over the succession, because the late Crown Prince was without heir. Udyot Śāha was a rival for the throne until Narabhupal Śāha was hailed as the rightful ascendant.

References to military music and musicians date mainly from Pṛthvinārāyaṇ Śāha's period of unification, in the form of army rolls and records, in the various *vamśāvalī* and accounts of military campaigns. Oral history also provides some interesting data, including the rhyme :

*ḍāñ ḍāñ ra ḍuñ ḍāñ.ḍarlagdo bājā
rāti rāti hīdne Gorkhālī rājā'*

'*dang dang* and *dung dung* terrifying instrument,
the Gorkhālī king who walks in the night' ²⁴

which must refer to the kettledrum in use as a military instrument (Darnāl, R.S., VS.2045:92-3).

Oral history also relates that at least from the inception of the Śāha dynasty, the *nagarā* was used in Nepal to announce state proclamations. In Kathmandu, this function was known as *jhyāli pitne* 'drum beating'²⁵ and in the hills, *ghogh hālne*, 'repeating over and over'.²⁶ The *Damāi* and watchman (*kutwāl*) shared this duty, and a *nagarā* used for such a purpose was known as the *raja* or *śahi nagarā* (Darnāl, R.S. VS.2044:28).

Before commencing the campaigns which resulted in the founding of the Kingdom of Nepal, Pṛthvinārāyaṇ Śāha went on a pilgrimage to Varanasi, with a full entourage of ministers and servants. Among the latter, according to the 'Bir Library' *vamśāvalī*, were two to four *nagārci* (*nagarā* players) and another musician who had the honourable title of *visyādamāi* (Naraharinath VS.2022:330). Darnāl suggests that Pṛthvinārāyaṇ heard a British band in Varanasi which prompted him to establish the *śarduljaṅko byāñḍ* 'wild tiger band' (named after his first platoon) in the Nepalese army (VS.2043:9).

²⁴i.e. 'fearless king'.

²⁵*Jhyāli* = a type of drum used by the public crier, hence *jhyāli pitnu* : to announce (Turner 1931:238).

²⁶From *ghok hālne*. *Ghoknu* = to repeat over and over again.

Prior to his attack on the Kathmandu Valley, Pṛthvinārāyaṇ Śāha captured the strategically situated town of Nuwākōṭ in 1744. The 'Bir Library' *vamśāvalī* relates that after the conquest there was a *pūjā*, during which *dīpa*, *kalaś* and Gaṇeś were propitiated, Brahmins recited the Vedas, and the *nagarā* and other (unspecified) instruments played at the auspicious moment when Pṛthvinārāyaṇ Śāha entered the palace (Naraharinath VS.2022:358). The Malla forces retaliated, so that Pṛthvinārāyaṇ Śāha thought it prudent to embolden his army with a rallying speech, upon which the musicians struck up, and they went into battle: '*bājā bājāundae raṇa-bhūmi tarpha gayā*, 'as instruments were being played, they went towards the battle-field' (Naraharinath VS.2022:371).

Concurrently with developing their military bands, the Śāha were also the primary patrons of temple ensembles, dedicating instruments and founding *guṭhi* at a number of shrines. In many instances, this kind of musical offering was made to the Goddess following a victory on the battlefield (Tingey 1994:36-9).

Thus, in Nepalese history and in the wider context of South Asian history, it is clear that musical ensembles of the type played by the *Damāi* have strong military connections in addition to their sacred and/or auspicious functions. At some point in history, it was decided that this warlike and bloodthirsty goddess deserved the awesome reverberations of the kettledrum to manifest her presence, and the band was transferred from battlefield to temple. In the light of the symbolic association of Hindu gods and kings, with the dual concepts of 'kingly god' and 'godly king' (Subramaniam undated:21) the employment of shawms and kettledrums in both court/military and temple contexts is not surprising, especially for a Goddess who epitomizes all the qualities of a great warrior.

Other Dasaī music groups

Apart from the *maṅgalinī* and *Damāi* musicians, upon whom falls the main responsibility for the provision of music during Dasaī, a number of other music groups have smaller rôles to play during the festival. For example, the Magar *susāre* (ritual assistants)

at Gorkhā Darbār have their own band, consisting of a large and a small *mṛdaṅga* - barrel drums with unequal heads, played with the hands - and two pairs of large bowler-hat shaped cymbals called *jhyāli*. The function of the *susāre* band is to lead priestly processions from the secluded interior of the Darbār, from whence their music emanates prior to their appearance in the visible ritual area immediately surrounding the Darbār buildings. Thus, it does not participate in the *phūlpātī* procession, but the rites of Bhadrakālī begin with the *susāre* band leading a procession of priests with their offerings from the Darbār to the sacrificial post in the courtyard for the blessing of the ritual knives (*khadgamāi pūjā*). On *mahāṣṭamī* the band leads the priests to the gateway of the Darbār for the anointing of the biggest and smallest buffaloes. The *susāre* accompany the priests during several other preambulations (Tingey 1990: 198-9), and on each occasion, they play a single rhythmic pattern which is referred to as *phāgu* ²⁷(ex.15). There is no *susāre* band, or corresponding ensemble in operation at Nuwākoṭ during Dasāi.

During Dasāi at Gorkhā, (but not at Nuwākoṭ.) local Gāine - itinerant minstrels - sing their own versions of *mālaśrī* at the Darbār, accompanying themselves on their four string bowed fiddles, *sāraṅgi*, ostensibly for the pleasure of Kālīkā, but also in order to beg a few rupees from devotees.²⁸ On *phūlpātī*, two Gāine take part in the *phūlpātī* procession, preceding all the other musicians.

Conclusion

The range of musics performed in connection with the Royal Dasāi at Gorkhā Darbār and Nuwākoṭ is quite impressive. Each of

²⁷Presumably because it accompanies the *phāgu khelne* of *vijayā daṣamī* although in Far-West Nepal, *phāgu* is synonymous with *maṅgal gīt/dhūn*.

²⁸In this area of Nepal, Gāine have the tradition of singing *mālaśrī* from door to door in the villages, in return for which they receive foodstuffs and/or a little money.

the separate groups of musicians has its own function within the ritual structure of Dasāi²⁹

The musical protagonists of the festival fall into two main groups - female ritual singers and male bandsmen. These two groups between them provide music to accompany almost every ritual that takes place during the Royal celebration of Dasāi. Usually the two groups are spatially separated, performing simultaneously but independently of one another, with the *maṅgalinī* singing primarily from within the temple buildings, and the Damāi playing outside, but occasionally (eg. during the *phūlpātī* procession) they coincide. Their music is highly contrasted, the *maṅgalinī* singing hymns of devotion to the Mother, and the Damāi playing the raucous shawms and kettledrums that previously stirred the troops on the battlefield. Mediating between the two main groups are the *susāre*, whose band leads priestly processions from inside the Darbār to the open air ritual areas.

The repertoires of both the *maṅgalinī* and the Damāi bands consist of context-specific items and other songs/pieces for more general use. In terms of musical *content*, only one item is common to both *maṅgalinī* and *pañcai bājā* (in Nuwākoṭ and Gorkhā) *mālaśrī*, the music of the season, but the functions of this song/piece vary between the groups. There is a coincidence of musical *function* with regard to the specific items of repertoire to be performed during animal sacrifice (*navagā, mār hālne* and *le le hanaū le le le* performed by the *pañcai bājā* of Gorkhā and Nuwākoṭ and the *maṅgalinī* respectively, and the *pañcai bājā* at Gorkhā has a further sacrificial piece to be played during the dispatch of the *satār, satār kaṭne bākyā*). Gorkhā Darbār *nagarā bānā* always plays the same music, but the amount of music to be supplied (*murrā*) is determined by the type of ritual it accompanies.

The Gorkhā Darbār *pañcai bājā* repertoire follows the ritual sequence of the festival, with a dynamic succession of pieces that mark the ritual and temporal progress of the festival. This is not

²⁹For a detailed tabulation, see Tingey 1994: Appendix II

the case with the *maṅgalinī* songs. A five-song sequence, together with a sixth item sung as an *ārati*, and a further song performed during the worship of the young virgin girls (*kanyā pūjā* and *kumārī pūjā*) comprise the *maṅgalinī* Dasai repertoire, and these songs are recapitulated as part of a daily cycle of worship.

The functions of the ritual music played during Dasai are manifold. For example, it operates as a kind of augmented temple bell (*ghaṅṭa*) which devotees ring reverently to announce their presence to the deity. The *maṅgalinī*, *nagarā bānā* and/or *pañcai bājā* awaken the deity to the presence of the officiant, and to the ritual activity in which he is engaged on behalf of the King and community. When the Goddess graces officiants with her presence she is treated as an honoured guest, receiving food and offerings and music forms a part of her 'royal welcome' (*archaka*). The music creates an auspicious environment in which offerings may be bestowed upon the deity, countering any inauspicious omens that threaten the efficacy of the ritual.

Music plays a central rôle in the celebration of the Royal Dasai, not only supplying the ritual needs of the festival, but also reinforcing the status of the King as the supreme *jajmān* - the one who has a sacrifice performed on his behalf. The shotguns and the official music groups announce that the King has had so many buffaloes and goats sacrificed, so that the music also serves as a Royal status symbol, in the same way that the *naubā* was a hallmark for the Abbasids.

The two contrasting facets of the Goddess's nature are symbolically manifest physically and aurally by the music of the *maṅgalinī* and the *Damāi*, which are sounded simultaneously and in various juxtapositions throughout the Dasai festival. Whilst the *Damāi* music is redolent of the Goddess's victory on the battlefield, the songs of the *maṅgalinī* recall her motherly care and life-affirming graciousness.

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Appendix

Ex.1: Mālaśrī (maṅgalinī)

♩ - 110

Ga - ṇe - sa pū - jāū na - dī ki - nā - ra - mā can - dra va - da - na mṛ - ga lo - ca - nī

Ex.2: Jaya Bindya Bāsini

♩ - 116

Jaya Bin - dya Bā - si - nī ti - mi bha - va - nī Tan ma - na sā rā āph - no ti - mi - mā

Ex.3: Bhairavi Devi

♩ - 110

Bhai - ra - vi De - vi tim - ro - sa - ra - ṇa mā Hā - mi āy - aū hā - mi āy - aū

Ex.4: Le le

♩ - 112

Le - le hā - nau le - le le dai - tyā - sa mār - na kharga cyā - pe kī

Ex.5: Dhanya dhanya

♩ - 44

Dhan - ya dhan - ya dhan - ya mā - tā dhan - ya guj - ya Kā - li - kā Ti - mi - nai ko - ṭi can - dra vadana

Ex.6: Mālaśrī (Gorkhā Darbār pañcai bājā)

♩ = 138

dholaki

jhyāli

damāhā

Ex.7: Navagā

♩ = 152

Ex.8: Satār kāṭhe bākya

♩ = 78

all drums & jhyāli

Ex.9: Phāgu

♩ = 80

dholaki

jhyāli

damāhā

etc.

Transposed pitch = Actual pitch

Ex.10: Căcări

The musical score for Ex.10: Căcări is presented in three systems. The first system includes three staves: a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 2/4 time signature; an instrumental line for 'dholaki' in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature; and an instrumental line for 'jhyāli' in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. The 'damāhā' part is indicated by a series of vertical stems on a staff below the 'jhyāli' staff. The second system continues the vocal and instrumental parts. The third system continues the vocal and instrumental parts, ending with a double bar line. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 98.