Traditional, Folk, Fusion, and conFusion:

Music and Change in the Newar Communities of Nepal

Subhash Ram Prajapati

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Reading Committee:

Shannon Dudley, Chair

Christina Sunardi

David Henderson

Ratna Maya Magarati

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Abstract

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Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Shannon Dudley
Music

This dissertation explores the musical changes in the Newar communities from the 1920s to 2018. For centuries, the indigenous people from Kathmandu, the Newars have been practicing predominantly Hindu and Buddhist culture, inviting comparison with India before the Mughal invasion of the sixteenth century. Since Nepal was never invaded by the Mughals, the scholars argue that the Newars and their music offer us a glimpse into an archaic South Asian culture. The Newar musical culture, which is often contemplated as untouched tradition that has been in practice for centuries, these days is undergoing a lot of rapid changes in content and the context mainly as a result of media, migration, and modernization. In a relatively short period of time, there has been a huge increase in women participation in traditional music, the caste barrier has been heavily relaxed and some traditional musicians have paved a way for commercialization.

On the one hand, traditional and folk music has been revitalized in many communities through newly formed gender and caste inclusive music groups. On the other hand, the music has been recontextualized and repositioned by changing repertoire, playing styles, modifying instruments and fusing with various other musical instruments, styles, and genres. This study focuses on these changes and analyzes these from the viewpoints of the ecology of music culture, modernism, and Newar musical identity.

In this study, I examine the historical narrative, current position and an overall health of traditional Newar music in a global perspective of the ecology of music cultures. This study shows that the presumably static Newar music tradition is changing as musical performances are separated from their ritual context in various ways and degrees, a change that I characterize as a shift from practice to performance. The study also examines the relationship between "traditional" ritual music and "modern" styles that incorporate pop and world music. I review socio-political influences, motivations of musical changes and argue the appearance of fusion music as "indigenous modernity" or "alternative modernity". I demonstrate new musical groups have brought significant changes in Newar music tradition in terms of gender and caste inclusiveness as well as financial sustainability. I also demonstrate that the new groups have developed a strong sense of ethnic identity. This study contributes to the ethnographic literature on musical tradition and change with special attention to gender, modernity, and discourses on ethnic and national identity.

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NOTES ON THE TRANSLITERATION

In this dissertation, I have transliterated non-English words and phrases using international standard for romanization ISO 15919 (Transliteration of Devanagari and related Indic scripts into Latin characters) with few exceptions. Rather than strictly following ISO 15919, in some cases, I have adopted the common ways that Nepalese transliterate Nepalbhasa or Nepali.

For short nasal sound (Sanskrit: anunasika), I have used ñ and for long nasal sound (Sanskrit: anusvara) I have used ṅ: for example, lañ as in lung and laṅ as in long. Since I used ñ and ṅ for the nasal sounds, I have used nga (ṅ in ISO 15919) for ङ as in jungle and yna (ñ in ISO 15919) for ञ as in yon. Similarly, I have used cha (ca in ISO 15919) for च as in chalk. For छ (aspirated cha), I have used chha (cha in ISO 15919) while for व I have used wa (va in ISO 15919) as in won. Below I summarize all the vowels and consonants how they have been written in the transliterations in this dissertation.

Vowels

अ a	आ ā	इ i	ई ī	उ u	ऊ ū
ए e	ऐ ai	ओ o	औ ou	अं aṅ	अः aḥ

Consonants

क ka	ख kha	ग ga	घ gha	ङ nga
च cha	छ chha	ज ja	झ jha	ञ yna
ट ṭa	ठ ṭha	ड ḍa	ढ ḍha	ण ṇa
त ta	थ tha	द da	ध dha	न na
प pa	फ pha	ब ba	भ bha	म ma
य ya	र ra	ल la	व wa	
श śa	ष ṣa	स sa	ह ha	
क्ष ksa	त्र tra	ज्ञ gya		

Throughout the dissertation, I have italicized non-English words. I have not italicized or used diacritics for proper names, mainly for names of a person or a place. Similarly, I have italicized colloquial Newar surnames (eg. *Sāymi, Nāy etc.*), but not the formal surnames they use these days (eg. Manandhar, Sahi etc.) I have also not italicized terms that are commonly used in English-language discourse, for instance, Nepal, Newar and Nepalbhasa.

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has provided me with endless support and encouragement. His works on Newar music attracted me to study ethnomusicology at the University of Washington. I cannot thank enough to Patricia Campbell for unending patience and careful advising. She always had answers to all my queries. Philip Schuyler, Laurel Sercombe, and John Vallier all offered thought-provoking courses which I'll be always grateful for. I owe great thanks to graduate school advisor Brenda Banks and Michiko Sakai for the administrative helps.

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DEDICATION

To my father Ganesh Ram Lachhi and mother Ratna Keshari Lachhi, who taught me to dream big; and my wife Chetana Shakya who always believed in and supported my dreams.

CHAPTER 1: THE BEGINNING

Background

This dissertation presents the findings of my recent years of ethnographic research in Kathmandu, Nepal (2016-2017), augmented by my personal experiences playing and listening to music in Nepal. Its focus is the study of Newar music and its changes. My emphasis is on the traditional form of Newar music and how the traditional music is being used today, having adapted to changes in content and context.

As a Newar traditional musician, I recall learning to play the *pachhimā,* a double headed Newar drum. I was a child living in Thimi, Bhaktapur – a small town in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. I was required to memorize everything; the *guru* did not allow me to write any repertoires. I would go home and write down all the repertoires I had learned that day. One day, the guru discovered a small note of the repertoire I had written. I was severely reprimanded, and made to destroy everything I had written. I can recall another incident from the hardships I had to endure while learning *guṅlā bājaṅ*[1] Buddhist music in a Bajracharya[2] music group. Since I was from a comparatively lower caste family (I was the first and the only member from a different caste), there were some restrictions to my access for certain processes and places. I had also wanted to learn *chachā*[3] music, but the guru insistently refused to teach me due to my caste status. Since neither did the children from the Bajracharya families learn *chachā* from the guru,

[1] *Guṅlā* is the tenth month according to Nepal Sambat lunar calendar. It falls around August/September. *Guṅlā Bājaṅ* is a Buddhist devotional music played daily for the morning pilgrimage during the month of *Guṅlā*.

[2] A Bajracharya is a Vajrayana Buddhist priest and considered a high caste in Newar communities.

[3] A venerable form of Buddhist devotional song and dance.

many *chachā* songs and dances, which are not performed anywhere in the Kathmandu valley, became extinct after the demise of the guru in late 1990s. The consequence of restricting teaching to certain castes and not changing the tradition was loss of the unique musical culture forever.

The situation has changed now. I have experienced a wide range of changes in traditional Newar music in a short span of time. My experiences inspired me to take a step back and examine the changes and explore their implications. This dissertation is the outcome of that exploration. Hopefully, my research will inspire further research into traditional Newar music, thus secure its future.

The University of Washington has provided me an opportunity to study a wide variety of subjects, including music history, music theory, music education, antrhopology, research & analysis, gender, sound archiving, writing, transcription, and ethnographic research methodology. I also got opportunity to study different music cultures of the world. This motivated me to analyze the musical traditions in which I was raised. On two occasions in 2016 and 2017 I travelled back to my home country and returned to the United States with various Nepalese musical instruments, teaching and performing traditional Newar/Nepalese music regularly in the Seattle area. I had to learn many new things about Newar music in order to teach others and to perform. This encouraged me to explore Newar music in greater depth. This exploration, guided by the university, forms the basis of this study.

Research Overview

Until recently, scholars generally paid little or no attention to musical changes in the Newar society of Nepal. Many earlier scholars (both Nepalese and Western) focused on the "wellsprings" or "glorious past" and studied Newar music as an untouched tradition that has

been in practice for centuries. Presently, however, Newar music is changing radically, both in terms of the content and the context. This study analyzes recent changes in traditional Newar music, starting from 1920s and mostly from 1990s onwards.

There are numerous Newar music traditions which have been in practice for centuries, many of which are considered to be indigenous. Other Newar music traditions may have originated outside of the Newar community but no longer exist in their places of origin. A double headed drum, the *dhimay* (played with a stick on the right hide and a free hand on the left) is believed to have originated in the Kathmandu Valley, and is thus an indigenous instrument. On the other hand, based on similarities in name, verse structure, cultural significance, and the use of cryptic language and philosophy, Widdess argues that the *chachā* of the Newars is a living continuation of *charyā* music, which originated in India in the eleventh century or earlier but no longer exists in India (2004: 7). These music traditions are now rapidly changing mainly due to accelerated political and social changes in recent decades. Contemporary musical change is an accentuated form of old processes of change. New musical styles are emerging at the same time as the content and context of traditional music is being radically modified.

Before expanding more on the musical changes I am examining, let's first look at the phases of musical change in *chachā* songs. Widdess presents three phases of change in the Newar tradition:

> Phase I: the "Indian Buddhism phase", during which the *charyā* genre developed in India [in 11th century or earlier], and ended with the disappearance of Buddhism from North India around the 14th century.
>
> Phase II: the "Newar Buddhism" phase, where *charyā*/*chachā* became absorbed into the ritual practice of a priestly caste; this phase may have overlapped with Phase I. [11th-13th century]
>
> Phase III: the "Revival" phase, in progress at the present day, where *charyā*/*chachā* has become a non-ritual art-form; this phase also overlaps with the preceding one [20th century]. (2004: 8)

I will be examining the "Revival" (20th-21st century) phase of music, generalizing and elaborating these phases more generally later in the chapter.

I would like briefly to explain the type of music I am considering in the study with the historical timeframe. Mirroring important historical events, Grandin establishes a rough periodization of Newar music tradition and sub-traditions (institutionalized ensembles, repertoires, genres) in three main historical layers:

> *Old Traditional*, comprising music forms current in the Kathmandu Valley prior to its conquest by Prithvi Narayan Shah[4] and his Nepali-speaking followers in the late 18th century, that is, the music forms of the people who with that conquest were transformed into the ethnic group, the Newars.
>
> *Recent Traditional*, comprising music forms which started to be cultivated from the conquest, during the first Shah (1769-1846) and subsequent Rana periods (1846-1951)[5]; that is, music forms taken up in the multi-ethnic Nepal.
>
> *Modern*, comprising music forms cultivated only after the downfall of the Ranas in 1951 (1989: 176)

This dissertation will focus on the old traditional music of the Newars as discussed above. So my focus will be the "revival" phase of the old traditional music. I also study modern innovation and new genres to analyze how the traditional music intersects with modern music. I study the changes in old traditional music through two broad ways: first, I explain the cumulative effects of subtle changes within the system (1920s onwards) and the eventual qualitative change of the system itself (1990s onwards); and secondly, I consider how traditional music is being used and reframed in a new genre of fusion music (2000s onwards). Fusion instrumental music illuminates new notions of modern Nepalese identity, not articulated in previous research. The

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[4] King of Gorkha who conquered and annexed numerous small kingdoms throughout Nepal in 1769 and formed the modern state of Nepal. Chapter 2 discusses this in more detail.

[5] A period between 1846-1951 when the Rana family overtook the power, reduced the Shah monarch to a figurehead and made the position of prime minister and other government positions hereditary. See chapter 2 for more on the Rana period.

evolving nature of fusion instrumental music provides an ideal substrate for exploring the concepts of invention, tradition, modernity, authenticity, hybridity and cultural homogeneity.

This research assesses the overall health of traditional Newar music and studies how new groups are working to preserve and promote traditional Newar music with different innovative ideas in structuring and regulating the music groups. It evaluates the changes since the onset of significant Westernization and modernization from the mid-nineteenth century to the present (2018), beginning with the formation of various literary organizations in 1920s as resistance to the Rana oligarchy.

Music and Change

The issue of music and change has been a matter of concern since early studies in ethnomusicology. Many ethnomusicologists were concerned about change in traditional music, stressing the need for its preservation. The notion of recording and studying folk music in order to prevent its disappearance was put forward as early as 1905 by Hornbostel, and possibly earlier by others.

In reference to the significance of the traditional musical heritage, Curt Sachs argued, "…as an indispensable and previous part of culture, it commands respect, and respect implies the duty to help in preserving it" (1962: 3). Sachs adds:

> In pursuing our goal, we are particularly rushed, as the venerable heritage of archaic culture is threatened with imminent extermination. The melodies of primitive man, an organic essential part of his spiritual life, fall victim to Christian missionaries, Soviet agents, European colonizers, and American oil drillers. And primitive as well as folk melodies are hopelessly succumbing to a technical age with military service and factory work, with rapid buses, planes, and cars, with phonographs, radios and television sets. (ibid, 3)

Alan Merriam also stresses the need for preservation of music culture and states that it is an aim of ethnomusicology. He also argues that change is a constant factor and no matter what the efforts to retard or impede it, changes occurs anyway. He suggests:

> This is not, of course, intended as a brief for neglecting the recording and study of any music, for what is done today will assume greater importance with the added perspective of time. But energy which is poured into lament for the inevitability of change is energy wasted. It is important that we record as widely and as swiftly as possible, but it is even more important what we study the very process of change that are being decried. The preservation of contemporary music is undeniably important, but given the inevitability of change, it cannot be the only aim of ethnomusicology (1964: 9-10).

Ethnomusicologists have also attempted to identify the processes by which music changes. Broadly speaking, Hornbostel and Sachs saw musical change as the result of discoveries and inventions in the realm of sound. They also saw musical change as the result of the diffusion of styles brought by the contact of different cultures. Blacking argues that Hornbostel and Sachs paid some attention to the cultural context of music, and they thought of the world history of music in much the same way as the evolution of culture and technology, but they looked for clarifications of melodic change in the association of social orders and in thoughts not primarily related to music (1977: 9). Blacking in another article argues:

> Musical and cultural changes are not caused by culture contact, population movements, or changes in technology and in means and modes of production: they are the results of decisions made by individuals about music-making and music or about social and cultural practice, on the basis of their experiences of music and social life and their attitudes to them in different social contexts. (1986: 3)

The capacities of decision-making and initiating change as Blacking discusses is present in all human societies. The process of decision making, and cultural change is explained earlier in a theory by Murdock (1956) with a set of four simple stages: identification of innovation, social acceptance, selective elimination and selective integration. This and other theories of social or cultural change are widely applicable in musical change as well; however, we might not

be able to analyze musical change in the same way as other socio-cultural changes. Some ethnomusicologists have therefore sought different ways to study and rationalize musical change.

Alan Lomax (1968, 1972) has pursued a culture-based theory of musical change. This theory assumes that musical variations are related to cultural variations. This theory has been criticized by a few ethnomusicologists. Blacking argues that the main problems in applying the theory are: "(a) the notion that musical changes reflect changes in culture, and (b) a somewhat restricted concept of cultural evolution" (1977: 10). He adds:

> Lomax compares the surface structures of music without questioning whether the same musical sounds always have the same "deep structure" and the same meaning: thus, an apparent correlation between a particular folksong style and a particular pattern of culture in a number of societies may not be valid… …it does not allow for flexibility in estimating what kinds of social and cultural change are the most significant as catalysts for musical change. There seems to be too much emphasis on the means of production and largely technological changes, and too little on the modes of production. (1977: 10)

Lomax's assumption of musical change reflecting cultural change is not always valid. Music can change without social or cultural change. Likewise, music can stay unchanged with huge cultural, social or political changes: for instance, the musical stability in the revolutions in Russia, Cuba and the independence of African states (Blacking 1986: 9).

For comprehensive and definitive study of musical change, Blacking proposes a provision and lists some situations in which musical change can be found. The provision he proposes is as follows:

> In order to identify musical change, it is necessary to distinguish between innovations within a musical system and changes of the system. Such distinctions can only be properly made by relating variations in musical processes and products to the perceptions and patterns of interaction of those who use the music. Musical change cannot take place in a social vacuum. (1977: 19)

According to him, innovation in a musical system, change of the system and change within a system depend on the situation or the people who live within the music community. In any community, both change and continuity are required to maintain the musical or cultural

ecosystem as Mans argues, “a balance between continuity (as in heritage) and change (as in development) needs to be maintained. Both are required for cultural vitality” (Mans 2007:237).

In the sections below, I analyze the Newar musical system; specifically, I examine the effects of cumulative changes that have occurred within the system, as well as qualitative shifts that have altered the system’s fundamental framework, as Blacking discusses. In other words, I examine both the surface structure and the deep structure (Blacking 1971: 20). I consider human agency, as discussed above, as well as the circumstances and consequences, all within the ecological framework of music proposed by Schippers (2010, 2016) which classifies the elements of ecology of music culture.

Newar Music and Change

Some scholars including Grandin (1989), Levy (1990) regard Newar music and culture as more constant or resistant to change than, for example, Indian music. The differing natures of Nepalese *rāga*s vs Indian *rāga*s are generally consistent with other comparisons of archaic Indian and Newar cultures. Grandin agrees regarding the constant nature of Newar music (1989:175). He further adds – “if the pace of development and innovation (no evaluation implied!) were faster in Nepal than south of the woodlands in (present) Tarai, the flow should have gone in the other direction, southwards” (ibid). Likewise, in a study of Newar culture, Robery Levy writes that the culture has “run on in very much the old way, like a clockwork mechanism assembled long ago that no one had bothered to disassemble” (1990: 15). Newar music, however, is transforming in ways more different and likely more rapidly than many earlier scholars have recognized.

I unfold my discussion of Newar musical changes with the introduction of a timeframe of musical tradition and its change. Considering the institutionalization, continuation and revival

phases that are common to other genres of music as well, all the changes in the Newar musical tradition can be generally categorized into the three phases Widdess discusses about *chachā* music which I mentioned earlier in this chapter. Accordingly, I propose the more generalized three key phases as follows:

Phase I: Development of a Music Tradition/Genre:

The actual development of a music tradition could have occurred in the Kathmandu Valley or elsewhere. This phase is mostly creating a new thing or "innovation" as Blacking (1977) mentions it. E.g. - the emergence of *Gyānmālā bhajan*.

Phase II: Absorption of the Tradition in Newar Society, Continuation of the Tradition:

This phase would be combined with the development phase (Phase I) if the tradition was developed by the Newars themselves. It is mainly related to adding something to existing tradition or "acculturation" as Blacking (1977) mentions. E.g. – adaptation of western drumset playing technique on the *dhimay* drum.

Phase III: Profound Change, Revival/Revitalization:

This phase is primarily huge "innovation" and "acculturation" within the existing system. It also includes change of the system. The Newar music tradition is the system in our case. The change in system becomes evident with change in bigger sub-systems such as financial, religious or social sub-systems.

I am most interested in looking at phase III changes. This essentially includes the profound changes in musical traditions or the revival and revitalization of Newar musical traditions.

Literature Review

In this section, I examine the early key studies on Newar music by both Nepalese and foreign scholars. I have divided the review in two major sections: studies on Newar music, which include studies on wider topics of Newar music; and studies on Newar music and change. I present these studies in thematic and chronological order.

Studies of Newar Music

Most earlier studies of Newar music are ethnographic to some extent. They mostly present Newar music tradition and does not discuss musical change. An earlier study of Newar music by Chittadhar Hridaya (1957), includes an outline of Newar music relating it to the origin of human civilization. Ballinger and Bajracharya (1960), Wiehlr-Schneider & Wiehler (1980), Vajracharya (1998), Kadel (2005), and Darnal (2007) have shown the diversity of Newar musical instruments. They focus on organology and primarily classify Newar musical instruments, providing a brief introduction to each instrument. The studies of Kadel (2005) and Darnal (2007) include all the musical instruments from Nepal and are not limited to Newar musical instruments. Vajracharya, on the other hand, studied only Newar musical instruments with emphasis on Buddhist instruments. The classification schemes of all of these scholars are based on the *nātya śāstra*,[6] which overlaps with Hornbostel–Sachs' (1914) system of musical instrument classification. Both of these classification systems divide musical instruments into four broad categories according to the nature of the sound-producing material: instruments using an air column, string, membrane to produce sound, and those using the instrument body to produce sound (e.g., aerophones, chordophones, membranophones, and idiophones).

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[6] The *nātya śāstra* is an ancient encyclopedic treatise on the arts which is believed to have been written between 200 BCE and 200 CE in India and is attributed to the sage *Bharata.*

Several scholars have studied Newar instrumental music, and many of these are empirical works written in a pragmatic style. These include studies of the drumming traditions, playing techniques, and notation of the repertoires. Shakya (1987, 1997, 2000) collected the *guṅlā bājā* repertoire in three volumes. The repertoire includes the drumming syllables of mainly *dhāḥ* and *nāykhiṅ* drums. His work does not use musical notation, rather, it gives just the drumming syllables. Wegner's (1986, 1987, 1988) work on Newar drumming is remarkable in Newar ethnomusicology. His works focus mainly on presenting the repertoires of different Newar drums, which includes drumming repertoires presented both in a modified box notation system developed by Nikhil Ghosh and in western staff notation. Wegner was the first to introduce the Time Unit Box System (TUBS) notation to Newar music. The *Guṅlā Bājā* repertoire of Bhaktapur by Pushpa Ratna Shakya (2002) also uses TUBS notation, while Prajapati (2001) uses TUBS and the Hindustani *Bhātkhande* notation system.

Bernède (1997, 2016), Wegner (1993), and Toffin (1998) examined the ways that musical knowledge is acquired in Newar communities. Bernède (1997) also studies the folk stories and ritual tradition of *nāsaḥ dyaḥ*[7]*,* Newar god of music and dance. Ellingson (1990), and Prajapati (2006c) explore the *nasaḥ dyaḥ*, its forms, iconography, and the cultural traditions as well as the associated philosophies.

There have also been notable studies on Newar vocal music and the singing tradition. Kansakar (1965) has compiled songs related to *nāsah dyaḥ.* Collections by Lienhard (1974, 1984) include ancient and famous songs. Vaidya's study (2002) focuses on classical poetry in Nepalbhasa[8]. Lienhard and Vaidya's study focuses on Nepalbhasa song texts. All of these studies

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[7] *Nasah* means charisma, *Dyo* means god in Nepalbhasa.

[8] Nepalbhasa is the traditional and preferred term for the language of the Newars. It belongs to the Himalayan branch of the Tibeto-Burman subfamily of languages, but it has been profoundly influenced by Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Hindi, Nepali, and most recently English.

analyze the literary meaning, providing western notations of only a few songs. Widdess (2013) studies a venerable singing genre *dāphā* from Bhaktapur city. While discussing *dāphā*, he focuses on three themes or orders: musical, social, and sacred. With the example of the *dāphā* tradition, he depicts the entwined social and religious traditions in Newar society that still survive in the modern age.

The early studies mentioned previously in this paper (Hridaya 1957; Kansakar 1965; Shakya 1987, 1997, 2000) focus mainly on music history, but are based on what the author has heard, without proper documentation or references. These scholars were songwriters and performers as well, so they fundamentally tried to document what they already knew. Hridaya (1957) mentions the adaptation of some musical instruments fof foreign origin in the Newar community. He mentions musical change in noting that even when the Newars adapted various musical instruments from others, they did it creatively to make their own instruments, molded to their culture. But he did not study any contemporary change in musical structure or traditions. Shakya's works in particular look like reference materials for those who already know how to play specific repertoires on the drums. All these studies are ethnographic to some degree. The primary focus of these studies is to present the Newar music tradition and repertoires in written form. These studies ignore musical change as the process of change in Newar music was not much noticeable at the time the studies were performed, specially the musical changes after 1990s.

Studies of Newar music and change

While many of the earlier studies on Newar music are empirical in nature, some recent studies help us to understand how Newar musical culture is changing over time and how it is adapting to modern circumstances. Studies by Grandin (1989, 2010), Henderson (1998), Greene

(2002/2003), Bianchi (2004/2005), Widdess (2004, 2013) and Toffin (2008) shed more light on Newar music and change.

Grandin examines Newar music and the effect of media on musical traditions. He focuses on medialized genres as opposed to traditional music. He discusses assimilation and accommodation in music through medialization.[9] He presents changes in singing traditions, emphasizing women's participation in new forms of music, the perception of music moving away from the sense that it is a low-caste affair, and the fact that people who otherwise have very limited musical involvement have found music to be a socially profitable investment (1989: 183). In his 2010 study, he focuses on changes in the *bhajan* singing tradition, as well as some recent changes in its function and context. Grandin questions Levy's (1990) metaphor of a clock noted above, where Levy writes, "Newar culture has gone on...in very much the old way, like a clockwork mechanism assembled long ago that no one had bothered to disassemble" (quoted in Grandin 1989: 6). Once assembled, Levy suggests, a clock cannot be expected to change its nature; it can only break down. Levy argues that Newar culture has persisted successfully for centuries without breaking, similar to a clock. Regarding women's participation in Newar music, Grandin challenges Levy's metaphor and argues, "instead of grinding to a halt, Levy's clockwork seems to have been updated" (1990: 9).

Henderson (1998) studies music and change in the Kathmandu Valley. His analysis of musical change shows the inseparability of musical and social change and avoids looking for "specific changes in music and then showing them to be simply indicative of, in the sense that they were caused by, broader social changes" (xii). Henderson was more concerned with how the

[9] "Medialization: the assimilation of and accommodation to new resources -media themselves and their contents, for our purposes notable mediated (and may be mediazed) music - as visible in music practice and sociocultural practice. Medialization covers both process of adaptation to media and the outcome of these processes" (Grandin xiii)

Newar make sense of changes in their lives and with what they have done to resist the effects of change and to promote meaningful change (ibid, 22). He did this by examining the recent social and musical transformations, along with his experience studying singing with Dilip Kumar Kapali and Newar traditional drums (*dhāḥ*, *dhimay* and *pachhimā*) with Hari Govinda Ranjitkar from Bhaktapur. Although his focus was not solely on Newars, his study on the advent of pop/rock songs, *bikās* (social development) and what music means in modern life is highly applicable to the Newars.

Greene (2003) studies the *Guṅlā* flute pilgrimage in Kathmandu and examines the construction of place from the perspective of practitioners. The author discusses the concept of the *mandalā* in space as put forward by other scholars (Slusser 1982; Gellner 1992; Levy 1990; Ellingson 1996) and argues that earlier studies are static and overlooked the dynamism of actual practices (2003: 206). The relation of Newar music to physical space has also been studied by Widdess (2006) and Wegner (2009). Both Widdess and Wegner discussed the fixed routes of processions and analyze the musical structures of the musical pieces played in the fixed physical space such as a courtyard or stage. Greene studies the reconfigurable flexibility of the physical space, which earlier studies did not address.

Widdess (2004) studies change and continuity in *chachā* Newar Buddhist ritual songs. Challenging the renowned *chachā* guru Ratna Kaji Vajracharya, who claimed *chachā* to be of entirely indigenous origin, the author argues *chachā* songs to be a living continuation of *charyā* songs originating in India in the 11th century, which no longer exist there. Widdess highlights three phases of changes (the Indian Buddhism phase, the Newar Buddhism phase, and the revival phase), and discusses changes in functions and contexts of the *chachā* tradition. He notes changes in music structure, particularly the structural form of the *rāga*, in phases I and II. He also discusses in phase III (or the "revival phase") the changing of the context of *chachā* from an

ancient Nepalese art form to the practice of presenting it publicly on stages, for enjoyment as dance rather than for ritual purposes (2004: 13). He argues, "whatever changes may have occurred in social and ritual context, the Newar *chachā* songs show some continuity with early *charyā* in terms of their function" (1ibid: 8), "... but function has been completely transformed in phase III, where *chachā* becomes a national art-form for foreign consumption, its performance a non-ritual entertainment" (ibid: 32).

Bianchi (2004, 2005) looks at several commercially available recordings of traditional Newar music, examines what they have presented, and studies how the music was contextualized. No other significant studies have been conducted regarding traditional Newar music recordings.

Toffin (2008) observes changes (not unique to music alone but greatly affecting music) with respect to the *guthi*, or Newar social organizations. He provides the reasons for their decline, such as with individuals and families moving away from areas in which their *guthi*s are located, and people's attractions to non-Nepali religious traditions like Theravada Buddhism, Vaisnava *bhakti* sects, Sai Baba etc (Toffin, 312-315)[10]. Building on Toffin's study with regard to change, Widdess (2013) discusses change, decline and renewal in the *dāphā* singing tradition. He examined the decline in *dapha* group membership between 1984 and 2004, as well as the decline in the frequency of performance of those groups that still perform (134-139).

To summarize, studies on Newar music thus far do not include deep structure changes such as women's participation in traditional music, fundamental changes in content and context, and the profound changes in the music system in terms of the organizational structure and use of

[10] The inclination towards Christian *bhajan* is also fairly increasing as Dalzell notes that there are several early Christian convert Newars from 1870s (2015: 329). "Even though most weekly services are conducted in Nepali, house fellowships may be conducted in an ethnic language if all participants are members of the same ethnic group. I have attended house fellowships in Kathmandu conducted in Newari" (ibid, 283). There are also some churches in Kathmandu in which Christian *bhajan*s in the Newar language are sung.

traditional music in new genres like fusion. My study analyzes these changes and evaluate the present condition of traditional Newar music as well as examines how traditional music has been repositioned in other genres of modern music, including fusion.

Fieldwork & Methodology

With experience gained through the ethnomusicology program at the University of Washington in conducting interviews, sound archiving, visual ethnography, and analyzing music, I conducted fieldwork in the Kathmandu Valley in 2016 (January-March) and 2017 (March-August). Of course, the study also includes my experiences and learning of Newar music since my childhood. My fieldwork in 2016 and 2017 was concentrated in three cities of the valley: Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. Besides these main cities, I also worked with music groups from Thimi and Bodey and musicians from other nearby villages. The case studies I present in chapter five are from Jya Baha and Bodey. Jya Baha is a traditional neighborhood in Kathmandu, which currently lies in ward 21 of Kathmandu Municipality. Bodey is a small-town settlement in Bhaktapur district, which currently lies in ward 8 and 9 of Madhyapur Thimi Municipality.

Figure1.1: Geographic scope of the study, the Kathmandu Valley

Titon suggests that fieldwork is no longer viewed principally as observing and collecting (although it involves this)

but as experiencing and understanding music: “the new fieldwork leads us to ask what it is like for a person (ourselves included) to make and to know music as lived experience” (2008: 25). Keeping this in mind, throughout my fieldwork, I attempted to experience and understand the issues associated with musical change through discussion, performance and engaging in other musical activities. In the course of this research I conducted interviews and observations with musicians, music educators, local scholars, and cultural and social activists, as well as friends and acquaintances. My research included both males and females as well as people from various castes and educational backgrounds. The informants were from musicians at their early twenties to a 98 year-old scholar.

I conducted interviews in the Nepalbhasa and Nepali languages. I had prepared for structured interviews with a pre-determined set of questions to ask in an order. I had planned to aggregate the answers and make comparisons as well. After interviewing a few people, I realized that structured interviews did not work well because of a few reasons. First, the same set of questions did not work for all because of informants’ varying fields of expertise. Second, when I switched from one question to another the informants often felt disconnection and the conversation did not flow well.

Figure 1.2 The author interviewing Newar women musicians in Bhaktapur. Photograph by Dan Wei

Third, the conversation seemed too formal and I felt like I was not getting sincere answers. I think structural interviews don't really work well in Nepal in general because that is not how people like to interact. My informants wanted to talk informally. They were interested in sharing their knowledge and experience as a friend. I thus conducted semi-structured interviews. I asked a few pre-determined questions and then started to ask other questions based on how the interviews went. The interviews usually lasted between thirty minutes and three hours in duration, with most lasting approximately an hour. A few informants preferred not to record in the interviews. Besides those few, I recorded all the interviews and transcribed them. In analyzing transcripts, I used open coding procedures. It helped me to engage anew with my data and helped to classify the data. It also supported to find the chapter themes and a general descriptive framework to emerge through outlines and stories.

Where appropriate, and when invited, I also took on the position of participant-observer and joined in as a music maker throughout my fieldwork. In some cases, I was viewed as an outsider, based on my outfit and my camera, voice recorder and big backpack. When I went and talked to people in Nepalbhasa or the Nepali language, their responses changed immediately. My privileged position in the field as a native musician enabled me to navigate local topics easily, however, some musicians were initially uncomfortable talking about a few topics such as caste. For example, when I went to observe a music performance and sat close to a low-caste musician in Bhaktapur, the musician felt uncomfortable. In such situations, I tried to start with general conversation and later began to talk about music and culture in detail. These personal engagements strongly shaped my thinking and also helped me to prioritize the issues I tackle. I have arranged the issues and structured the dissertation by blending ethnographic writing and historical narrative.

Theoretical Frameworks and Concepts

I have applied various ethnomusicological and anthropological concepts and frameworks in this study. Throughout the dissertation, I generally weave the framework and relevant literature together with my data analysis and discussions, as opposed to separating them out. However, below I outline separately the thematic areas and key concepts and terms that inform my analysis of Newar musical change in the following chapters. As the frameworks are presented in relevant chapters in detail; I only present a brief overview of the frameworks and the key concepts here.

Traditional, Folk and Fusion

The terms "traditional" (Nepali: *paramparāgat*), "folk" (Nepali: *lok*) and "fusion" in my title need a few words of clarification. I'd like to begin with the irony that the notion of "traditional" started only in "modern" times, when people around the world started to be aware of *tradition* as a concept. Tradition is a "belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past" (Green 1997: 800). Tradition is also perceived as a process which attempts to maintain or re-establish an equilibrium and resists cultural change or channels it within relatively narrow limits (Hughes 2008: 5). Regarding the study and the use of the "folk," William Wilson (1973) points out the traces of romantic nationalism, with roots especially in the work of the German scholar Johann Gottfried Herder in the late eighteenth century (quoted in Henderson 2002/2003: 19). Following the narrow definition of "folk" as conceptualized by Herder and those who followed him, folk music generally meant the musical traditions of rural and illiterate European peasantry. A similar idea was followed in the United States later.

In ethnomusicology, tradition can mean the belief systems, repertoire, techniques, style and associated culture which is passed down through successive generations. Folk music is generally taken as both traditional music and the music that evolved from it during the folk or root revivals (the 19th century in the United Kingdom and the 20th century in the United States). A Nepalese would view traditional (*paramparāgat*) music as a strictly followed music passed down through generations while folk (*lok*) music is less strictly followed music, though it is also passed down through generations. What people call *paramparāgat* is generally religious, spiritual, institutionalized and documented to some extent, just as the predominant concept of tradition in relation to Western music has been that of the canon. *Lok* or folk music is less rigid and can have contemporary content. The traditional music repertoires are fixed, and people tend not to change them. For example, a traditional bhajan melody and lyrics tend not to change whereas the folk music repertoire (song lyrics, etc.) can be contemporary even when the melody is old. *Dāphā* devotional singing is an example of Newar traditional music and a *gainchā mey* song is an example of Newar folk music. Throughout the dissertation this is the notion of "traditional" and "folk" that I follow.

Fusion music combine elements of different genres together. Sutton argues that "the notion of cultural purity is 'demonstrably a myth', as any careful historical analysis of cultural expression anywhere in the world can reveal multiple origins, blends, syncretisms, hybridities that are the inevitable result of human contact" (2011: 5). Similarly, in the case of Newar music, it is hard to define what is pure or what is "authentic". For this research, I'll consider the historically informed "old traditional music" discussed above as Newar music. Similarly, I'll consider recent mixings of traditional Newar musical instruments with other musical instruments, mixing of traditional Newar music with pop or other genres and playing styles as fusion music.

Ecology of Music Culture

A network of patterns and a complex multiplicity of elements function together as a whole to sustain the ecosystem of a music culture. The concept of the ecology of music culture has been discussed by different scholars. I use the five-domain framework proposed by Schippers (2010, 2016) to explore the concept of the ecology of music cultures in my analysis of musical change. The five-domain framework consists of: a) systems of learning music, b) musicians and communities, c) contexts and constructs, d) regulations and infrastructure, and e) media and the music industry. The framework is useful because it classifies all the major components of ecology of music. I use the framework to analyze the changes in these various components. The study of the ecology of music responds to anxieties about modern music. It suggests how music sustains and how a new form of music evolves.

Indigenous Modernity/ Alternative Modernity

Different parts of the world experienced modernity in their own fashion. Frederick Cooper (2005) examines the question of whether modernity should be seen as a singular process unique to the West or as plural, with many possible alternative modernities. The notion of an alternative modernity, often called an indigenous modernity, importantly combines global and local forms of knowledge. I follow the indigenous modernity or alternative modernity as proposed by Feenberg (1995), Gaonkar (2001) and Hosagrahar (2005). Alternative modernity is an attempt to incorpore Western technology into an ethnic culture through a mutual transformation. On the one hand, it asserts local knowledge by stressing local ethnic and cultural values. On the other hand, it aligns itself with global knowledge by using modern skills and technologies.

Roadmap

This dissertation begins with an overview of the research. I develop and support my arguments through four other chapters. Each chapter examines different themes of traditional Newar music and change.

Chapter Two expands on the historical overview of the Newars, Newar music and change, using this as a way to evoke the texture of Newar life. I introduce Newar traditional music and examine Newar instrumental and vocal music. I examine the musical history of the Newars as well. While doing so, I also examine the people, their history; and their social status. Examining socio-political circumstances, I study a pivotal period of musical change through two major events: the anti-Rana movement from the 1920s to 1950s and traditional Newar music revitalization during the fourth World Buddhist Conference held in 1956 in Kathmandu. The musical changes I discuss in this chapter are from the period of the political revolution for democracy and the aftermath of it, when Nepal opened itself to the West.

Chapter Three presents an ethnographic account of traditional Newar music and change in the latter half of the 20th century, mostly from 1990 and later. I chose to focus on the change since 1990 because it is the year the absolute monarchy ended, and constitutional democracy began. The political change also brought significant changes in musical traditions. This chapter examines such changes. It explores the changes in traditional music groups in traditional contexts, such as music performances in rituals and festivities. I look at changes through the lens of the ecology of music. I analyze musical changes using Schipper's five-domain framework (2010, 2016) of ecology of music to understand the flexibility and resilience of the Newar music tradition. In this chapter, I discuss the changes within system.

Chapter Four examines the rise of fusion bands in early 2000s, along with controversies over them and implications of those. It studies the cultural context and historical process out of

which fusion music has emerged. I look into how traditional Newar music is being deployed in fusion bands in various contexts. In this chapter I argue that fusion bands are promoting an alternative modernity (Feenberg 1995, Gaonkar 2001, Hosagrahar 2005) with their mix of traditional musical instruments, folk tunes, and new playing techniques and styles of performance.

Chapter Five evaluates some of the issues raised in the dissertation, reflecting on the concerns of Newar ethnic identity. I present case studies of two newly formed traditional music groups: a drum ensemble, *Fayagan Dhimay Bājaṅ Khalaḥ* from Jyā Bāhā, Kathmandu and a flute ensemble, *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* from Bode, Bhaktapur. In doing so, I analyze the formation of the groups, their gender and caste inclusiveness, and their financial structures. In this chapter, I discuss change of the system. I argue that new traditional music groups are changing the system rather than creating changing within the system (Blacking 1977). I analyze how the new groups are promoting the health of traditional Newar music with various innovative ideas. I conclude the dissertation by reflecting on the issue of Newar identity in the modern period and argue that the sense of Newar identity is being strengthened in the modern period through traditional music.

CHAPTER 2: NEWAR MUSIC FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Introduction

The Newars are the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley and the surrounding territory, known at different periods in history as the "Nepal Valley," "Nepalmandal,"[1] or simply "Nepal."[2] This territory now lies in Nepal's Province No. 3, established by the country's new constitution, which was promulgated on 20 September 2015. Today, the Newars are spread throughout Nepal and other lands. The most recent census (2011) counted the population of Newars in Nepal at 1,245,232, or 5.48% of the national population.

In this chapter, I first present a brief overview of the Newars and their traditional music. I aim to develop a broad grasp of the Newar people, their history, their political and social status in Nepal, and in particular, their traditional musical practices, all with the goal of understanding the musical changes, influences, and tendencies I discuss in this and the following chapters. I examine Newar traditional music and the social structure of the Newars that relates to music. I also examine the ancient, medieval, and modern history of Nepal and the sociopolitical circumstances that influenced musical changes. The second part of the chapter focuses on two major movements: the literary and religious movement during the Rana period known as the "renaissance of Nepalbhasa," and the traditional music revival that took place during the World Buddhist Conference in Kathmandu in 1956. Here in the second part, I first discuss the

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1 For an introduction to Nepālmandal, see Prajapati (2006a).

2. As Slusser notes, "There is no question that the political boundaries of ancient Nepal transcended the exact physical limits of the Kathmandu Valley" (1982, I:7). The border kept fluctuating due to wars with nearby principalities. The official name, "Nepal Valley," was changed to "Kathmandu Valley" only in the administrative reorganization of 1962 (Gellner 1986:123).

circumstances and the emergence of a new genre (*gyānmālā bhajan).* Then, I examine the changes that came with the first shock of modernity in the early 1950s. This period followed a political revolution for democracy, after which Nepal opened itself to the West and introduced development programs in the areas of education, agriculture, increased social mobility, and the media.

Traditional Newar Music

Various historical documents reveal the long history of Newar music. A 1,500-year-old inscription highlighting the music organization *bāditra gosṭhi* (Joshi 1973:264) was found on stone in Lele Lalitpur.[3] A seventh-century Chinese account also suggests the importance of music in Newar society; it referred to the inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley playing drums and trumpets (Snellgrove 1987:373). In addition to the evidence within these historical documents, Newar music's antiquity is also implied by the fact that many local people and scholars associate it with various gods and goddesses. For instance, Chittadhar Hridaya describes the oral history of the Nepalese music tradition, citing the legend that Lord *Māhadeva* created six *rāgas* and the *damaru*, a small, double-headed percussion instrument. Māhadeva then began dancing, creating *sthāna*, *nāda*, and *tāla,* which the author calls the "abc of music" (1957:3). Similarly, the drum *dhimay* is also attributed to Lord Māhadeva, and the drum *mridanga* is attributed to Lord Krishna.

In this section, I briefly review the "old traditional" Newar music noted in the previous chapter. In the course of exploring traditional Newar music, I propose the categorization of

3. *Bāditra* (Sanskrit) refers to a particular musical instrument or music ensemble. *Gosṭhi* (Sanskrit) refers to a social/religious organization formed for a particular cause. *Guthi* is the present term the Newars use for *gosṭhi*.

Newar music based on the musical content, the context, and the musicians who perform it. I provide an outline of instrumental and vocal music.

Categorization of Newar Music

Newar music is diverse, and it lends itself to many different methods of categorization. The diversity in Newar music reflects the fact that the Newars are a heterogeneous amalgam of groups from diverse origins who were absorbed into the societies of the Kathmandu Valley and neighboring villages throughout history. Different religious and caste groups among the Newars have their own music traditions. Within these traditions, there are various repertoires linked to different times of the day, different festivals, or different seasons. Music and dance are so deeply embedded in Newar culture that not a single festival, feast, or ceremony passes without music, from womb to tomb. Table 2.1 presents a few examples of each of these music categories, which intersect and overlap with each other.

Based on Content	a) Instrumental i) Pure percussion: *dhimay* drumming ii) Melodic: *bāsuri khalaḥ* flute ensemble, *guṅlā bājā* ensemble b)Vocal i) A Cappella: *macha mey* (children's songs), *sinhājyā mey* (work songs), and other casual singing ii) Vocal accompanied by instruments: *dāphā, chachā*
Based on Context	a) Periodic performances: daily, weekly, and monthly *bhajan* b) Occasional performances: performances in festivals such as *sāpāru* and *biskāḥ jātrā*

	c) Dance/play: music played for dances such as *māhākāli pyākhaṅ* and *kāti pyākhaṅ* d) On-demand performances/rituals: wedding music, *nāsaḥ pujā*
Based on **Performers**	a) Performers from a particular group or caste i) Nonprofessional musicians performing for their own rituals/celebrations: *dhimay* ii) Professional musicians hired for performance/rituals: *see bājā* (music played for funeral processions) by *nāy* (butchers) b) Performance with mixed musician groups: *nau bājā* or *guṅlā bājā* ensemble with oboe *muhāli*

Table 2.1 Classification of Newar Music

Instrumental Music

Among the categories of music traditions listed above, instrumental music is most common among the Newars. As of this writing, eighty-six types of Newar musical instruments have been found.[4] These include instruments from all four major types as classified by Hornbostel-Sachs (1914):

Idiophones: *bhusyāḥ*, *chhusyāḥ*, *tāḥ, kayeṅpi,* etc.

Membranophones: *dhimay*, *dhāh, nāykhiṅ, koṅchā khiṅ,* etc.

Chordophones: *piwāṅchā,* etc.

4. In an interview, the founder of the Music Museum of Nepal, Ram Prasad Kadel, informed me that he has collected a list of eighty-six types of Newar musical instruments, of which forty to fifty are in the museum collection (interview, 26 May 2017).

Aerophones: *bāsuri*, *bay*, *muhāli*, *pongā*, etc.

Within the category of instrumental music, some types, such as *dhimay*, comprise a pure percussion ensemble, while others, like *pachhimā* and *dāphā khiṅ*, also feature melody instruments such as the double-reed, *muhāli,* or the *bāsuri*. Some drums are played with bare hands (for example, *pachhimā* and *koṅchā khiṅ*), some with sticks (for example, *nagarā*), and some with a combination of both (for example, *dhimay* and *dhāh*). The drums are accompanied by different types of cymbals, such as *tāh*, *babūchā*, *bhusyāḥ,* and *chhusyāḥ*. Wind instruments are used for melodies and signals. The Newars play comparatively few chordophones. Today, the two-string instrument *piwāṅchā* is almost extinct.[5] Traditionally, the double-reed *muhāli* is only played by the low caste *jugi,* while the *bāsuri* (wooden flutes) are mostly played by peasants in groups, although they are not limited to any particular caste.

The Newars practice instrumental music in various life rituals from birth to death, and in other occasions. There is a tradition of playing *poṅgā* trumpets for babies on the sixth and tenth days after birth. The musician and singer Ram Krishna Duwal informed me that the trumpets are played to convey a message about life from heaven to the newborn on earth. Newar butchers (*nāy*) play *nāykhiṅ* drums (*sī bājā*) and *khusah* people play *kāhā bājā* trumpets during funeral processions. According to Lie (1999), Newars believe that when the god Indra hears the *nāykhiṅ* funeral music, he comes to see the dead body and open the gate to heaven. The music facilitates deliverance. This particular drum was also played in the medieval period (known as *nāykhiṅ choyekegu*) to proclaim royal news and announcements.

Various festivals, feasts, pilgrimages, and religious ceremonies also feature traditional instrumental music. Instrumental music is used in a variety of dances, including traditional

5. Bir Bal from Swoyambhu, whom I met a few years ago, seems to be the only surviving *piwāṅchā* player.

masked dances and ancient Nepalbhasa plays.[6] Many ancient dramatic scripts include instructions about when to play these musical instruments.

Vocal Music

Scholars agree that societies in the Kathmandu Valley have been literate for at least 1,500 years. Stone inscriptions in Sanskrit from the fifth century onward support this. The earliest evidence of Nepalbhasa writing is a palm leaf from Uku Bahal, Lalitpur, which dates from 1114 AD, during the Thakuri period (Malla 1990:15). It has been estimated that there are some 1,600 Nepalbhasa compositions in verse from the classical period (1360-1900) (Malla 1982:2). The song "*walaṅgata si mune somubārayā dhalana dānya*" ("Monday fasting under a sacred fig tree"), written in the reign of Pranmol Malla (1523-1550), is the oldest Nepalbhasa song that has been discovered (Kayastha 1999:2). Newars still sing this song today in Thimi, Bhaktapur.

Chachā and dāphā are two traditional, venerable forms of devotional vocal music. Both are believed to have originated in India—*chachā* in the eleventh century and *dāphā* in the thirteenth century. However, the Portland, Oregon-based *chachā* dancer and teacher Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya told me in an interview on 22 September 2018 that he believes *chachā* originated in Nepal and later spread to other parts of South Asia. Prajwal argued that many ancient, handwritten manuscripts were taken from Nepal to India based on which people in India also started to practice *chachā.* Vajracharya stated he has been collecting evidence for this hypothesis. Widdess argues *chachā* might have been established in Nepal in the fourteenth century, reflecting the transformation of Buddhist society from an ancient egalitarian, mercantile social class into a quasi-Brahminical caste (2004:12). In another study, he argues that the earliest

6. See Prajapati (2006d) for musical aspects of ancient Nepalbhasa plays.

dāphā-type singing in Nepal comes from the seventeenth century (Widdess 2013:34). In Newar society, *Dāphā bhajan*, a form of devotional singing, is more connected to Hindu devotional singing, whereas *chachā* is a Buddhist practice that includes tantric songs, dance, and instrumental music as well. *Dāphā* mainly includes *dāphā khiṅ* drum and *babūchā* and *tāḥ* cymbals, whereas *chachā* is traditionally only accompanied by *tāḥ* cymbals. *Dāphā* is performed openly, usually in public rest places, but *chachā* is practiced in a close setting with a limited group of people.

Figure 2.1: Musicians singing dāphā bhajan with dāphā khiṅ and konchā khiṅ. Photograph taken from Arnold Adriaan Bake's film of 1955-1956, The British Library.

Bhajan devotional singing evolved from the *bhakti* movement, which began in the Tamil-speaking area of South India sometime after the sixth century AD (Slawek 1988:78). The *bhakti* movement rapidly spread northward and soon reached sectarian cults devoted to incarnations of *Vishnu*, *Shiva,* or *Shakti*. Slavek argues that two prominent characteristics of the medieval *bhakti*

movement were the displacement of the Sanskrit language in religious observances by vernacular languages and an egalitarian attitude in accepting new members into its fold, a practice in direct defiance of the strict hierarchical social order imposed by the *brahmanic* orthodoxy (1988:78). Other than *chachā* and *dāphā bhajan*, several other devotional forms of *bhajan* singing, such as *dhalchā bhajan* and *rās bhajan,* are also in use in Newar society.[7] *Dhalchā bhajan* is practiced by lower castes and *rās bhajan* is practiced by higher castes. In addition to hymns in Nepalbhasa, these *bhajan*s also include hymns by the Sanskrit poet Jayadeva (who lived around 1200 AD) and the Maithili poet Vidyapati (1360-1448 AD). Lienhard argues that the composition of religious hymns, secular songs sung for recreation or when at work, love-poems, narrative verses and so forth always flourished together with classical prose writing based on Sanskrit sources and continued to do so in later times, when modern Newari came into use (1984:5).

In Newar society, there are traditions of singing *machā mey*, children's game songs; *phalchā mey,* leisure songs sung in public rest shelters; and *sinhājyā/tukājyā* and *sāmājyā mey,* work songs sung during farming and other work. These songs are often unaccompanied, mainly because the context is unsuited to the use of musical instruments.

Some of the Newars' instrumental and vocal music practices are widespread, but others are on the verge of extinction. *Dhimay* drums are most popular among the Millennial generation, including girls. *Dhimay* are played on almost all occasions. *Dhāḥ* (*guṅlā bājā*) and the flute ensembles are popular, especially during a month-long everyday pilgrimage that takes place in the months of *guṅlā* (August/September), *yaṅlā* (September/October), and *kāti-sewa* (November/December). Some traditions, including *machā mey* (children's songs), *pachhimā,* and

7. *Pachhimā bhajan* is performed with a double-headed drum, *pachhimā*. Similarly, *nagarā bhajan* is performed with a pair of kettle drums, *nagarā*.

nagarā bhajan,[8] are under threat of extinction. Widdess notes musicians' and others' assumption that the *dāphā* tradition in Bhaktapur has severely declined and is in danger of disappearing altogether in this or the next generation (2013:134). Grandin observes the decline in the *nagarā bhajan* singing tradition that began in the late 1980s and has continued into recent years:

> These [*bhajan*] singers are all in their fifties or sixties. When I first visited this *bhajan*, some 25 years ago, it was quite different. While there were a few more elderly singers also at that time, the *pāti*[9] [Nepali: public rest shelter] seemed to be full of rather fresh recruits, people in their 20s and 30s....In fact, one of today's *nagarā* drummers was here already then, a young man at that time. And also, my musical friend, at the harmonium here, was part of the *bhajan* scene this many years ago – though he has now left *bhajan* singing for numerous other musical activities. ... (2010:5).
>
> This *bhajan* group seems to have lost its ability to attract newcomers. Other ensembles have closed down. (ibid.:6).

In addition to these vocal and instrumental traditional forms of music, emerging instrumental bands play many of the traditional musical instruments in new settings, often in combination with Western musical instruments. I discuss these bands in detail in Chapter 4. Modern Newars also play pop, rock, and other forms of modern music, but many musicians wish to preserve the distinctive culture that marks Newars as different from *parbatiyā*[10] and other groups.

Social Structure and Musical Space

The components of Newar social structure—including the physical structure of settlements as well as caste roles and the division of labor—carry special meanings. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the Newar settlements and caste hierarchy with a focus on

8. Devotional singing with *pachhimā* double-headed drum or *nagarā* kettle drums.

9. These public rest shelters are one of the primary places where Newar people gather and sing hymns.

10. Indo-Aryan ethno-linguistic group residing in hill regions who speak the Khas language (modern Nepali language).

caste division in the fourteenth century. The change in caste hierarchy at the national level after the adoption of the national legal code *Mulukī Ain* in 1854 will be discussed later in the chapter.

Newar settlements are well-known for their urban appearance. They generally have paved streets and thickly clustered, multistory brick buildings with paved courtyards, wells, and water spouts. Even the smallest Newar settlements feature the urban architectural style of tall brick houses tightly packed together along narrow streets. Not all Newar settlements are urban, but all of them look so. The Newars are a community of urban disposition, and whether they live in towns or villages, their settlements often reveal an urban character (Nepali 1965:53). However, some scholars dispute the existence of a typical Newar settlement. Quigley believes the underlying disputes about the nature of Newar society boil down to a single question: Is there a basic model of what Newar settlements look like (1995:301)? Quigley's implication is that all settlements are variations on a theme, and therefore, no one is more typical than any other. As most people in Kathmandu—and in fact, the majority of people in almost all Newar settlements—are peasants, the population could sustain itself from local resources. In the case of Kathmandu, the settlement is also located on an ancient trade route between India and Tibet. Because of the connection with two trade centers, the Newars could develop their settlement with an urban look.

It is a common perception that the Newar city stands for completeness and represents or encapsulates the cosmos. Perhaps more importantly, the city represents the fullest possible expression of moral values and social order. Newar settlements are protected from the outside by a ring of deities known as *asta mātrikā*[11] or *dash māhavidhyā.*[12] For instance, all the towns of

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11. Eight divine mother-goddesses: *Brāhmi*, *Vaishnawi*, *Māheshvari*, *Aindri*, *Kaumāri*, *Bārāhi*, *Chāmundā*, and *Narasimhi*.

12. Ten divine mother-goddesses: *Kālī, Bagalāmukhī, Chhinnamastā, Bhuvaneswari, Mātaṅgi, Sodaṣi*, *Dhumāwati, Tripurāsundarī, Tārā,* and *Bhairawi*.

Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, and Thimi are designed after the *mandalā* of *asta-mātrikā*s, considered to be the guardians of the town. In the past, the settlements were often surrounded by defensive walls. Gates in four or eight directions mark the settlements' borders, and outside of them lie rivers and land for cremation and burial. Inside the core settlement, the town is arranged with the King (or a representative of the King), the center of political and economic power, as the nucleus, circumscribed by several layers of circles—or "mandalization"—inhabited by different caste groups (Shepard 1985: 82).

The present ranking of castes in Newar communities is based on a division of 64 occupational castes formulated by a group of *Brahmin* scholars in the time of Jaya Shtiti Malla (1382-1395). Based on this division and their present-day positions, Gellner divides the Newar castes into six major blocks, presented in Table 2.2.

Block I	Castes entitled to the priestly honorific *bijyāye*, such as *Rajopādhyāya*, *Sharmā*, *Bajrāchārya*, *Shākya,* etc.
Block II	Castes entitled only to the honorific *diye*, such as *Amātya*, *Shrestha*, *Urāy*/*Tulādhar,* etc.[13]
Block III	Castes not entitled to Tantric initiation, such as *Maharjan,* etc.
Block IV	Relatively low castes, such as *Mānandhar* (*Sāymi*), *Ranjitkar* (*Chhipā*), *Nakarmi* (*Nau*), etc.
Block V	Group whose water is not acceptable, but whose touch does not require purification, e.g., *Khadgi* (*Nāy*), *Kushle* (*Jugi*), etc.

13. These castes (Block I and II) are entitled either to full Tantric initiation (Buddhist or Hindu) or to wear the sacred thread. The lower castes refer to these two groups as *bhājupin* (gentlemen).

Block VI	Group whose water is not acceptable and whose touch requires members of other castes to purify themselves, e.g., *Dyaḥlā*, *Poḥ,* etc.

Table 2.2: Newar Caste Hierarchy (Gellner 1995:17)

Different caste groups perform distinct roles in Newar communities' musical practices. For instance, *Jugi* (block v from above table) play the oboe *muhāli*, *Nāye* (block v from above table) play *nāykhiṅ* drums, and *Kabujā* and *Khusaḥ* (block iv from above table) play *kāhā* trumpets. Two special castes make particular instruments: *Kulu* (block vi from above table) make skin drums, and *Tabaḥ* (block ii from above table) make cymbals and bells. Similarly, various musical traditions are limited to particular castes. Some traditions, however, are believed to have passed from one caste group to another. For instance, *nekū* horn-blowing is believed to have been practiced by Buddhist Tantric priests, *Bajracharya* (block i from above table), in the past, but it is now practiced mainly by the *Sāymi* (block iv from above table) caste. Greene suggests the reason for passing on traditions might be that Bajracharyas at one point found they lacked the time or other resources to perform the function themselves, or that they switched to more profitable work (2002:106). The *dhimay* drumming tradition, which used to be an emblem of *Jyāpu* caste, has also spread to many other castes.

In Newar settlements, a royal palace functions as the center and "meeting point of all major processions" (Gutschow 1981:250). In villages, it might be difficult to find this kind of ordering in an obvious form, and the systematization might not be clear, but it is still evident in core settlements like Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, or other nearby towns. This is clearly reflected in rituals and festivals. In festivals, the routes of circumambulation of the towns (for

instance, *yeñyāḥ punhi*[14] in Kathmandu, *sāpāru*[15] in Bhaktapur and *matayāḥ*[16] in Lalitpur) encircle the core settlements. The *upāku* route in *yeñyāḥ punhi* is principally the circumambulation of the town's outer part.[17] This route passes through the settlements of low-caste people like *nāy* and *dyaḥlā*.

The arrangement of social and religious monuments within a town is particularly important for musicians engaged in musical performance and processions. Ellingson argues Newar musical structures are often derived from the Newar social structure:

> Structuring music according to mathematical formulas is a principle known from other Buddhist cultures; and in Newar music, such structures often derive from the ritual geometry and geography of the Valley and its sacred sites, and form part of an artistic-ritual complex that unifies music, dance, architecture, iconography, meditation, pilgrimage, and other elements into a multimedia, multidimensional web of interlinked concepts and performance forms of practices (1996:447).

Widdess writes that one main feature distinguishing Newar music from other types of music heard in the Kathmandu Valley—such as modern film music or Indian classical music—is its "architectonic" character (2006:182). The architectonic character of Newar music is articulated through various processes such as segmentation, repetition, contraction, and expansion, which can be directly related to, for example, the Newar social structure, traditional monument positioning, and processional routes. Wegner explains that Newar musicians proceed in their routes on an elaborate *mandalā* [18] that represents their ritual townscape. Whenever they

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14. A festival celebrated mainly in Kathmandu around September/October in honor of Indra, the king of heaven. The festival features a series of celebrations including a chariot procession for the living goddess *Kumāri* and performances of various masked dances.

15. A festival celebrated in various parts of the Kathmandu Valley and its environs around August/September to commemorate people who have died in the previous year. The festival includes a carnival and music and dance performance in the street; these performances mostly feature humor and satire.

16. A festival celebrated only in Lalitpur on the day after *sāpāru* to pay homage to all the Buddhist shrines surrounding Lalitpur. This festival is especially important for people who have had a family member die in the past year.

17. A procession in the *yeñyāh punhi* festival in Kathmandu.

18. A symbol through which physical, social, and religious space is imagined. Commonly, the "mandala" is a generic term for any diagram or geometric pattern that metaphysically or symbolically represents the cosmos.

pass a key point of the *mandalā*, they erupt in loud musical invocations that address the divine power residing in those places (2009:114). He adds that locals make sense of the music with regards to where it is played: "Newar settlements are like musical scores to those who know how to read them" (ibid.).

Religious and social organizations known as *guthi* play crucial roles in maintaining Newar customs and social order as well as building communities. Many inscriptions from the fifth century onward refer to the formation, rules, and regulations of these organizations (inscribed as "*gosṭhi"* in those documents). Often but not necessarily, a *guthi* is financially regulated by a land endowment. Regmi notes that *guthi* in this sense is virtually synonymous with the *debutter* land tenure of Hindus in India, the *waqf* system of Muslim communities in India and the Middle East, and the tenure of church and monastic lands in medieval Europe (2014:46). Many traditional music groups are also financially and structurally managed under a *guthi*.

The Newars and Newar Music in Ancient and Medieval Nepal

> Nowadays the term Nepalese has a far wider significance, indeed almost a changed meaning, but when we speak of Nepalese civilization, we can only mean Newar civilization. (Snellgrove 1961:3).

This quote by a non-Nepalese scholar tells us much about the Newar and Nepalese civilizations. Today, the term Newar—or *Newāḥ*, as colloquially used by the natives—refers to a group of people. However, an examination of Nepalese history reveals that historically, "Newar" has been used without any ethnic connotation.[19] Since the Gorkhali conquest of the Kathmandu

19. The term "Newar" is first used with a clear ethnic connotation in 1684 in a diary that reads, "Although the Khas came, all the Newars fought among themselves" (Regmi 1965, III, II:63). Before that, it had a spatial connotation, referring to any inhabitant of the Kathmandu Valley in ancient Nepal.

Valley, the term "Newar" has been used to refer to the community that resided in the Kathmandu Valley before the conquest and have Nepalbhasa as their mother language, or the offspring of such persons. In this section, I briefly explore the political and cultural history of the Newars and their social structure as it relates to Newar music traditions.

The history of the Newars starts with the history of Nepal—or vice-versa. In other words, the two histories complement each other. Scholars have found that the ethnonym "Newar" and the place name "Nepal" are etymologically identical. The term "Nepal" is first found in *Atharva Parishista*, a piece of Vedic literature believed to have been composed in the seventh century BC (Nepal 1984:2). The earliest historical evidence that uses the word *Nepāla* is the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta, who ruled between 335 and 375 AD (Fleet 1888:8). The earliest incidence of the word among Nepalese sources is in an inscription in Tistung dated equivalent to 512 AD, which includes the phrase *swasti naipālebhya*, translated variously as "(greetings) to Nepalis," "(greetings) to the residents of Nepal," "(greetings) to the Nepalas," and "(greetings) to the leaders/kings of Nepalas" (Malla 1983:33). Scholars—Levi (1905), Turner (1941) and Chatterjee (1974)—argue that the word "*Nepāla"* is a sanskritization of "*Newāra*." Kamal Prakash Malla conducts a linguistic/phonetic study of the two words (*Nepal > Nebala > Newala > Newara*) and argues that they are two phonetically variant forms of the same word: *Nepāla* is the learned Sanskrit form whereas *Newāra* is the colloquial Prakrit form (1983:38).

There is no unanimous agreement among scholars about the Newars' origins. There exists a popular legend that the Kathmandu Valley was once a huge lake, but the Bodhisattva Maha Manjushree from the Tibetan reign (or, in the Hindu view, Vishnu as Krishna) cut a passage through the hill with his sword, draining the valley of its waters. Another legend describes the Newars as descendants of the cow herders (*Gopāli*) who only reluctantly became

kings. Some scholars argue that the Newars are aboriginals.[20] Similarly, some argue they are immigrants,[21] and others that the Newars are a composite people.[22] Although there are many arguments about the origin of the Newars, what is true is that the Kathmandu Valley was a trade center for centuries, and it remained a melting pot of different people and cultures for a considerable amount of time. This is a reason that the Newar musical tradition is very diverse across caste groups. It is also a reason that present-day Newars follow neither any particular religion nor a single cultural practice. In the medieval period, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam existed in parallel in the Newar community. Although the Newars mainly follow Buddhism and Hinduism, the distinctions between these religions often blur in their musical and cultural life. Traditionally, the Nepalbhasa language is the most common shared element of Newar identity.

Written historical evidence starting from the fifth century depicts the Newars as a highly literate civilization. While the origin of the very early settlers is still unidentified, historians believe the first major influx of people and the establishment of a political entity occurred in the seventh century BC, known as the period of the *Kirāti*. According to the legends, the *Gopāla* (cow herder) dynasty were the first rulers, and they were overthrown by *Mahispālas* (buffalo herders). *Mahispālas* were succeeded by *Kirāti*. Following the *Kirāti*, more of the available

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20. Furer argues, "There is every reason to believe that the bulk of the Newar people has been settled in the Nepal Valley since prehistoric times" (1956:15). Bista affirms this argument, writing, "The Newar people had been settled in the Nepal Valley since prehistoric time" (1976:16). Malla writes, "The aboriginal people of the Valley were possibly Austroasiatic who were later assimilated by the Mongoloid *Kirāts*" (1979:132).

21. The scholars Kirkpatrick (1811) and Nepali (1965) suggest a connection between the Newar and the Nayers of Kerala in South India. Levi (1905) and Brown (1912) argue the Newars emigrated from the region north of the Himalayas (the Tibet area) and settled in Nepal.

22. Certain groups among the Newars, such as *jyāpu* (farmers) and the *Po* (the sweepers and guardians of temples of the mother goddesses), are sometimes called the true descendants of the *Kirātas* (Shrestha 2012:23). Other middle-ranked Newar castes claim descent from dynasties that ruled Nepal before the Malla period. As Gellner notes, these include: Maharjan *jyāpu* of Tistung (*Mahispāla* dynasty), Shrestha of Thankot and Tistung-Palung (*Gopāla dynasty*), Vyanjankar *Tepe* of Lalitpur (Kirāta), Thaku juju of Kathmandu and Lalitpur (Vaisya Thakuri), and various high-caste Shresthas (Nanyadeva's dynasty) (1986:139).

references mention the Lichhavi dynasty (fifth to ninth centuries), the Thakuri period (ninth century to 1200), and the Malla period (1200-1768), up until the Gorkha king Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered Kathmandu and modern Nepal was formed. The Lichhavi rulers were inclined to use Sanskrit, but Malla argues the vernacular language belonged to the Tibeto-Burman family (1983:57-68). He adds that the place names found in the many Lichhavi inscriptions are in an archaic form of Nepalbhasa (ibid.). Written records of stone inscriptions starting in the fifth century show the evidence of a cultured and literate civilization in the Kathmandu Valley, however, other parts of Nepal remained sparsely inhabited and rural until the modern period. Gellner argues that while the Kathmandu Valley was able to support a division of labor and a sophisticated urban civilization, it was impossible elsewhere in the Himalayan foothills between Kashmir and Assam (1986:103-104).

The Lichhavi and Malla periods are credited as the golden age for Newar artistic achievement. Various inscriptions in the Lichhavi period reference the era's musical life. In addition to the fifth-century mention of the musical organization *bāditra gosṭhi,* discussed above, another inscription found in Suryaghat from 505 mentions the musical instrument *Veenā* (Vajracharya 1973: 82-87). The *dhimay* drums are also believed to originate in this period between the fifth and eighth centuries. According to the scholar Thakur Lal Manandhar, "when the Mallas came to power, the *dhimaybājā* was there already. It was war music, used in battle; the thundering drum and the crashing cymbals, heard from a distance, would suggest hundreds of people and thus served to frighten the enemy" (quoted in Grandin 1989:68). In inscriptions from King Jayadeva II's reign (713-733), terms such as *pondi mandapikā* and *prekshan mandapi* denote the performance stage and highlight musical performance.

The Malla period is considered the primary period for the significant growth of temples, shrines, art, and culture (the Kathmandu Valley has seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites within

a ten-mile radius). Newar music flourished in this period with royal support. The economy was self-sustained and based on agriculture and trade. The Newar language was the state language. Historical evidence shows that many Newar musical traditions were institutionalized during the Malla period, often with patronage from Malla kings in the form of a plot of land. The yearly rice crop from this land was used to cover all the expenses for performance and musical instrument maintenance. Many other traditions that had developed earlier expanded in this period. Furthermore, there are several pieces of historical evidence that show that, in addition to patronage, the royal family members themselves participated in dance and musical performances. A stone inscription in Kathmandu shows that King Pratap Malla (1624-1674) performed a Narsimha dance, *Nasal Devatasthan*, in front of Kasthamandap, Kathmandu (Rajbanshi 1970:7).

The Newars and Newar Music in the Modern Period

In this section, I examine the social status of the Newars after Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered the Kathmandu Valley and formed modern Nepal. Rather than offering a comprehensive account of the history, I focus on the sociocultural and political factors connected to Newar musical traditions and identity.

The modern state of Nepal was born with the expansion of a principality called Gorkha.[23] Since Prithvi Narayan Shah, king of Gorkha, conquered and annexed numerous small kingdoms throughout Nepal in 1769, the high-caste Hindus from the hill region had gained and maintained

23. The brutal expansion of the Gorkha kingdom has been glorified as "unification" by many historians. However, several authors have explored the hidden facts surrounding Prithvi Narayan Shah's Kathmandu conquest. Behr, for instance, argues that the British government supplied weapons to the Gorkhas, a fact that has been kept hidden in history books about Nepal (1976:58). He adds that the secret treaty under which this was done is still preserved in London in the archives of the East India Company. The pact was signed by Captain Ceane and the Gorkhas. The British government agreed to supply weapons and advice, and in return, the Gorkhas had to destroy the old trade routes between India and China.

the upper hand in Nepalese politics. The three main groups in this category are *Chhetri*s, who have lived in the hill region since as early as the second millennium BC, as well as the *Thakuri*, who are members of the landed gentry, and *Bāhun*s (Whelpton 1997:8-10). Both the *Thakuri* and the *Bāhun*s claim to have emigrated to Nepal from India starting in the twelfth century (ibid.). Lawoti notes, "In the newly conquered territory, the conquerors introduced, imposed or strengthened *Khas-Kurā,*[24] a hill variant of Hindu religion system and hierarchical caste system, and Gorkhali caste-based recruitment policies to top position" (2010:80). For many linguistic, religious, ethnic, and caste groups, marginalization and exclusion began with the conquest, while for others, the conquest exacerbated or continued their exclusion—sometimes through coercion and at times more subtly, through the display and promotion of the dominant culture and customs.

Early Shah Period (1769-1846)

The linguistic, social, cultural, and religious domination of the Newars by the Khas people began in the early Shah period. The Khas Nepali language replaced Nepalbhasa, which had been the state language in the medieval period. However, some official activities continued to be practiced in Nepalbhasa.[25] Because it was still spoken in daily life by the majority of the people, the Newar language retained an important role in the royal palace. King Prithvi Narayan Shah himself is credited as the author of some Nepalbhasa poems. Similarly, King Rana Bahadur Shah and King Grivan Yuddha Shah also wrote songs in Nepalbhasa. King Rajendra Bikram Shah is credited with writing the Nepalbhasa play *Mahāsatwa Pākhyān* (Tuladhar 2000: 69). The

24. The language of the *Khas* people from the hills, also known as *Gorkhā Bhāṣā* or *Parbate Bhāṣā*, is now called the Nepali language by Nepal's constitution.

25. For example, the Tibet-Nepal treaty of 1775, signed during the reign of King Pratap Singh Shah, was compiled in Nepalbhasa (Shrestha 1999:83)

early Shah period ended when Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana usurped executive power in 1846.

Rana Period (1846-1951), Literary/Religious Movements, and the Birth of a New Genre of Music

The Rana period is the period in Nepalese history when the Rana family seized political power, reduced the Shah monarch to a figurehead, and made the prime minister role and other government positions hereditary. The general public was deprived of education, and writing in languages other than Nepali was punishable by imprisonment. In the early Rana period, a national legal code, *Mulukī Ain*, was proclaimed in 1854; this code virtually ignored the internal hierarchy of the Newars (Quigley 1987:159). It laid out detailed codes for inter-caste behavior and specified punishments for their infringement. According to the national caste hierarchy and the ascribed ritual purity system, the Newars and all ethnic groups belong to comparatively lower or "impure" castes. This was a matter of special concern for the Newars because the Newars do not follow the orthodox Hindu caste hierarchy of *barnāshram dharma*. For example, the Newars consider the king to be at the topmost position in the caste hierarchy, above even the priests, whereas the Hindu *barnāshram dharma* regards priests (*Brahmin*) as the top position, with the king (a *Kshetriya*) below them. During the anti-Rana movement, three Newars (Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Sukra Raj Shastri, and Gangalal Shrestha), a *Kshetriaya* (Dashrath Chand), and two *Brahmin*s (Tanka Prasad Acharya and Ram Hari Sharma) were arrested for opposition and sentenced to death by the Ranas. Others were tortured and executed; Tanka Prasad Acharya and Ram Hari Sharma survived only because they were *Brahmin*s, and the Ranas could not execute members of that caste (Weller and Sharma 2005:64).

The *Mulukī Ain* led to cultural, religious, and social discrimination. For this reason, the Newars and other ethnic groups claim they have been treated as second-class citizens within their own state and consequently have had no access to the benefits of the national development process, such as education and job opportunities. Although the *Mulukī Ain* was abolished in 1963, many traditions remained unchanged in practice. Up to the present day, indigenous groups have faced discrimination in the political, economic, social, cultural, and educational sectors. Many groups have experienced regular violations of their rights and freedoms (Limbu 2005:40).

For the Newars, open suppression began with a ban on writing in Nepalbhasa, the removal of the Nepalbhasa matriculation high school exam, and the replacement of the *Nepal Sambat* calendar with the *Bikram Sambat* calendar. *Nepal Sambat* is the lunar calendar that originated in Nepal; the Newars still follow it for their cultural festivals. *Bikram Sambat* is a solar calendar that originated in India. In 1906, documents in Nepalbhasa were declared inadmissible in court (Tuladhar 2000:79). Between 1909 and 1941, several authors defied the ban and resumed writing, translating, publishing, and educating in Nepalbhasa. This period is widely known as the Nepalbhasa Renaissance Era. The Newars honor the four writers who served as leaders of this movement: Siddhi Das Mahaju, Nisthananda Bajracharya, Jagat Sundar Malla, and Yogbir Singh Kansakar. While these and other writers were producing classic works of Nepalbhasa literature, Shukraraj Shastri (Joshi), and Dharmaditya Dharmacharya (Jagat Man Vaidya) were at the forefront of the Renaissance movement due to their political and religious activities. Many authors, including Dharmaditya Dharmacharya, Chittadhar Hridaya, Phatte Bahadur Singh, and Siddhi Charan Shrestha, were imprisoned for their Nepalbhasa literary activities. Phatte Bahadur Singh was sentenced to life imprisonment, and Dharma Ratna Tuladhar Yami was sentenced to eighteen years. Thirty-two writers were jailed (Tuladhar

2000:108). Many local people believe the rulers of this period destroyed hundreds or thousands of ancient handwritten manuscripts related to Newar music, arts, and culture.

Before and during the Rana period, many high-caste Newars served as bureaucrats in the palace and maintained positions of political importance; however, discrimination against their language, culture, and religion (for Buddhist Newars) led many Newars to be active in the indigenous nationalities' movement (Hangen and Lawoti 2013:13). Newars in Kathmandu formed some of the earliest activits organizations. Beginning in the 1920s and increasingly through the 1930s and 1940s, Newar intellectuals promoted their language through publications and by founding literary associations (Gellner 2009: 119). *Nepal Bhasa Sahitya Mandal* (Nepal Bhasa Literature Organization) was one of these early organizations; it was founded in Kolkata, India in 1926 (Shrestha 1999:89). The first Nepalbhasa magazine, *Buddha Dharma*, began its publication in 1925, also in Kolkata. Newar writers started writing widely in Nepalbhasa. Many people were jailed for writing in the Newar language, but the movement did not stop. During this time, Newars, including Hindu Newars, also began practicing Theravada Buddhism, an expression of "semi-articulated resistance" to the Hindu state (Leve 1999: 31). The Newars initiated the *Gyānamālā bhajan* at the same time.

While the *bhajan* tradition itself is not new, the *gyānamālā bhajan* discussed here was a new tradition in Newar society. *Gyānamālā bhajan* can be seen more as "acculturation" than "innovation." The new elements introduced with this genre included new content in the hymns, new musical instruments, and involvement from women. *Gyānamālā bhajan* was also seen as a threat to the traditional Newar *dāphā* or *dhalchā bhajan*, it replaced the later *bhajan* traditions in some places as well. Gellner writes of the emergence of Theravada Buddhism and *gyānamālā bhajan* in Nepal:

> In the early 1920s Prem Bahadur Khyahju Shrestha (1901-1979) was asked to compose some Buddhist hymns by his friend Dalchini Manandhar. In order to help him do so,

> Manandhar gave him a copy of Pandit Nisthananda Vajracharya's Nepal Bhasha version of the Lalitavistara, the life of the Buddha, which Nisthananda had had printed in Calcutta in 1911. Prem Bahadur composed the hymns, and they quickly became very popular (they were in Hindi as was still customary). As a result of reading the Lalitavistara, Prem Bahadur, who had been raised a Hindu, became a Buddhist (Gellner 2004: 12).

Prem Bahadur later became the monk Mahapragya and followed Kyangtse Lama's teachings. In the 1930s and 1940s, Rana rulers exiled Theravada monks, including Mahapragya, from Nepal, demonstrating that the Nepalese state felt threatened by this religious movement. This planted the seed of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal. The Theravada Buddhist movement by the Newars was an attempt to mark Buddhism as clearly distinct from Hinduism, which was practiced by the Rana rulers at that time. Maha Bodhi Society missionaries, led by their Sri Lankan founder Anagarika Dharmapala, introduced this form of Buddhism into Nepal from Burma and Sri Lanka in the 1930s (LeVine and Gellner 2005:26). The movement played a role in uniting the Nepalese people against the autocratic, feudalistic Rana oligarchy.

As the Theravada movement grew in the 1930s, the monks started to encourage the singing of Buddhist hymns, but it was not easy. In an interview on 7 May 2017, Punya Shakya and Raju Shakya disclosed to me that *gyānamālā bhajan* singers and musicians were arrested once and released on bail. During the Theravada renaissance, writers and musicians began to use the Nepalbhasa vernacular in translations, commentaries, and devotional songs. A group of enthusiastic people including Ratna Das (Tahribhai) of Chhetrapati, Nar Bahadur (a drummer), Sukra (a Brahman), and a few others recited prayer songs of Hindu gods and goddesses in Swayambhu. In 1937, Ratna Bahadur Tandukar, Dwarika Das Shrestha, Nara Bahadur Manandhar, Indra Bahadur Manandhar, Tuyu Guroju, and Ratna Das (Tahribhai) were inspired to conduct a performance of Buddhist hymns. They started this daily practice in coordination with Maharatna Shikharakar, Siddhi Ratna Shikharakar (a harmonium player), and Ashta Ratna of Tebahal (Pradhan 1997:1). In the same year, Bhikshu Pragyabhivamsha's songbook

Bhajanmālā (*Garland of Hymns*) was printed in India. This book had thirteen pages and eighteen hymns, and Bhiksu Dhammalok brought hundreds of copies to Kathmandu. The book was republished in 1941 with twenty pages.

The start of *gyānamālā bhajan* was an important acculturation in Newar music. The new musical instruments *hārmonium* and *tablā* were first introduced widely in Newar music through this type of *bhajan*[26]. The traditional musical instruments *pachhimā*, *piwaṅchā*, and *tāḥ* were also in use in the *bhajan*. Initially, all the hymns were in the Newar language, although there are now a few hymns in the Nepali language as well. While other *bhajan*s were devoted to both Hindu and Buddhist gods, *gyānamālā* is solely dedicated to Buddhist teachings. Most of the hymns in *gyānamālā* are newly composed, and some are sung to traditional seasonal tunes. While conducting fieldwork, I noticed a *Swoyambhu gyānamālā* group singing *hārati mai*, a new hymn, to *ghātu,* a traditional seasonal tune played around April/May. The music team informed me that they sing the same hymn to seven different seasonal tunes—*ghātu, sitalā māju, sinhājyā, silu, mālasiri (mālashrī), dhanāsiri*, and *basanta*—depending on the season or time of year. In this way, *Gyānamālā* is also helping to preserve traditional tunes.

26. Electronic keyboards and synthesizers were added later.

Figure 2.2 Gyānmala bhajan khalaḥ in Swoyambhu, Kathmandu. Photograph by the author.

Many early scholars regard the start of *gyānmālā bhajan* in the 1930s as the start of Newar women's participation in music, but it does not seem true. Grandin (2010) states women were taught hymns to be sung as part of *jātrā* processions. In interviews, the *gyānmālā bhajan* singers and the executive officers of the *Swoyambhu Gyānmālā Bhajan Sangh* organization informed me that women did not begin participating in *gyānmālā bhajan* singing until the late 1970s or early 1980s.[27] Before that, musicians and singers were all male. Women's participation

27. I discussed this issue separately with *gyānmala bhajan* singers/musicians Ratna Behoshi Bajracharya, Bhriguram Shrestha, Nhuchhe Bahadur Dangol, Punya Shakya (current president of *Gyānmala Bhajan Khala*), and Raju Shakya (current executive member of *Gyānmala Bhajan Khala*), all of whom have been involved in *gyānamālā bhajan* for at least the past three decades. Each of them informed me that there was not a single woman performer when they started singing *Gyānamālā bhajan*. They saw women participate only starting in the late 1970s or early 1980s, first by singing and later by playing musical instruments.

in music only began after female singers like Koili Devi Mathema began recording songs to be played on the radio. [28]

Revolution of 1951, Democracy, and the Revitalization of Traditional Newar Music

The years between 1909 and 1941 are considered a renaissance for Nepalbhasa language and literature. It was the time when people started to gather against the Rana oligarchy. The anti-Rana revolution ended on 18 February 1951, and the end of the Rana regime led Nepal down a path of democratization. Radio Nepal began broadcasting in a few languages other than Nepali, including a five-minute daily news broadcast in Nepalbhasa starting in 1951, as well as the literary and musical program *jīwan dabū* (Nepalbhasa: life platform).[29] Likewise, the Kathmandu Municipality passed a resolution stating it would accept applications and publish major decisions in Nepalbhasa as well as the Nepali language.

As suggested above, the renaissance period was when the movement to revive and standardize the Nepalbhasa language took place. During this time, a new generation of writers produced literary works, defying government restrictions. The renaissance reestablished the Newar language's lost glory and invigorated creative writing. The movement's activities included the publication of literary works, the standardization of grammar, translation of various literatures from other languages to Nepalbhasa, the spread of education in Nepalbhasa, and the beginning of a Newar identity movement. This was also the period when *gyānmālā bhajan* was

28. Mathema and many other Newar musicians, such as Seturam Shrestha, Natikaji, Shiva Shankar, Narayan Gopal, and others, contributed to the development of the *lok* and *ādhunik* genres of Nepali music. I discuss these genres in the next chapter in the context of the change in ecology of music.

29. Radio Nepal, founded in 1951, was Nepal's first radio station. It was a nationwide, state-owned station and remained the only radio in Nepal until the 1990s.

created and added a new dimension to Newar music. However, the era did not bring much change to traditional Newar music. This had to wait until 1956.

I discussed the Newar music renaissance in an interview with 98-year-old Nepalbhasa language and culture scholar Satya Mohan Joshi on 30 April 2017. Joshi witnessed the Nepalbhasa language renaissance, the early days of *gyānmālā bhajan*, and many other changes in Newar language, culture, and music. He said he sees *gyānmālā bhajan* as a milestone in Newar music; however, he asserted that the renaissance of Newar music truly began with the fourth World Conference of Buddhism in Kathmandu in 1956, organized by *Dharmodaya Sabhā.* Joshi was one of the organization's executive committee members.

Joshi's narrative begins shortly before Nepal hosted the fourth World Conference of Buddhism, which would include guests from many countries around the world, including all of those countries that had their own Buddhist associations. The conference was the first and largest international conference of its kind in Nepal. The organizer Dharmodaya Sabha formed a committee to host programs that would showcase Nepalese culture to foreign delegates. The main purpose of the cultural program was to show the foreign delegates how the Nepalese had preserved their traditional music and culture. Chittadhar Hridaya was the coordinator of the committee, and Joshi served as sub-coordinator. For the cultural program, the committee proposed to perform a play, Bal Krishna Sama's *Bhrikuti,* that showcased the cultural exchange between Nepal and Tibet in the seventh century. A performance of Bhim Nidhi Tiwari's play *Yashodhara*, which depicts the life of Buddha, was also proposed. The third proposed performance was a play in the Sanskrit language. All of these were recent plays that featured modern techniques in their dialogue delivery, choreography, and performance styles. However, the committee raised concerns that none of these plays reflected the authentic and traditional Nepalese culture. The committee came up with the idea to also feature *chachā/charyā* music and

dance performed by traditional musicians and dancers. At that time, *chachā* music and dance were only performed clandestinely. The committee approached traditional gurus, but none agreed to perform *chachā* in public. After much persuasion by the committee, Asha Kaji Pandit from Kathmandu agreed to perform *chachā* in public. This was the first time in its history that *chachā* was performed in public, and it comprised a break from tradition. The audience applauded the performance with great respect.

In addition to the first-ever *chachā* public performance, the committee also selected an ancient Nepalbhasa play, *Mahāsatwa Pākhyan*, written by King Rajendra Bikram Shah. The committee planned this production with the *Nāsaḥ Khalaḥ* performing group led by the scholar Prem Bahadur Kasa. After reading the play's script, dance guru Kanchha Buddha Bajracharya explained that the entire play was written to be performed with music, like a ballet. Kanchha Buddha Bajracharya consulted with another senior guru, Chaitya Raj Bajracharya from Patan. Chaitya Raj Bajracharya, the play's director, studied the script in detail and then arranged it to traditional music featuring traditional drums. At the time, no one other than the director knew about the traditional *rāga* and *tāla* written in the script. He also taught the *apsarā pyākhaṅ* nymph dance accompanied by traditional *khiṅ* drums to a group of dancers. Therefore, he can be credited with resurrecting the Newars' traditional music for use in plays and elsewhere. Kanchha Buddha Bajracharya later learned the music and dances in detail with the help of Chaitya Raj Bajracharya. Kanchha Buddha then joined the Royal Nepal Academy, where he taught *chachā* music and dances. He also recruited traditional drummer Krishna Bhai Maharjan for further training and performances. Kanchha Budhha Bajracharya later choreographed *kumāri* ballet using traditional drums, a style that became very popular and helped promote traditional dance

and music.[30] Thanks to these events, the fourth World Buddhist conference played a vital role in the renaissance of traditional Newar music, and Chaitya Raj Bajracharya was a key leader. Joshi stressed that he considers this revival of traditional Newar music the most significant change he has witnessed in his lifetime.

Pańchāyat (1962-1990)

On 15 December 1960, King Mahendra dismissed the Nepalese government and imposed a party-less political system called *pańchāyat*, which lasted from 1962 to 1990. He claimed the king was the single source of the constitution's authority and sovereignty was vested in him. During this period, the state solidified the concept of Nepal as a homogeneous Hindu society. The state promoted the Hindu religion, the Hindu monarchy, the *khas kurā* Nepali language, and hill Hindu culture, including the *daurā suruwāl* dress for men, as signifiers of the national community. As suggested by the slogan *ek jāti, ek deś – ek bhāṣā, ek bheṣ* (one nationality, one country – one language, one dress), the government required that ethnic languages be limited to local usage, with the result that these languages gradually diminished in their value and use.

The king proclaimed Nepal a Hindu kingdom in 1962. The state articulated its hill Hindu identity via daily broadcasts of Hindu ritual music and sermons on Radio Nepal. The government funded Sanskrit schools and declared many hill Hindu festivals as national holidays. National symbols, such as the color red, the cow, and the flag, referred to Hinduism and the Hindu monarchy (Lawoti and Hangen 2013: 14). During the *Pańchāyat* years, the state vigorously

30. *Kumāri* ballet was first performed soon after the fourth World Conference of Buddhism. It was also performed a few times in 1990s.

promoted this form of national identity through the education system and government-controlled media, especially Radio Nepal.

In 1963, the Kathmandu Municipality revoked its decision to recognize the Nepalbhasa language. In 1965, the state banned Radio Nepal's broadcasts of Nepalbhasa news and the *jīwan dabū* Newar music and literary program. This sparked a protest movement widely known as the Movement of 1965 (*bāis sāl-yā āndolan*). Although the ban on the Newar music program was the main reason for this movement, Shakya argues two other factors contributed to its birth (2011:22). First, before banning the radio program, some royalists ran the program without notifying the program team. Second, on 11 May 1961, the ministry of education issued a directive to use the term "*Newari*" instead of "Nepalbhasa." [31] The protest took the form of musical and literary meetings as other types of demonstrations were prohibited at the time. Several Nepalbhasa writers were jailed, but the protest did not stop and continued for years in the form of literary and musical events. The most important achievement of these events was the development of a new generation of activists who would go on to lead the movement in subsequent decades. The organization *Nepalbhasa Mankāḥ Khalaḥ*, founded in 1979, started celebrating the Nepalese new year, *Nepal Sambat*, with musical events and cultural rallies. Many participants in these celebrations were also jailed, but still the movement did not stop. This movement, also widely known as *bhiṅtunā* movement, laid the groundwork for other Newar

31. "Some people in Newar community, including some prominent Newar linguists, consider the derivation suffix -i found in the term Newari to constitute an 'Indianization' of the language name. These people thus hold the opinion that the term Newari is non-respectful of Newar culture" (Genetti 2007:10).

identity movements in 1980s and 1990s.[32] Today, the *bhintunā* celebration has also spread to Newar diasporic communities abroad.[33]

Rebirth of Democracy from 1990 to the Present

With the rebirth of democracy in Nepal in 1990, ethnic minority groups formed an institution, the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), which included various ethnic member organizations that each advocated for their own issues and objectives. Since the 1990s, this umbrella organization has become so strong in advocating for the groups' demands that the government has already addressed some of their requests (Onta 2006:303). NEFIN consists of 54 indigenous member organizations, including *Newāḥ Dey Dabū* (Newars' National Forum). Its declared mission is to establish a secular and federal Republic of Nepal with autonomous states where diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and territorial indigenous nationalities are treated equally. NEFIN is also a member of the United Nations' Working Group on Indigenous Populations (NEFIN 2004).

While the Newars were uniting with other groups to create a strong, identity-based movement, on 25 July 1997, a board meeting of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) decided to regard Nepalbhasa alongside Nepali as an official language for local legislation. A few people who advocated for Nepali as the only official language Lal Bahadur Thapa, Yagyanidhi Dahal, Hari Prasad Pokhrel, Achyut Raman Adhikari and Dhruba Raj Thebe filed a case against the decision in the Supreme Court. On 16 March 1998, an interim stay order was issued under the single bench decision of Judge Hari Chandra Upadhyaya; it prohibited the

32. *Bhiṅtunā* (Nepalbhasa) – good wishes. The movement started with Nepali sambat new year wishes to each other.

33. As of 2018, the Newars from India, USA, UK, Australia, Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Denmark, Qatar, UAE, Thailand, HongKong, China, Myanmar and few other countries celebrate Nepal Sambat new year.

official use of Nepalbhasa in KMC. On 24 May 1999, the Supreme Court passed a verdict prohibiting the use of Nepalbhasa as an official language for local administration. These decisions incited a renewed protest effort for indigenous groups' linguistic and cultural rights.

The identity-based movement became more prominent after the multiparty movement and the failure to address ethnic issues in the new constitutional democracy implemented in 1990. After the Maoists' People's Movement (Nepali: *jana āndolan*), in 1990 and 2006, one of whose main motives was equal ethnic rights, the government and the legislature passed several rules, regulations, and resolutions to end caste-based discrimination, but have not yet succeeded in doing so (Bhattachan et al. 2009: 42-43). After many debates, Nepal adopted a new constitution on 20 September 2015 through the Constituent Assembly.

Many Newars believe their issues have not yet been properly addressed. A few of their major demands include the declaration of ethnicity-based federal states, the Official use of local languages at the state level, proportional representation in all bodies of government, and the declaration of Nepal as a secular nation. In opposition to these demands, the new constitution states Nepal will be a secular state, but it defines secularism as the protection of *sanātan dharma ra saṅskriti* ("the honored" or "ancient" religion and culture). Some Indigenous nationalities interpret the *sanātan* religion as Hinduism, a reading that has influenced Nepalese law and governance. Rapid political and social changes after the 1990s influenced Newar music; these changes included relaxation in caste system, women's participation in traditional music, modification to musical instruments and performance styles, the development of fusion musical genres, and more. Chapter 3 examines these changes in detail.

Conclusion

This chapter served to introduce the Newars, their history, their musical tradition, and the sociocultural circumstances that shaped musical changes over time. It also discussed the sociopolitical status of the Newars in modern Nepal, starting from the Gorkhali king Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest of the Kathmandu Valley in 1769. The chapter also examined the "old traditional" music of the Newars and presented the circumstances of its changes over the course of the last century. This discussion mainly focused on the anti-Rana movement, the birth of *gyānmālā bhajan*, and the traditional Newar music revival associated with the post-1950 democracy movement. This overview encompasses the timeframe of the musical changes on which this study focuses. Having established this background on the political situation and the musical changes it shaped, the next chapter discusses the ecology of Newar music through the lens of sustainability, with a focus on changes to traditional Newar music in the decades since 1990.

CHAPTER 3: CHANGES IN ECOLOGY OF NEWAR MUSIC

Introduction

Change occurs in music as in all aspects of culture, but it has been argued that Newar music possibly has been stable over the past several centuries. Because Nepal was never invaded by the Mughals, Gellner (1995) argues that the Newars' predominantly Hindu and Buddhist culture may offer us a glimpse into an archaic South Asian culture that predates the 16th century Mughal invasion. This age-old musical culture currently is undergoing a lot of rapid changes in its content and its context including gender and caste inclusiveness, commercial performance, revival and reconfiguration. In a relatively short period of time, there has been a huge increase in women's participation in traditional music, the caste barrier has been relaxed to a large extent, and some musicians have paved a way to commercialize the traditional music. On the one hand, traditional and folk music has been revitalized in many communities. On the other hand, the music has been re-contextualized and repositioned by a changes in repertoire, playing styles, and musical instruments.

In this chapter, I explore the musical changes in traditional performance contexts such as rituals and festivities. I examine recent changes, their socio-political reasons, and their consequences. My focus on this chapter is to examine the changes in "old traditional" music in the modern age. I use Schipper's five domains of a musical culture or "ecology" (2010, 2016) to analyze the flexibility and resilience of the Newar music tradition. I argue that there has been an increased interest in old traditional music among youth and females; however, the focus has been shifted towards "performing", a ritualized action in discursive context rather than "practicing", an embodied ritual or preserving traditional music (Shneiderman 2015). Younger musicians are

most interested in big ensembles, in learning easier repertoires, and in performing in public, such as for processions.

Ecology of Music Culture

There has been a renewed interest in the ecology of music as a theme of scholarly discussion in ethnomusicology. Several anthropologists and ethnomusicologists (Archer 1964, Bateson 1972, Geertz 1973, Neuman 1980, Slobin 1996, Rehding 2002, Ramnarine 2003, Sheehy 2006, Adams 2009, Titon 2009, Perlman 2014) have implicitly or explicitly used the term "ecology" to discover the components that function together as a whole in order to sustain a musical culture. The term was initially used as a metaphor in the late 20th century (see Lomax 1972). Since the new millennium scholars have started exploring the subject of ecology in depth and in detail. Some scholars have recently proposed different components of an ecology of musical culture. Titon provides a list of factors for an ecological approach to the sustainability of music as follows:

> Cultural and musical rights and ownership, the circulation and conservation of music, the internal vitality of music cultures and the social organization of their music-making, music education and transmission, the roles of community scholars and practitioners, intangible cultural heritage, tourism, and the creative economy, preservation versus revitalization, partnerships among cultural workers and community leaders, and good stewardship of musical resources (Titon 2009: 5).

Schippers (2010) proposes a framework to explore the concept of the ecology of music cultures, categorizing the ecological elements in five major domains which include different aspects of musicking[1] in each domain. The five-domain framework consists of: a) systems of

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1. Christopher Small introduced the term "musicking" (from the verb "to music"), meaning any activity involving or related to music performance:" tak[ing] part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing" (Small 1998: 9)

learning music, b) musicians and communities, c) contexts and constructs, d) regulations and infrastructure, and e) media and the music industry. Below I summarize the framework he proposes (table 3.1)

1. Systems of learning music	This domain explores the transmission processes, informal and formal education, including new learning and teaching technologies. It also explores nonmusical activities, philosophies, and approaches and their impact. The domain examines everything from community level initiatives to institutionalized professional training.
2. Musicians and communities	This domain examines the positions and roles of the musicians in the community. It explores the issues of remuneration, careers, community support, employment, freelancing, and nonmusical activities. Cross-cultural influences and the role of the diaspora are also explored in this domain.
3. Contexts and constructs	This domain examines the social and cultural contexts, values, constructed identities, gender issues, and perceived prestige of musical traditions. It also accesses recontextualization, authenticity as well as cultural diversity resulting from travel, migration, or media. It also examines issues of appropriation.
4. Regulations and infrastructure	This domain examines performance, practice and collaboration spaces. It also includes the study of tangible sources such as issues related to the musical instruments, funding sources/grants, artists' rights, applicable laws and regulations.

5. Media and the music industry	This domain explores modes and roles of distribution, and marketing/publicizing as well as commercial aspects of music including new sources of media, recordings, radio, television, the Internet, and recent social media.

Table 3.1: The Five-Domain Framework: An Ecological Approach to Sustainability (Reduced from Schipper 2010 in Schipper 2016: 13)

Schippers argues that these domains cover "the key aspects relevant to the sustainability of almost any musical practice, irrespective of specific musical forms or content, and as free as possible from Eurocentric bias" (2016: 11). The key domains cover all the core areas of ethnomusicological concern:

Domain 1 (systems of learning music) has been explored by music education and ethnomusicology; Domains 2 and 3 (musicians and communities, and contexts and constructs) have been at the center of much ethnomusicological research for five decades. Domain 4 (infrastructure and regulations) has attracted sporadic attention in the discipline but has been the realm of governments and NGOs, as exemplified by the International Music Council report on musical diversity commissioned by UNESCO (Letts, 2006). Domain 5 (media and the music industry) has gained increased attention since the 1980s from ethnomusicologists, and long before that from business and media scholars, as well as through professional publications from the music industry itself (ibid).

The framework has been applied to a greater understanding of the phenomenon of music sustainability and its mechanics in different music cultures around the world (see Schippers 2016). The mentioned study has made a careful choice to focus not only on "endangered" music practices but also, equally, on "successful" ones (ibid, 3). Schippers argues that "the rationale for

this was that while the former may provide profound insight into the main obstacles encountered by living music cultures in need of safeguarding, vibrant practices can reveal possible pathways to removing such obstacles" (ibid, 3).

I analyze the contemporary changes in Newar music under these five domains. Each of the domains in the above framework overlaps and interrelates with the others. Rather than going into each domain in detail, I only discuss the recent changes in each particular domain.

Ecology of Newar Music

Over the past few decades, Newar music has gone through profound changes, which has also prompted questions regarding its sustainability. Starting in the 1990s traditional Newar music saw a new wave of intense changes. I examine the ecology of the Newar music tradition as a whole from the viewpoint of sustainability.

Systems of learning music

Musical knowledge in the Newar tradition had been historically transmitted in an aural context and it is heavily memory dependent. Newar music teaching is done orally using drum syllables that copying the sounds of the drum.[2] Different types of songs matching the drumming syllables or musical tunes are also used to remember the repertoires. The training includes implicit musical knowledge transmission without explicitly writing or theorizing the rhythm, melody or structure. The musical knowledge is reproduced through performance and the replication of a memorized repertoire. The traditional method of learning can thus be arduous

[2] Wegner notes "occasionally there are spiced with some dirty messages" (1986: 12). Wegner presents the regular drumming syllables and the dirty messages in the repertoire. Because of the dirty words, the book could not be used as a textbook in Tribhuvan University (Prajapati 2006b: 21).

and time consuming. At the same time, it often helps to maintain a pleasant relationship between a teacher and students because transmission of knowledge is done with direct repititive communication between teacher and students.

There is a tradition of written music in Nepal since the medieval period (1201–1779), however, Newar music is mostly follows oral tradition till now. A catalog of medieval manuscripts in the National Archive of Nepal[3] lists 123 music manuscripts which include 9 manuscripts on *mridaṅga* drum repertoires. A catalog from Asā Archives in Kathmandu (Vaidya and Kansakar: 1991) lists 14 repertoire manuscripts including "*khiṅ bola"* (drumming syllables,) *"khiṅ boli"* (drumming syllables,) *"poṅgā boli"* (trumpet syllables,) and *"payeñtāḥ boli"* (trumpet syllables). These manuscripts seem to be intended for musicians who already know how to play the particular instrument. Wegner (1986) introduced the Time Unit Box System notation in Newar music. Shakya (2002) also uses TUBS notation, while Prajapati (2001) uses TUBS and the Hindustani *Bhātkhaṇde* notation system. These notation systems are still not practiced in drum teaching in a traditional setting. A traditional musician from Bhaktapur, Mukti Sundar Jadhari, informed me that he has not seen any traditional group in Bhaktapur that uses musical transcriptions by Wegner, who has published several volumes on drumming repertoires from Bhaktapur (interview, April 18, 2017). Mukti Sundar explained: "Many traditional musicians in Bhaktapur are still illiterate and cannot read or write. Even the younger generation musicians still neither know the eastern nor the western notation systems" (interview, April 18, 2017). Nhuchhe Bahadur Dangol, a music professor from Tribhuvan University and Nepal Music Center who also teaches music to Newar women told me that he's been teaching choir to elderly women who do not even know how to count at all. He gives them a certain number of grains and ask them to

[3] Abhilekh 9/9, "*Sangīt Sambandhī Sanksipta Sūchipatra*" (A brief catalog of music manuscripts), 1991.

move the grains to keep track of the cycle and repetition. For example, if a particular piece needs to be repeated for four times, he would give them four grains while teaching or performing (interview, June 19, 2017).

Nepalese ethnomusicologist Lochan Rijal argues that proper music education can help the need for the documentation and preservation of Nepalese music:

> The musical traditions of the ethnic groups of Nepal are in need of immediate documentation and preservation. Ethnomusicological music education should incorporate these traditions and inspire new generations. If students realized the basic human values of inclusion and equality, such pedagogy would be beneficial to all members in society (2014: 439)

Traditional music is now taught in many schools. Institutions such as the Music Museum of Nepal organize periodic short-term workshops. The oral tradition has now been formalized in a few places, including the use of notation and transcriptions of the traditional repertoires. Besides the schools where music is an optional subject, there are a few colleges and universities which also offer traditional music in their curriculum. The Nepal Music Center in Kathmandu is offering a diploma and Secondary Education Examination (equivalent to the tenth grade) degrees in music. They are also working with the Sibelius Academy in Finland to develop undergraduate-level courses in music.[4] Tribhuvan University is offering undergraduate and graduate level courses in music, and Kathmandu University offers undergraduate and graduate-level courses in ethnomusicology. None of these courses include much study in traditional Newar music. Nhuchhe Bahadur Dangol informed me that:

> Over 75% of the courses taught in schools and universities here are Indian classical music or western music; there is not space for Newar music, or music from other ethnic groups. Our *rāga*s, seasonal tunes have been swept away by the Indian and Western music. To study and preserve our music, we should focus on establishing our own school or university which teaches just Newar or Nepalese music. (interview, June 19, 2017).

[4] Bal Krishna Ranjit, interview, May 25, 2017

Even the schools or universities that have Newar music courses do not have strong connections with the community, as Mukti Sundar suggests:

> Few traditional musicians have got employment in Kathmandu University music school in Bhaktapur. Few others also got employment in administration. Besides those, the music school in Bhaktapur does not have a significant impact in musical and cultural life in Bhaktapur (interview, April 18, 2017).

Figure 3.1: Children learning flutes with written notation. Photography by Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ.

Besides the academic institutions, there are a lot of private music training centers in Kathmandu who teach Newar music. Formal institutions have helped the students to widen their knowledge of music. Sarada Maharjan, the founder of *Shree Tara* band and who learned both in a traditional setting as well as in a university setting, thinks that her knowledge has widened through the university education:

> The traditional gurus are specialized in a single area [either a single drum or a single musical tradition]; they teach about only one area. These days there are schools; even a *tablā* player needs to study other things such as various *rāgā*s. Students therefore get knowledge in more than one field (interview, April 4, 2017).

Formal education has helped students to learn about different instruments, different traditions, and different genres, giving them greater opportunity to explore and collaborate with other instruments and genres. In contrast, the musical training in the traditional setting has not comparatively changed much.

The sustainability of Newar music also depends on improving its transmission to younger generations. In many places these days, traditional music teachers allow students to write the repertoires where it used to be prohibited. Some new flute ensemble groups are using the *Bhātkhande* notation system for learning (Figure 3.1). This has helped students to learn more quickly, especially for those who are visual learners.

Musicians and communities

Social stratification of the musicians

Traditionally, professional musicians and drum makers in Newar society were solely from low-caste families. Higher caste people also play music, but they are not traditionally professional musicians. Traditional professional muhali players were from the *jugi* caste, *nāykhiṅ* drum players from the *nāye* caste, and drum makers from the *kulu* caste. They are in the lower hierarchy in the labor and caste division created by king Jayasthiti Malla in the 14th century. Thus, specialization in some particular music used to be a low-caste affair. The tradition was later detailed and codified in the *Muluki Ain* of 1854. In the five caste groups defined in the *Muluki Ain,* all the professional musicians in the Nepalese community fall into the two lower most strata in the caste hierarchy:

a) Impure but "touchable" caste (*pāni nachalnyā)* - with whom water cannot be shared, but "touchable":
kasāi or *nāy* (Newar butchers) - Newar professional musicians for funeral procession and other ceremonies, *kusle* or *jugi/jwagi* (Newar Musicians) – double-reed muhali players, the main melody instrument in all types of Newar music.

b) Untouchable caste (*pāni nachalnyā choi chito hālnu parnyā*):
Damāi (Tailors, musicians) - *Pañchai Bājā* players in wedding processions, *Gāine*: the singers, *sārañgi* players (Guneratne 2002: 75).

Because of this social status, most members of the younger generation from these castes stopped learning these instruments from *Panchāyat* era or even earlier. Wegner notes "the caste stigma surely is a chief reason for the *Nāy* boys to refuse the learning of *nāykhiṅbājā*" (1988: 9) because of the fear that they will be identified as low caste people when they play these instruments in public. Besides, playing these instruments does not make them financially strong. A *muhāli* player from a *jugi* community, Ravi Kapali, thinks that the economic unsustainability is the main reason that *jugi* people have left playing *muhāli:*

> I and my father both play *muhāli* but our thoughts are different. My father thinks that we should play this instrument because it's the tradition that our caste has been continuing from long. I think that I should play this instrument to preserve the dying music. I do not think it is only because of the lower caste issue that people are leaving to play *muhāli.* Not playing the instrument does not make them high caste. The caste status, citizenship or nationality does not change just by not playing the instrument. The economic unsustainability is the main reason behind it (interview, April 3, 2017).

Because of the economic unsustainability, *jugi* people instead learn modern instruments like guitar and keyboard. They are more into playing modern trumpets and clarinets in *ben bājā*, brass bands in wedding processions. Grandin also observes this upward caste mobility:

> Maybe the most important change in the field of wedding etc. music is not the substitution of instruments in the orchestra, but the new people attracted to performing it: those of the middle caste stratum. In other words, wedding music has moved upwards socially, and "Hoerburger's law" has been broken (1989: 181).

Grandin's observation was true for new *ben bājā* brass bands, but not for *muhāli*, the traditional double reed instrument.

During my fieldwork, I also observed that *muhāli* has also been taken up by other caste groups. I met two *muhāli* players in Bhaktapur in the *biskāḥ jātrā*[5], a festival that I used to observe every year since my childhood until a few years ago. I was interested in audio and videotaping a *nau bājā*[6] drum ensemble that played during this festival. It was an afternoon of the *biskāḥ jatra* festival in Taumadhi neighborhood, Bhaktapur in April 2017, and I went to a courtyard where the *nau bājā* music is performed. I was quite surprised this year that I saw two teenagers: 15 year-old girl and her 14 year-old brother playing *muhāli*. I'd never seen this instrument played by such young musicians before. Another surprise was that they are not from the *jugi* caste. Rather, they belong to a peasant community, which is considered higher than *jugi* caste in the hierarchy. I followed them during the festival procession and spoke to them after the procession. They took me to their home, where they wanted me to speak to their father. Their father, Mukti Sundar, is a musician as well. He knows the importance of the *muhāli* and also worries that this instrument is gradually becoming extinct. Therefore, he encouraged his children to learn this instrument. The kids were previously learning keyboards and other musical instruments. They have been learning *muhāli* for two years now and still continue the classes, but less frequently. I asked Mukti Sundar if they are the first people from a non-*jugi* family to learn this instrument. He replied, saying, "I do not know the history," and added:

> I read in a newspaper that a group in Kathmandu claimed that they are the first group from a non-*jugi* caste to learn *muhāli* instrument, but that was after my children learned and performed in public. I also read about a non-*jugi* group in Changu Narayan, Bhaktapur. That too was much later than my children learned. I did not want to publish news or anything (interview, April 18, 2017).

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[5] *Biskāḥ Jatra* is a festival celebrated in various parts of Kathmandu valley including Bhaktapur, Thimi, Nagadesh, Bodey, Tokha, Chakhunti and Khadpu. It is celebrated according to the solar calendar and falls in the month of April. The essence of *biskāh jātrā* festival is erecting a pole flag, *yahsin*. In many places, the festival also includes pulling or carrying of chariots of deities around the neighborhoods and worshipping of various deities with musical procession. In Bhaktapur it is a nine-day eight-night festival.

[6] *Nau bājā* is a musical group/ensemble consisting various types of drums such as *pachhimā*, *nagarā* and *nāy khiṅ*.

Mukti Sundar informed me that it was very hard for him to have a *jugi* guru in his home for *muhāli* lessons. He indicated that the *jugi* people fear that other people will take away their music; thus, they hesitated to teach others. They do not intend to teach their music to others even though their own children do not learn their music.

Many music traditions are not limited to particular castes anymore. For instance, the *dhimay* drum, which is traditionally played by the middle-class peasants, is widespread among many caste groups. Sharma and Wegner (1994) point out that *dhimay* drum is also played by the *Pahariyā* at Baḍikhel. Bernede notices lower caste *Duiṅ* also play this drum in the localities of Icaṅgu Nārāyaṇa and Lubhu (2016: 290). In Kathmandu, *dhimay* is also played by members of the low-caste *poḥ* (sweepers) community. [7]

A newer generation of musicians such as Ravi Kapali is currently heavily involved in teaching *muhāli* to other castes as well. Ravi Kapali himself is pursuing an undergraduate degree in ethnomusicology at Kathmandu University. It is an indication that the traditional musicians from low caste families are now also devoting their time and effort to the formal education of music.

[7] Anup Singh Suwal, interview, March 24, 2018

Figure 3.2 A fifteen-year-old girl from a non-jugi family and Asakaji Darshandhari playing muhāli in Biskaḥ Jatra festival in Bhaktapur. Photograph by the author.

Bājaṅ guthi: social music institutions

While the gradual relaxation of caste barriers has expanded the music of individual castes to others, the traditional music group institutions, or *guthi*, are in many places facing problematic situations. One main reason for survival of the traditional Newar music is because of the land endowment, property the *guthi* would have as an income source. Many social and musical organizations perform their rituals and cover the expenses with the income from agriculture through the lands. With the land reforms of 1964 and the formation of the government corporation *Guṭhi Saṅsthan*, many of these lands once owned by *guthi* are now under the ownership of the government instead of the social or musical groups. *Guṭhi Saṅsthan* does

provide annual support but it is very small. It has failed to take account of the growing costs faced by *guthi*.

Contexts and constructs

The performance context of Newar music is changing significantly. The predominantly male-centered Newar music tradition is changing in terms of gender roles. Similarly, the identity movement has brought a performance context shift in traditional music. Also, the gender and caste identity is no longer so strict in music making. I examine contexts and constructs under the three main themes of changes in performance context, changes in gender roles and the impact of the identity movement in this section.

Performance Contexts

There have been shifts in the uses and functions of Newar music.[8] Recently people have been dis-embedding music from traditional settings and re-embedding it in new contexts. Many musical groups have now started to perform in private functions, such as wedding processions, from which they get some additional money to support their group, at least to buy and maintain the musical instruments. Some groups also perform in hotels and restaurants.

The function of *chachā,* Buddhist devotional songs and dances, which used to be very secretly performed between limited people, has been completely transformed these days. Now, it is performed publicly on stage rather than for a ritual purpose. This includes performances in hotels and restaurants. *Chachā* has become "a national art form for foreign consumption, its

[8] See Merriam 1964 on uses and functions.

performance a non-ritual entertainment, although its earlier functions are acknowledged in order to enhance its appeal" (Widdess 2004: 32).

A well-known Indian *tablā* player Zakir Hussain does not see anything wrong in these type of contextual changes in general; instead, he sees it as an opportunity for a new audience to explore the traditional music:

> When you are in a hotel or a restaurant and somebody is playing music back there, the audience is not paying attention, not necessarily what music is happening. They are more interested in eating. So, what the restaurants and the hotels do is they hire musicians who are just trained enough be able to be an ambience sound. It's not necessarily a performance. But they hope that when the audience even in their subconscious mind hear the sound of the instrument, they may become curious and might want to find out more about it. That's when they'll go to a concert to see a master play. I'm sure the audience knows the person playing in the hotel is not a master, he is a student. So, he's you are giving a student version of what's happening and if they want to find out more about it and more in detail they'll go and listen in a concert hall. I don't see any problems in that area. I just feel that the purists get very carried away with the idea of protecting the music. And when they do they stop any possibility of any normal person being able to hear the music. Yes, you can hear in restaurant, or you can hear on a record or you can hear in a film music or whatever. They try to stop people from doing that. In doing so they are restricting the ability of the audience to be able to find a way finally to get to a concert and listen to a great master. That should not happen (interview, November 8, 2017).

Some people I talked to, including senior musicians Ratna Behoshi Bajracharya and Bhriguram Shrestha, fear that the increased performance of traditional music in new contexts such as hotels, restaurants and at political rallies will encourage people to learn and play easier repertoires and put the traditional repertoires at risk.

Gender Roles

> No procession is complete without the deep rumble of *dhimay* [drum] and the crashing of *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichāaḥ* [cymbals]. This combination is considered to 'get the maximum number of girls hanging out of the windows' as Dasaram Machamasi from Yata puts it (Wegner 1986: 11).

An aspect of gender roles in the Newar music scene is hinted at in the above quote. Until the 1990s, traditional Newar music used to be dominated by males. Girls and women used to be only observers or listeners, typically watching the musical processions from the windows. This is changing considerably these days. Toffin notes: "on the whole, Newar women from all castes, high or low, feel themselves to be in a better situation than *Chhetri* and *Bāhun*[9] women" (2008: 392). Still their participation in music is almost negligible compared to *Chhetri* or *Bāhun* women. Women in general have limited participation and access to music and dance in Nepal. "Women of the Indo-Nepalese castes only sing in public on three occasions: during the arduous work of rice-transplanting; whilst keeping all-night vigil at a shrine during the annual women's festival (*tīj*); and at the all-female wedding party [*ratyauli*] celebrated at the groom's home while the men are away at the bride's" (Broughton 2000: 200). Newar women's access to music and dance is even more limited since they celebrate neither *tīj* festival, nor the wedding party celebration at the groom's home.

Involvement in music for men is compulsory in many caste groups such as *jyāpu.* As Wegner states, "[in a Newar town] – with the strict exception of the womenfolk – almost everybody seems to be a musician or a dancer" (1987: 471). Toffin asserts that "music is a compulsory activity among Maharjan peasants in the Kathmandu Valley. All young men of the village or of the ward must be trained in drum playing and acrobatics in order to be incorporated into his caste" (2008: 400). He adds, "...what is more, men have enclosed musical and dance-drama activities within male gender boundaries; they have erected fences around this field to defend it from women" (ibid). However, this situation is rapidly changing. In a short time frame, Newar women have begun actively participating in music through singing and playing traditional

[9] *Chhetri* (a Sanskrit derivative of *Kshatriya*) and *Bāhun* (hill Brahmins) are a high class Nepali-speaking Indo-Aryan Hindu community that dominates the majority of government and policy making positions.

musical instruments since 1990s. Even though there is a variety of literatures (poems, etc.) found written by the queens in the medieval period (13th-18th century), it's only been in the last few decades that women have first gradually become involved in singing, mostly in new genres. They later started playing various traditional musical instruments. Female participation in Newar music on many traditional musical instruments has become more widespread over the last few decades.

The early days of teaching the traditional drums to women was not easy. Nhuchhe Bahadur Dangol informed me that he started teaching his sisters Nani Chhori Dangol and Tara Dangol to play the *dhimay* drum in the early 1970s (interview, June 19, 2017). He also had his sisters perform in a few events in Kathmandu during the 1970s and 1980s. Since he broke the tradition, he was boycotted by *guthi.* He had to leave his traditional neighborhood and move to somewhere far beyond the traditional boundary of Kathmandu. He also taught a few other women to play traditional drums. None of them could continue to play the drums due to the social and cultural restrictions. Hari Govinda Ranjitkar in Bhaktapur also taught drums to his daughters, but they do not play regularly either.

India Lachhimasyu (32) from Bhaktapur is the first female player of Newar traditional musical instruments who learned and continues to play the traditional drums. She began playing the *dhimay* drum in the late 1990s when she taught a few *tāla*s to herself listening to the drum lessons happening at her home. Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhwa and German ethnomusicologist Gert Matthias Wegner were teaching dhimay there. It was from them whom she learnt *dhimay* drum first. Before taking a formal lesson, one day when no one was at home, she practiced the drum alone. Her parents and teachers heard her playing the drum. They were surprised that all the repertoire she played was correct. The teachers then encouraged her to learn and play the drums. Her parents also did not oppose her playing the drums, though it was breaking from tradition. It

is likely she got encouragement from her parents because her father and grandfather both were traditional music gurus. After learning *dhimay* drum, Lachhimasyu learnt the *nau bājā* drum repertoire from her parents. Later, she taught traditional drums to her female friends and formed the musical group, "Dattatraya Mahila Dhimay Khala" with all female members in early 2000s. It is the first all-female musical group to play the traditional Newar musical instruments. The group includes Indira and Julum Lachhimasyu and six of her students: Krija Manandhar, Leena Manandhar, Mira Manandhar, Kabita Manandhar, Bina Manandhar, and Manju Manandhar. These days she teaches drums in various schools in Bhaktapur and to date she has taught drums to over 500 students.[10]

Traditional music is now taught to women in nearly all social organizations (*guthi, bājā, khalaḥ*) and in schools. Women musicians have considerably increased their presence in traditional rituals and festivals, particularly in bigger groups such as *bāsuri khalaḥ* (flute ensemble). Toffin recorded that of the 32 *jyāpu* neighborhoods in Kathmandu, four had started to teach musical instruments to women as of February 2005 (2008: 403). As of March 2018, all 32 neighborhoods teach musical instruments to women. Anup Singh Suwal, a *jyāpu* community leader, informed me that the *dhimay* drum is taught to women in all *jyāpu* neighborhood in Kathmandu these days. He also informed me that women play these drums in all the festivities in Kathmandu in a traditional music group or in newly formed *dhimay* clubs (interview, March 24, 2018). In some neighborhoods, however, as Toffin notices, (2008: 403) the *dhimay* apprenticeship is still limited to the small drum (*chigwaḥ dhimay*) only and not to the bigger one (*tagwaḥ dhimay*), which is considered more sacred.

[10] Indira Lachhimasyu, interview, April 29, 2017

Young girls thesedays are especially attracted to bigger ensembles such as the *dhimay* drum ensemble or *bāsuri* flute ensemble. There is low participation by older women in these groups. They are more attracted towards the *bhajan* singing instead. The main reason for this is that bigger ensembles such as *dhimay* and *bāsuri* mostly participate in processions, where young people can dance and enjoy themselves in public. *Bhajan*, in contrast, is performed seated in a rest shelter or a room and it is easier for elderly people to participate since it does not require long walks carrying and playing musical instruments. Another reason for elder women's interest in *bhajan* is because of the smaller size of repertoire they need to learn. Just learning one or two *bhajan*s will make a woman a musician in the group. Eight to ten such musicians will make a *bhajan* group who can perform for up to one hour.

There are various reasons for women's growing attraction towards *bhajan*. Mukti Sundar informed me that one big reason is because of the changes in occupation:

> The people in Bhaktapur used to be mostly peasants who used to get busy every day in the field. Children of the peasants also started going to school. The peasants started to sell their lands for higher education. After the study, their children started working in offices. Because of lack of the farming lands, many older people now have a lot of leisure time. Because of this extra time, many people are inclined to *bhajan* (interview, April 18, 2017).

Mukti Sundar's view is fairly true. In past, even for those familieis in which men work in adiministrative sectors in offices, women used to work in farms. Now with less and less farming lands, women have leisure time and many have chosen traditional music as a hobby. During my fieldwork I met a woman in Thimi in her sixties who was taking music lessons in a local music school. Her aim was to learn harmonium and few *bhajan*s so she could join a local bhajan group. I asked her why she is learning music at this age. She said that all her children are abroad now. She does not need to work for her living. Music is a way that she could user her time (interview, June 14, 2017.) This widening of acceptance of girls and women as instrumentalists since the

1990s underscores ongoing changes to established ideologies and suggests a new means of sustaining traditional Newar music.

The identity movement

The identity movement is one of the most prominent movements in present-day Nepal. In the 1920s, the Newars of Nepal started the movement for equal linguistic and cultural rights. The movement then developed broadly with other ethnic groups in Nepal - who call themselves *adibāsi janajāti* (indigenous nationalities) - demanding representation at the decision-making level with ethnic autonomy.

Hawkesworth and Kogan define an identity movement or identity politics as "one form of a 'politics of recognition' where groups organize around socially marginalized and vilified identities, seeking to change their social or cultural status as outsiders" (1992: 577). While discussing the movement in the context of Nepal, the term "identity movement" refers to movements by marginalized ethnic groups who call themselves indigenous nationalities, which include *madhesi*s, *dalit*s, Muslims, and other marginalized communities who have been marginalized on the basis of caste, ethnicity, language, religion, sex, class, and geographical territory. The movement includes, but is not limited to, linguistic and cultural rights, as well as their representation at the decision-making level.

The identity movement in Nepal has influenced changes in musical repertoire, function, time and space in many instances. The movement has reinforced a focus on "performing" or exhibiting rather than "practicing" or preserving traditional music. I borrow the terms "practice" and "performance" from Sara Shneiderman, who describes "practice" as "embodied, ritual actions carried out by individuals within a group-internal epistemological framework" and

"performance" by contrast as "a ritualized action carried out within a broader discursive context created by political, economic, or other kinds of external agendas" (2015: 37).

One of the central tenets of the identity-based movement in Nepal is that ethnic groups should reject the language and culture of "high" caste Hindus and revive their own distinct languages, religions, clothing, music, dances, and festivals. As a response, many ethnic groups have made dramatic changes to their cultural practices, including music. An example of this movement is seen in the 2001 census data. The 2001 census showed that over the previous decade, many of Nepal's ethnic groups increasingly identified themselves as followers of non-Hindu religions. Harka Gurung (2003) analyzed changes between Nepal's census of 1991 and that of 2001 and found that the population of people who identified as Hindus decreased while the population of people who identified as members of non-Hindu religions increased significantly. For example, the population of Buddhists grew by 69.7%, while the population of ethnic groups who identified as Buddhist only increased by 24.9%, and the population of followers of the Kiranti religion increased by 157%, while the population of Kiranti ethnic groups (Rais and Limbus) increased by only 28.1% (Gurung, ibid).

As a consequence of identity-based movements, many ethnic groups are reviving their own festivals and have boycotted many Hindu festivals, including the national festival *daśaiṅ*, which represents a key Hindu identity.[11] Similar is the case of music. Newars are now reviving their own songs, music, and dances as part of the collective identity of the Newars. They have moved away from traditional barriers in previously strict traditions by teaching people from various castes in their community and including women, which otherwise would have been

[11] See Hangen (2013).

considered “impure.” There has also been wide use of traditional music in protests and for cultural and political rallies.

Music has always been used as a tool for collective Newar identity performance in identity movement. Archer argues, “the ecology of music presupposes that the dynamics of music shift in proportion to the dynamics of the total culture, and, by and large, are some index of the emotional needs of the culture” (1964: 30). The Newars have emotionally realized they need identity performance to show themselves distinct in changing cultural scenarios where people from various other cultures from outside the valley are constantly migrating into the Kathmandu Valley. Thapa & Murayama identify the main causes of migration of people into the Kathmandu Valley “greatly influenced by seven driving factors: physical conditions, public service accessibility, economic opportunities, land market, population growth, political situation, and plans and policies” (2010: 70).

A great part of *nakali* (Nepali: artificial) musical identity has been developed through the identity movement. *Nakali* is not necessarily a negative attribute; as Shneiderman describes, it implies the “re-objectification of the *sakali* (Nepali: genuine) in a new context for a different purpose” (2015: 47). *Lakhey* masked dance and music performance (which is traditionally performed in Indra Jatra festival in Kathmandu) in the street for political protest, is an example of a *nakali* tradition. Here, the *Lakhey* dance itself is still *sakali,* but the performance context is *nakali*.

Several new Newar flute ensembles in Kathmandu depict music as growing identity performances rather than ritual practice. In these ensembles, more focus is given to presenting a group of people in Newar traditional dress, particularly young boys and girls. Besides its traditional use in wedding and other ritual processions, this form of musical ensemble is very popular these days in political and cultural rallies.

Drums like the *dhimay* and the *dhāḥ* have also become popular for political rallies and festivals, as their loud volume makes them especially suitable for those occasions. Other drums, such as the *pachimā* and *khiṅ*, have become rare, almost to the point of extinction. These drums are harder to play and require months or years of training. Even with the easier drums, new groups learn a very limited repertoire, usually for performing in certain festivals or rallies and for a short duration of time. Mukti Sundar informed me, "The *dhimay* drummers in Bhaktapur these days only play *mā tāla* which is comparatively easier to play. *Khajati* and *Ekatā* are almost extinct. They are difficult to play" (interview, April 18, 2017). This makes sense when playing music for the purpose of performing an identity, as the complicated drums or repertoire are not essential for demonstrating cultural identity. What matters most is the visibility: the traditional dress and playing any musical piece on a traditional drum. Identity movement has threatened more complex performance traditions.

For many groups, the focus has been on created identity rather than the practice, preservation, and promotion of all types of musical instruments and repertoires. The shift from "practice" to "performance" in the Newar communities of Nepal is very much noticeable in new musical groups and the performances in the new context of the identity movement. The ongoing identity movement in Nepal has reinforced changes in the function, time and space of traditional music.

Regulation and infrastructure

Performance Spaces

Local streets, public *dabū* (a raised platform), squares, courtyards and *phalchā* (a public rest place) are typical performance spaces for traditional music. Over time, the Newars have

dynamically changed the performance spaces for example in the route of the music procession. Greene notes:

> ...each route [of the flute pilgrimage during the month of *guṅlā*] is followed much the same each time, but there is some room for flexibility, such that certain temples or shrines may be included or excluded at the discretion of the music group leader. Perhaps as a result of this flexibility, some routes have changed considerably over time (2003: 212- 213).

Because of the migration of people to the Kathmandu Valley and growing urbanization, Newar music performance spaces are changing. In some cases, *guthi chheñ* (Nepalbhasa: house of the *guthi* social organization) or *akhā chheñ* (Nepalbhasa: a house where music and dances are taught, and where dance costumes and musical instruments are stored) have been converted to multipurpose community buildings. An example of a new community building is in Kuthuchhen, Bhaktapur. Their new *guthi* house was constructed with contributions from 56 households with local voluntary labor. It was initially built as a school, but the school was later relocated and the house was made available for community purposes. The first floor is a *phalchā* (Nepalbhasa: public rest place) used by the *dāphā* group for singing and the room above it is used for music training and other purposes (Widdess 2013: 136). In many cases, the public platforms and rest places have been converted to commercial spaces or destroyed in the name of road expansions, thus limiting the performances to a street or a room in a private house. With growing traffic in Kathmandu, the street performances are also facing difficulties.

Funding Sources

Newar music is highly regulated by the *guthi*. Guthi not only provides the rules and regulations, but also manages the financial sources for music performance and rituals. The income source for a *guthi* is generally a physical property such as land or a house. But the land

reforms in 1964 changed all that with the government many properties owned by traditional *guthi* as I noted above. Generally, the current financial support from the national government for traditional musical activities is minimal. Some local governments such as municipalities provide some funds to selected music groups. Some musicians have formed new organizations such as new *bāsuri khalaḥ* flute ensembles, who manage their funding through training as well as performance in non-traditional contexts such as private parties and restaurants[12].

Musical Instruments

Incorporation of new musical instruments and the modification of existing musical instruments is another significant change in Newar music. When rock 'n' roll began in the United States in the 1950s, Nepal was just emerging out of isolation.[13] It wasn't until the late 1960s and early 1970s that rock began to take hold in the capital (Henderson 2005: 21). New musical instruments were introduced to Newar music from the 1960s onwards when rock music was also introduced to Kathmandu. Nepalese people then got "a fairly 'pure fix' of the new music, relatively unmediated by middlemen, international distributors, import agents, and government censors" (Liechty 2003: 198). Tourists and travel and trade brought recordings and musical instruments to Kathmandu. Guitar, violin, and keyboards are some of the instruments that were introduced in this period while *tablā*, *harmonium, kaṅgo* (a set of three congas), tambourine and trumpet had been introduced at least a few decades earlier. Many of these

[12] See Chapter 5 for details on these types of music groups.

[13] Nepal was in a deliberate isolation in a period between 1846-1951 (the Rana period) when the Rana family overtook the power, reduced the Shah monarch to a figurehead and made Prime Minister and other government positions hereditary. General public were deprived from education and even writing in other than Nepali languages led to the imprisonment. See chapter 2 for more on the Rana period.

instruments, such as guitar and keyboards, are being used in "recent traditional" and modern Newar music. Only a few of these, such as violin and trumpet, are being used in "old traditional" music with *guṅlā bājā* and *bāsuri bājā* flute ensembles.

Modifying musical instruments and changing the playing styles is not a new phenomenon in Newar music. Early scholars of Newar music argue that the Newars have been modifying musical instruments and the playing techniques from very early periods of the Newar musical history. In discussing the origins of various musical instruments and traditions, Chittadhar "Hridaya" notes how the Newars adapted various foreign musical instruments and made them their own:

> … in imitation of the *mrdanga*, which is so highly spoken of by *Kalidas*, we have the *danga* by eliminating the syllable '*mri'*, and by replacing the *khau* (iron-filing dab) by dough on both sides. As in the Moghul period they cut in two the *mridanga* and introduced the *tabla*; we too made the *koncha-khiṅ* with parchment only on one side and without the need of *bama* we produce both *bol*s with single hand (1957: 13).
>
> … The *Desikhiṅ* came from Bengal, but with that too we did mix our own style, not only in *bol* and *tāl* but we changed the shape itself. The Bengali *khiṅ* has such a narrow end that it is difficult to use the full hand, and therefore we widened it (ibid, 14).

In recent days, the musicians have made some modifications to different traditional musical instruments. The most noticeable change is the replacement of traditional artistic wooden flutes by bamboo or plastic flutes. Bamboo flutes and plastic flutes are sometimes played in combination in flute ensembles but most of the ensembles use only the plastic flutes. The plastic flutes are often painted to look like the wooden ones. The necessity of the uniform-scale flutes in a big quantity for the flute ensemble is the driving factor for creating the plastic flutes, as music guru Dharma Munikar explains:

> I started teaching flutes from 2000 AD under a community learning project by UNESCO. I needed flutes in bulk and contacted the traditional flute makers in Lalitpur. The flutes were not tuned to a scale. I requested them to make flutes tuned in a particular scale and all the flutes match the scale. They changed the mold; the new flutes were in different size and shape but still did not change in terms of the sound it makes. I could not use these flutes to play with guitar, sitar harmonium or violin. I then started using the bamboo

> flutes. They are cheaper, but the drawback is they do not last longer. They easily break when we accidentally drop them or when we play longer in sunlight (interview, May 12, 2017).

He added about the plastic flutes:

> It was still difficult for me to get flutes in bulk. I used to teach to a group of at least twenty to thirty students. I even taught to a group of up to ninety students. It was really hard for me to get flutes of that quantity. At the meantime, a student brought a sample of a plastic flute. He was a mechanic and used to work in a LED machine. He made it from Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) pipe which is generally used for pressurized plumbing lines. The flute was tuned in C scale. It was little soft to use in a group performance. I suggested him to make in D scale because it sounds better in a group. This worked pretty well in terms of quicker production and the sound quality. The sound quality did not change even when we play under sunlight for a long time (interview, May 12, 2017).

Munikar later taught flutes to many new groups in the Kathmandu Valley, to over 2000 people so far. He mostly uses plastic flutes in all these groups. He also told me that plastic flutes are easier to blow. From communication with flutists Rojina Dangol and Sujina Bajracharya, I learned that the new flutists who learn plastic flutes hardly try to play the wooden flutes (interview, May 15, 2017).[14] Rojina tried to play it once, but she found it hard to blow. Sujina has never tried; she has only heard that the wooden flutes are hard to blow.

On one hand, the plastic flutes are simpler in terms of mass production, making them uniform in sound and easier to blow. On the other hand, the sonic taste of wooden flutes is lost, as Ratna "Behoshi" Bajracharya notices:

> Music from wooden flutes is very pleasant to hear from far than to hear it from near, which is lost in plastic flutes. Traditional flutes are made in three types with different octaves: *ghor, majhwālā*, and *tīp.*[15] These flutes are harder to blow; they need more air. Compared to the wooden ones, plastic flutes are easier to play which is important especially for women's participation. I've also seen women's group in a few places like Satungal, Balambu and Bosigan who use traditional wooden flutes (interview, June 14, 2017).

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[14] Rojina and Sujina are also members of the fusion band "Shree Tara", discussed in chapter 4.

[15] In terms of size *ghor*, *majhwālā* and *tīp* flutes are large, medium and small respectively.

Music performed by new ensembles with plastic flutes is monophonic and lacks layered variation of melody, elaboration and ornamentation, as in older ensembles which use wooden flutes. Greene explains the continuous quality of collective melody-making which the flute musicians metaphorize as *khusi nhyāḥtheṅ* (Nepalbhasa: just as the flow of a river):

> Musicians take care to perform with *gerā* Nepali word meaning seed or grain-with regard to this [straight version of] melody: that is, the notes of the skeletal melody are to be clear and distinct, like uncooked grains of rice in a bowl. But at the same time, one can also hear many layered individual elaborations, in the trills. The effect is much like a river in which all the water flows forward together, but water flowing over rocks at the banks takes more twists and turns than water flowing straight through the smooth basin in the center (2003: 214).

When I asked Dharma Munikar about such variations in new ensembles, he explained to me that he is using a flute with D scale as *majhwālā* (medium) and two other kinds with a G scale in two octaves as *ghor* (large) and *tīp* (small.) He informed me that he has been teaching with the mix of these flutes to retain the layered melody as in music produced by wooden flutes. During my fieldwork, I recorded and interviewed some of Munikar's student flutists, from the group Bodey Baja Khalaḥ[16] during a festival in Thimi, Bhaktapur. They were all playing D scale flutes. Rajib Napit, a member of Bodey Baja Khalaḥ, told me in conversation that they mostly use only one type of flute in processions like these to make it easy for all the flutists. For stage performances, they normally try to mix different types of flutes. I could hear the sonic difference between music of two groups in the same festival: one group using the wooden flutes and this group using the plastic flutes.

There have also been some modifications in the drums. Wooden drums have been replaced by metal drums in many places. This started with aluminum or copper *dhimay* drums. I also noticed a steel *nāykhiṅ* double headed drum in a drum store in Yatkha, Kathmandu. Besides,

[16] I discuss more about this group in the next chapter.

I also noticed a *dāphā* group in Manamaiju, Kathmandu with the fixed tuning paste on the left hand hide of the *pachhimā* drum instead of having to put wheat dough on each time to play the drum.

There have also been some limited experiments with modifying musical instruments. Late musician Asta Man Palanchoke experimented with creating scale-changeable flutes. They included three pieces which could be adjusted to get tuning in a desired scale. They also have a jack for electronic amplification (figure 3.3). Likewise, a *sārangī* player Hari Sharan Nepali has created various *sārangī*s with 8, 12 and 16 strings (interview, June 5, 2017). Hari Sharan has also created an electric *sārangī* and has produced a CD *Sārangī Nepal Sārangī* with these various types of *sārangī*s. Other musicians, however, did not continue with these experiments.

Figure 3.3: Scale changing flute created by Asta Man Palanchoke. (Left: 3 adjustable pieces of flute, Middle: assembled flute, Right: outlet for electronic amplification). Photography by the author.

Media and the music industry

Media is an important driver of musical and social changes. There are many cases in the world in which media has played an important role in preserving and promoting traditional music. In the case of Newar music, at least for several decades, since the beginning of radio

broadcasting in Nepal, media has been one of the reasons for its degeneration. With the advent of Radio Nepal there have been many changes in the Nepalese musical scene, especially with the emergence after 1950 of *adhunik git* and *lok git* in the Nepali language. *Adhunik git* are newly composed, often folk-based songs while *lok git* are newly arranged songs based on folk tunes[17]. Henderson argues these genres emerged in relation to development:

> First, it is clear that the romanticization of the folk has been going on at least since the 1950s. In fact, it has its roots in the multiple projects through which government and non-government agencies have worked to extract and develop a sense of *nepalipana*, or Nepaliness, as an important property of the Nepali nation. Second, development strategies in Nepal from at least the mid-1800s have stressed the need to blend the cultural heritage of the East with the technological and political prowess of the West (2002-2003: 29).

While these two genres of music sung in the Nepali language flourished with the radio, there was a gradual decline in traditional Newar music praxis. One reason for this decline was that the traditional Newar music did not get any space at all on Radio Nepal and many people were attracted to the modern music in the Nepali language to which they were exposed in the media. There was a radio program in the Newar language for 15 minutes a week, but that too was banned in 1965. Not only the traditional music but even modern Newar songs could not flourish, as Henderson argues -

> While Gurungs, Sherpas, Tamangs, and Newars have been the groups most strongly represented in Radio Nepal's folk songs, any use of the Tibeto- Burman languages of these groups in song was eliminated in favor of a language [Nepali language] that more effectively developed a linguistic image of a unified nation (2002/2003: 22)

The new genres of *lok* and *adhunik git* in the Nepali language were seen as pan-Nepalese music, welcomed as modern by rural villagers but held in uneasy tension with varied ethnic and regional

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[17] Outside Radio Nepal's development of *lok git*, there used to exist other folk songs commonly known as *lok git*. The main difference was this seemingly new genre was mainly intended to be played on radio. Though many tunes of these songs were collected from diffferent ethnic groups, the language used was Nepali. Also see chapter 4 for discussion on *lok git*.

genres and their associated values, which were excluded from the nationalizing project. Regarding this, Stirr argues:

> As Nepal's mainstream politics now grapple with issues of ethnic and regional inclusivity, the nationalist emotional resonance of *lok* and *adhunik* may diminish as groups from outside the dominant hill region struggle for inclusion not only in the process of restructuring the state but also in the symbolic practices of representing the nation (2013: 390).

If we compare the effect of media and change in music of various ethnic groups of Nepal, folk songs in the Nepali language flourished through media, whilst Newar language songs did not. Many Newar singers failed in Radio Nepal voice tests only because of their pronunciation, as they had to take a test in Nepali language songs.[18] Neither traditional nor modern Newar music saw a recording in the form of a cassette until the 1980s.[19] This was because the media was controlled and influenced by the state, which followed a single language and single culture policy.

Since the 1990s, there have been multiple private FM radio and television stations but still only very few of them have regular programs dedicated to old traditional music. They do promote the "recent traditional" music such as *shāstriya sangīt* or fusion music, but not old traditional music. A local television station, Nepalmandal TV, seems very dedicated to preserving and promoting Newar traditional music by broadcasting traditional music, often live from different festivals. The TV station also organized a *dāphā* musical festival for six months where different music groups performed traditional *dāphā* music every week. Shree Krishna Maharjan, the coordinator of the festival, informed me that over 150 *dāphā* music groups

[18] Ratna Behoshi Bajracharya, interview, May 14, 2017

[19] *Nepalbhasa Mey Kū* released by Dapa Khala in 1979 is the first Nepalbhasa audio cassette.

performed in the festival (interview, May 25, 2017). The program was organized in a local mall every Friday in Lalitpur and was telecasted live on television.

The Newars were active in the realm of publishing, however, generally, the Newars in the past did not pay much attention to the importance of recording and broadcast media such as radio, TV or cassettes, as Bianchi notices:

> ...the lack of recordings of older styles can probably be partially attributed to the fact that most Kathmandu valley Newars have much traditional music virtually at their doorsteps (though seemingly to a lesser extent with each passing year), whereas most outsiders, for whatever reason, seem to have taken relatively little interest in (or are simply not aware of) Newar music. (2004/2005: 25)

With the changes in profession, decreased frequency of traditional musical activities and proportionately decreased number of musicians in the Kathmandu Valley population, increased media influences and easy access to the media, and extensive growth of social media, it seems important that traditional musicians utilize the media for educational, promotional and preservation purposes.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the contemporary changes in Newar music under the broad domains of music ecology as Schippers (2010, 2016) proposed. The following implications can be drawn:

1. There has been an increase in formal traditional music education through schools, colleges, universities and private institutions. This has not only helped to promote the learning of traditional music in new settings but has also helped to educate and maintain a knowledgeable audience. The continued oral transmission of knowledge has helped to maintain close relationships between music *gurus* and

their students. Although it is still less commonly practiced, the use of notation systems has helped students to learn and memorize more quickly.

2. Increased relaxation of caste barriers has helped some music traditions flourish. However, music played by some low castes, such as that of the jugi who play *muhāli,* is still under the threat of extinction because of decreased public interest. Changing structures of *guthi* has also alarmed musicians and adversly impacted the continuation of music traditions for several music groups.
3. Contextual changes of music performance have created worry over the disappearance of rich and complicated traditions and repertoires. Increased women's involvement has helped to promote some genres, involving a greater number of musicians such as *bāsuri bājā* flute ensembles. The identity movement has pushed musicians to emphasize on "performance" rather than "practice", resulting in the endangerment of certain repertory and subgenres.
4. The search for new funding sources, such as from training fees and performance in non-traditional contexts, has increased in scope. Traditional music groups, however, are unquestionably in need of strategies that promote and sustain musical traditions. In changing the musical instruments for whatever reason consideration should also be given to indigenous technologies and methods and industrializing it, for instance, how the traditional wooden flutes could be mass produced.
5. Media and the commercial music industry generally did not seem to play a positive role in promoting traditional Newar music. To offer a basis for sustainability, exposure of traditional music through news media, commercial recordings, the Internet and social networking sites seems crucial. There might

also be some drawbacks though, for example, more preference to “performance” for media than actual “practice” in daily lives.

In the next chapter, I continue the exploration of Newar musical changes, focusing on how Newar music is being used by fusion bands in new contexts.

CHAPTER 4: FUSION AND CONFUSION

Introduction

Since the mid 2000s, a new form of instrumental folk music has evolved in Nepal that is primarily targets the youth urban culture. It is a second wave of musical genres developed after the mixed Nepalese folk pop genre *lok pop*[1]. Many instrumental bands appeared with inspiration from the popularity of the folk instrumental band Kutumba, which was formed in 2004. Currently, there are dozens of these kinds of bands. These types of bands are not specifically a Newar project, but for various reasons Newar instruments became important symbols of folk tradition. The bands primarily perform instrumental folk tunes comprised from the various ethnic groups within Nepal, as well as a distinct blend of new compositions and western beats. These bands also occasionally perform folk/pop fusion songs, collaborating with different singers and musicians. Some have also started poetry recitation with the music. The bands play many different Newar musical instruments, such as drums including *dhimay*, *dhāḥ*, *nāykhiṅ*, *daphā khiṅ, nagarā*, and *pachhimā*; and cymbals including *bhusyāḥ, chhusyāh, tāḥ, ghaṅghalā* and others. These groups are also touring different parts of Nepal and abroad; but the reception is not uniformly positive.

These artists and bands have challenged many traditional conventions and boundaries generating tension between an aspiration for traditional/folk music and an inclination towards the

[1] *Lok* pop (which translates to "folk pop") are youth-oriented pop music in the Nepali language with the lyrics mostly connected to the mountainous village life. These are studio recorded high tech songs with western instruments and often double headed Nepalese drum *mādal.* Greene puts it as: "some ways analogous to America country music (cf. Fox 1992): marked as the 'folk' or 'traditional' wing of Nepali pop, it is situated in opposition to musics marked as 'cosmopolitan' or 'westernized,'" such as mix music. *Lok* pop songs invoke mountainous settings, and in so doing take part in the Nepalis' tradition of imagining mountainous Nepal as the location of *nepālipan*, Nepali-ness" (2002/2003: 43).

modern world. These artists and bands claim that they have promoted the music and expanded an audience base for traditional music, but are also blamed by some, especially older musicians, for polluting the traditions by creating "conFusion" music instead.

In this chapter, I examine the development of new musical trends and controversies inspired by the fusion artists and bands in Nepal. Through the lens of eclecticism, appropriation, and indigenization I explore their music and performances to analyze contemporary Newar society and Nepalese society in general. I argue that fusion bands are promoting an "alternative modernity" (Feenberg 1995, Gaonkar 2001, Hosagrahar 2005) which attempts to incorporate both western technology and native culture.

Revisiting Fusion Music

The concept of fusion is not new; however, it is often associated with the changes in jazz producing "ain't jazz, ain't rock" (Fellezs 2011: 5) in the 1960s and 70s. At that time people started to combine aspects of jazz harmony and improvisation with different styles such as rock, funk, blues as well as experiments with electronic effects. Fusion is generally perceived as crossing the boundary of a musical genre by incorporating elements from two or more different musical genres. It can refer to "the perceptual combination of elementary aspects of music such as frequencies or tones (perceptual fusion) or the result of combining distinct musical styles (such as jazz and rock) to form a novel genre or sound (fusion music)" (Thompson et al 2014: 492). Fellezs describes fusion as a merging of aesthetics and practices of different genres and the subsequent blurring of large-scale genre boundaries in articulation with other musical traditions that each musician engaged in a more limited fashion (2011: 7). This type of fusion of different genres typically occurs when a musician feels limited in a particular genre and thus borrows techniques and styles from other genres. It can also occur when musicians trained in different

genres seek experimental collaboration to construct something new. Terada Yoshitaka in his studies of fusion music in South India suggests that fusion music is also an approach for the traditional musicians to survive in the competitive music profession, and to secure the freedom for musical creativity (2015: 444). He argues that fusion music also offers "musicians a venue for negotiating their position in the traditional hierarchy between soloists and accompanists, and for challenging caste-based divisions" (ibid).

In addition to fusion, "Hybrid" is another term used frequently to denote the blending of two or more distinct music genres. Some scholars have observed that hybridity is a common phenomenon in the "culture of late twentieth-century capitalism" (Dujunco 2002: 26). In both popular and scholarly discourses, as Sutton argues, truly "fused" hybrids, collaborations, or arrangements are generally referred to collectively as "fusion" music (2009: 29). For the purpose of this research, I use the term "fusion" to denote the mixing of different elements from one genre, ethnic or cultural group with that of another for aesthetic, experimental, commercial, modernization, or other purposes. These elements include musical instruments, playing styles, rhythms, melodies, compositions, and arrangements.

The Rise of Fusion Bands in Nepal

In the early 1990s, a band named *Sur Sudhā* was formed by the musician Surendra Shrestha. Since its inception, the band changed the music scene in Nepal, becoming one of the most popular groups in the '90s transforming the concept of traditional music, and fusing new styles with those of the old. *Sur Sudhā* remains a vital part of the transformation that it sparked and has performed over 2,000 concerts in Europe, India, Japan, S. Korea, Africa and the USA,

and released fourteen CDs.[2] Since the founding of *Sur Sudhā*, other similar groups have been created and have continued to change the musical landscape. Another band of notable importance is *Sukarma* which was formed by Dhrubesh Chandra Regmi, Shyam Sharan Nepali and Atul Prasad Gautam. What's striking about these bands is that although they perform traditional and folk music, the instruments they use are classical and include flute, *sitār,* and *tablā* which most of the people consider are not native to Nepal[3]. When the *Kutumba* started to perform traditional and folk tunes entirely on native musical instruments in 2004, it quickly resonated with more Nepalese people because of the cultural importance of the traditional musical instruments.

Interestingly, just prior to forming the group, half of the *Kutumba* band members were event organizers. While organizing music events, they realized that most performances that featured traditional/classical tunes were performed on Indian instruments such as *harmonium*, *sitār* or *tablā*. They realized there was a vacuum in that there weren't any musical groups that played music entirely on native Nepalese instruments. Therefore they decided to do an event only with native instruments. The band gave its first performance with popular folk tunes played on native instruments in the Patan Museum on May 8, 2004.[4] Additionally, they released their first instrumental music album *Forever Nepali Folk Instrumental* during the concert. Their program and music were so popular that they gave around half a dozen concerts within a few months. Talking about the band, the *Kutumba* band members introduced their band as a folk fusion band:

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[2] Sur Sudha official website. Accessed Feb 1, 2018. http://www.sursudha.com

[3] Some people might argue that Kathmandu was one of many courts around South Asia that patronized *śastriya sangīt* (classical music), so these instruments are native too. Those people associate these instruments wich classical music, not with foreignness.

[4] Kutumba, interview, April 30, 2017

> We do not promote *Kutumba* as a fusion band, but we are a folk fusion band. When we say fusion music, people think it is a musical piece created when different musical instruments are fused. But music can be fused melodically and with the beats as well. We do the melodic fusion. For example - we play music from *terai*[5] on *tungnā*[6]. (interview, April 30, 2017).

The way in which groups promote themselves is significant as it requires introspection and a level of understanding of the society and culture in which they work. And while some groups accept the fusion label, others are reluctant to do so. Instead, they prefer to be recognized as folk instrumental bands instead and take pride in being recognized as such. That way they can introduce themselves as protectors of traditional and folk music. Similar to the members of *Kutumba*, Naresh Prajapati introduced his band *Vairabi* as "a sort of fusion band but performing traditional and improvised tunes" (interview, April 28, 2017). Their promotional materials use the phrase "*Vairabi*: folk fused instrumental band."

Exploring Fusion Bands and their Music

Performance Contexts and Audience

Most fusion bands do not perform in traditional festivals, rituals or processions. They are dedicated to playing full-fledged ticketed stage performances, mainly targeted to Nepalese urban youths, and occasionally foreign audiences. They perform at various technical, industrial, educational or touristic fairs, as well as occasions such as New Year Day, Valentine's Day, *Daśaiṅ* and *Tihār*. They also perform in private parties such as wedding and anniversaries. These are mainly organized in hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, performance halls or other public places. The bands are even featured in pop, rock and jazz concerts. There is a great increase in these types of events in Kathmandu and other major cities of Nepal. "There is now a perception

[5] Southern plain region of Nepal

[6] A string instrument from Northern Himalayan region of Nepal.

that, in corporate events or private wedding or anniversary parties people think that they should have a live Nepalese band," Sarada Dangol, the founder of *Shree Tārā* band told me.[7] This demand is due to the growing number of listeners of fusion music. Both the event hosts and the listeners feel pride that they are promoting Nepalese folk music.

In addition to the live performances of traditional and fusion music that have sprung up around the country, there has been a surge in audio recordings and YouTube videos as well. Some groups have started event series or video series such as "*Yomāri* sessions", "*Kathāharū*", and, "Project *Bajā* Nepal." Increasingly, many radio and television programs are creating spaces for fusion music.

The increasingly diasporic audience has inspired other fusion bands to form outside Nepal as well. A London-based band, Nāmlo*,* the Toronto-based band The Himalayan Vibes, and Dallas-based band F-1 serve the Nepalese diasporic community in respectively the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. These bands also perform for a global audiences; however, their main audience group is the Nepalese diasporic community. The music they produce creates a sense of kinship for performers and audiences affirming a Nepalese ethnic and cultural identity. While trans-nationally dispersed communities may maintain traditions more rigidly than in the homeland in some diasporic communities in the world (Myers 1998), Nepalese diasporic communities seem to be more interested in performing the fusion style of music. Additionally, some fusion bands from Nepal also do international musical tours, targeting a growing diasporic audiences around the globe.

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[7] Sarada Dangol, interview, April 4, 2017

Musical Instruments and Arrangements

Emphasis by the emerging fusion groups is on including Nepalese musical instruments, although many do also use other Asian or Western musical instruments. Many of these bands tend to present as many native instruments as possible. For this purpose, different bands have explored fusing different instruments in their performances and recordings. These instruments are either from different ethnic groups in Nepal or from other countries. The band *Lakhe*, for instance, uses *poṅgā* (a Newar trumpet) and guitar along with other instruments. The band *Saptak* uses violin, flute, and drums.[8] *Rudra* and *Shreyha* use *tablā* and djembe along with traditional Nepalese instruments. Similarly, *Shree Tārā* started with *sitār* but the sitarist could not continue with the band, so the band later continued with Nepalese *sāraṅgi.*[9] The Night band use the sacred fig leaf *pāluwā*, stringed instrument *tuṅgnā*, and drums *nāykhiṅ* and *dhimay*, while the *Baaja* band has explored an African musical instrument, the mbira. Likewise, *Sarodaya* uses *sarod* and *pachhimā* drum whereas the Cycle band uses the traditional double-reed *muhāli*, trumpet, *sitār* and others. *Kutumba* so far has used more than fifty Nepalese musical instruments in their different musical performances.[10] Regardless, the most common musical instrument is the double-headed drum *mādal*.

In addition to fusion music, spoken word in Nepal is also becoming popular. Most notably, a group named Word Warriors has been performing, as well as conducting events, competitions and workshops on spoken word and slam poetry. The band *Mi Ku* has taken spoken word to the next level by fusing it with different ethnic musical instruments. They use the Newar

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[8] Naresh Prajapati, interview, April 28, 2017.

[9] Sarada Dangol, interview, April 4, 2017. A Nepalese *sārangī* is different in construction and shape from Indian *sārangī.* A Nepalese *sārangī* has four strings vs the Indian with three strings. Similarly, Nepalese *sārangī* has a double-chambered body while Indian *sārangī* has more boxed-type hollow body. *Sārangī* is played more in folk music as compared to the classical music in India. See Rijal (2012) for more on *sārangī.*

[10] *Kutumba*, interview, April 30, 2017.

kettle drums *nagarā*, a wind instrument called a *bīn,* which is generally played by snake charmers, and guitar and other instruments for their spoken word, poetry recital and song performances.

The musicians of these bands prefer to play native instruments over others even though they might not necessarily understand with great depth the traditional playing styles or the repertoires. Pavit Maharjan of the aforementioned *Kutumba* is well trained in keyboards. Similarly, Raju Maharjan of the same band has completed a master's degree in *tablā* performance. Both of them play other traditional drums in the band. Sujina Bajracharya of *Shree Tārā* band was a violinist. She learned *sārangī* just to join the band since violin was not a preferred instrument for the band.

A distinctive function of the bands that make the fusion music is the blending of melody, style of playing the instruments or the performance settings with traditional and European style instruments. They have made many new arrangements which follow western musical approaches, such as incorporating an orchestral format. The bands are characterized by a multitude of traditional musical instruments which are rarely played together in a traditional setting. For example, traditionally the drum *dhimay* is never played with a melody instrument such as the *bāsuri* (a flute); the drums *khiṅ* and *dhimay* or *nāykhiṅ* are never played together. Likewise, the instruments which are traditionally always played together are now not necessarily played as a group. The cymbals like *bhusyāḥ*, *chhusyāḥ*, *babūchā*, and *tāḥ,* which used to be the main accompaniments in drum ensembles, are now played by very few bands. Even the groups who play these cymbals do not necessarily play them the same way they are played in traditional settings.

Nonetheless, many of these bands have publicly stated that one of their main goals is to preserve traditional Nepalese instruments. *Sakchyam* introduced their goal as a band as "to

expose ourselves to the world and be heard. We are here to preserve Nepali traditional instruments and also encourage youths to do so."[11] The bands like *Sakchyam* work diligently on getting the youth audience's attention and getting it refocused on the traditional aspects of native Nepalese music. And to get their attention they use modern musical concepts, rhythms, and beats fused with traditional elements. Someone who thinks traditional music is static (in terms of repertoire, playing style etc) would feel the dynamism of the traditional musical instruments with the modern usage in which traditional and modern worldviews are complementary. Likewise, *Manda*: introduced themselves as "a folk and fusion instrumental ensemble which aims to promote and preserve Nepal's traditional instruments whereas continue the modern musical instruments."[12] These examples of how bands introduce themselves also point to the emphasis they place on traditional musical instruments rather than the traditional music repertoire, the playing styles or the traditional rituals associated with them.

Figure 4.1- Left: the author with a local group in Thimi playing dhimay drums in traditional festival, Right: same drums in a fusion band. Photographs by Nhoojah Maharjan and Lakhe, respectively.

[11] *Sakchyam* band facebook page. Accessed March 12, 2018. https://www.facebook.com/sakchyamband/

[12] *Manda*: band facebook page. Accessed March 16, 2018. https://www.facebook.com//mandabandofficialpage

Bands have changed how the drums are positioned and played. They have invented stands for almost all musical instruments, which otherwise used to be played carried over the shoulder or waist. The bands perform on stage and do not need to carry the instruments as the traditional musicians do for traditional ritual processions. Many instruments that used to be played seated are now played standing, requiring stands for every instrument. Another common practice these bands follow on the traditional drums is imitating the patterns or beats as played on western instruments, such as 2/4 or 4/4 rock beats on the western drum kit, repeating the same beat cycle over and over. They also arrange the drums as a western drum set. For instance, a *nagarā* drum and a few *dhimay* drums are placed around and are played with mallets and/or brushes, like playing a snare drum or tom-toms in a western drum kit. A double-headed *dhimay* drum, which is traditionally carried around the shoulder and played with two hands on two sides, is now placed vertically on the floor and played only on the one side (figure 4.1). For their purpose, two or more *dhimay* drums are put straight on the floor, one facing the right-hand hide up and another with the left-hand hide up. The left-hand hide serves as a bass drum. Similarly, various kinds of pair of cymbals which are played with two hands are now played with one, keeping one cymbal on the table while hitting with the oher held in the hand. Sometimes, the one on the table is played with a stick. Some bands also use western effects cymbals, such as splash cymbals, with native drums. Almost all the bands use *ghaṅghalā,* a musical anklet tied to the feet of dancers, as a shaker.

Instrument Construction

Fusion bands have also brought significant changes in the construction of the musical instruments. Gut strings are now replaced by metal strings. For instance, the bands that use the native string instruments such as the *sārangī* use strings primarily made for *sitār* or western

string instruments such as electric or acoustic guitars.[13] Not only the strings, the bows used are also often imported bows made for violin or other western string instruments instead of traditional horsehair bows. Likewise, instead of using traditional wooden flutes as in traditional Newar flute ensembles, the bands use bamboo flutes. Plastic flutes are popular in traditional flute ensembles these days, but the plastic flutes are not seen in these bands.

The Repertoires

The bands play diverse kinds of musical pieces. When a band is formed, usually they start by playing popular folk tunes such as "*resham firiri", "asāre mahināmā"*, "*kalilo tāmā lai sodha rāmā lai", "rājamati"* or *"basanta"*. Most of these tunes are from *lok gīt,* a folk song genre evolved in the 1950s. Some of the tunes are taken from the different ethnic groups of Nepal. For many of the bands, these tunes fill up most of their performances. Many of *Kutumba'*s concerts in their early days featured folk tunes that were already popular in Nepalese society. *Kutumba* and other bands' early cassette/CD recordings are also packed with well-known tunes.[14] This was a strategy deployed by these bands to authenticate their creativity by connecting their music with an historical past. As the general public started to appreciate their work, the bands started to write their own compositions. For the public who already developed the habit of listening to their music, the new compositions still felt like traditional pieces of music.

For their performances, the bands have not only changed how instruments are combined and playing techniques used but have also changed the pattern of the traditional repertoires. The

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[13] Sujina Bajracharya (sārangī player in *Shree Tara* band), interview, May 15, 2017

[14] *Kutumba*'s first album *Ever Lasting Nepali Folk Instrumental* (2004) and second album *Folk Roots* (2005) include popular folk tunes only and not their own compositions. Only from their third CD, *Naulo Bihani* (2007), they started to include their own compositions.

bands perform popular tunes; however, except for the *mādal* drum, they do not play the traditional repertoires on the drums. Particularly on the Newar drums, they do not even play the pieces which are considered mandatory in any performance. For instance, the musical piece *dyaḥ lhāyegu*[15] is a mandatory piece to be played at the beginning and at the end of every practice session and every public performance of any Newar drums as an invocation of *nāsaḥ dyaḥ*, but I have not seen a single band perform this piece during a practice session or during a public performance. This is because many musicians in the bands like, Pavit Maharjan of *Kutumba*, do not know the fundamental traditional repertoire, such as *dyaḥ lhāyegu,* since they did not learn music in a traditional settings from traditional gurus.[16] But many of those who learned in a traditional settings have forgotten the traditional repertoires.[17]

In Newar traditional music, melody is typically guided by the sophisticated drum *tāla* compositions. Besides the regular *tāla*s such as *cho* (4-beat cycle), *jati* (7-beat cycle), and *palemāṅ* (6-beat cycle), there are several complicated traditional *gwārā* talas which include composition with combination of many of these regular *tāla*s. In such compositions, there often are fixed number of cycles on each *tāla*. For instance, Ter Ellingson, in his study of some of these complex structures in Newar music, discovered a formula in the rhythmic cycle of the song "*Karunāmaya Avalokitesvara"* he videotaped, transcribed and analyzed from a performance at Jana Baha, Kathmandu. Analyzing the cycles, sub-cycles, and repetitions of the ascending and descending sequences as shown in figure 4.2, he discovered a total of 108 beats with the following rhythmic formula:

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[15] For more on the significance of the *dyaḥ lhāyegu*, see Wegner 1992.

[16] Pavit Maharjan informed me that he had learned some traditional repertoire from another band member, Raju Maharjan, who learned with a traditional guru.

[17] Naresh Prajapati informed me that he did learn dhimay, dholak and other drums in a traditional setting in his neighborhood as a child. He now plays various traditional drums in Lākhe and Vairabi bands, but these days he does not play during traditional rituals or festivals. He says he has forgotten many of the traditional repertoires he learned earlier.

Ascending sequence: 10, 12, 14, 16 - Beats in individual sub cycles

Descending sequence: 4, 2, 1 - Repetitions of sub cycles

Exponential product: 2^2 X 2^3 - Total number of sub cycles.

He regards the *tāla* cycle of this Newar Buddhist song as probably "the most complex rhythmic cycle known in the world, and certainly in the music of South Asia" (1996: 459). If any part of a repertoire like this is not played, the entire secret "formula" will be destroyed. If a cycle in this particular repertoire is not played, the total beats will not be 108, a very significant number in Buddhism.

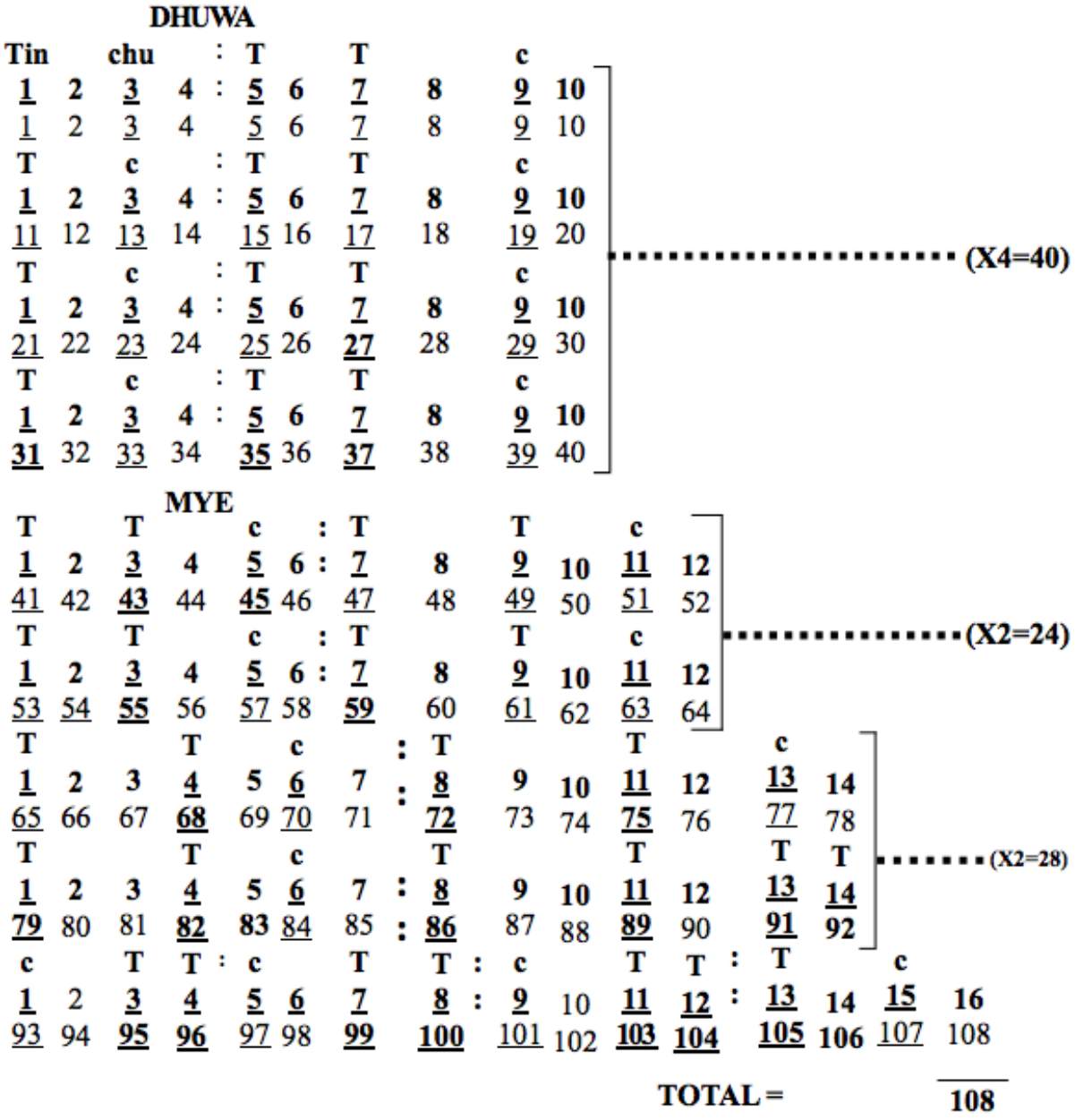

Figure 4.2: Karunamaya Avalokitesvara Dāpā song rhythm cycle. (Source: Ellingson 1996: 459).

Ellingson argues that "all Buddhist traditions share an emphasis on making beautiful offerings as a technique for developing awareness of the excellent qualities of a Buddha, and Buddhist music everywhere is influenced by this meditatively-based aesthetic" (ibid, 460).

Therefore, both in the regular *tāla*s and *gwārā tāla*s the music structure and the repertoires play a vital role in presenting the aesthetics of traditional Newar music. In contrast, in the new performances by fusion bands, the drum beats are used only to support the melody of a musical piece with the *thekkā*[18]*,* like the structure in Hindustani music, with no emphasis on the composition of the repertoires using cycles and sub-cycles.

The knowledge of playing techniques and the traditional repertoire take time. It may take from months to years of practical training to grasp this knowledge. Since not many people know about the repertoire, the bands took the approach of just showcasing the traditional drums as symbolic objects to exhibit a continuity with the historical past.

Dress & Appearance

Besides using traditional musical instruments and performing popular folk tunes, dressing in "updated" traditional outfits is another tool the bands use to modernize the tradition. Many of the bands have developed traditional-modern fused outfits expressing the tension between the traditional culture and the western world. *Kutumba* and *Sirshak* band members wear *daurā,* a traditional Nepalese top for men. The *daurā* is black with a red border, like the pattern of *hāku patāsi,* a *sāri* worn by Newar women (see figure 4.3). The tablecloth they use for putting the cymbals during performance on stage also has the *hāku patāsi* pattern. Similarly, *Sakchyam* and *Safal* band members wear modified cotton *daurā* that have borders with handwoven *dhākā* fabric, which is recognized as an indigenous craft product of the Limbu ethnic community. Their *daurā* seem shorter in length than traditionally worn. In addition, instead of the cotton ties,

[18] Basic rhythmic structure of a particular *tāla*

buttons are used. All these bands, however, rarely wear *suruwāl,* the bottom piece worn with *daurā*. They wear jeans instead. They also hardly wear the traditional *ṭopi* cap.

Daurā suruwāl, worn by men from the hill regions, were a component used in the *panchāyat* era to develop a "Nepaliness" with the national policy of "one country, one language, one dress." Some modified versions of this outfit incorporate a few elements from different ethnic communities, which portrays the bands' genre of fused music. In promotional photo used by *Kutumba,* all the band members have *daurā* dress with *hakupatāsi* patterns and on top of the *daurā*, and all the band members have *bhāṅgrā,* a cloth worn by men from the Gurung and Magar ethnic communities (figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Kutumba band members with daurā in hāku patāsi pattern and bhāṅgrā tops. (Source: kutumba official website – www.kutumbaband.com)

Commercialization

Kutumba band members informed me that their main aim is to explore the wider applications of traditional musical instruments. By saying this, they mean to change the function of the music as well as how an instrument can be played. They thought that traditional music can be commercialized if they can build the larger audience. They started this by playing various

traditional musical instruments a little differently, such as performing in various new events in public squares, parks, hotels and restaurants. Various fusion bands have brought traditional musical instruments out of their traditional contexts. Also, certain musical instruments in Newar traditions are not allowed to be played during certain times of the year. For instance, the *jyāpu* of Kathmandu do not play any musical instruments during the monsoon season (from the *Sithi Nakhaḥ* festival to the *Gathāṅmugaḥ* festival), and people from Bhaktapur and Thimi do not play instruments with black tuning paste during this season. All the instruments are now played throughout the year by the bands.

Since their music targets mainly new, young audiences, the main focus of these bands is always on musical content rather than traditional rituals and the functions associated with them. The bands are more interested in an enjoyable sound than ritual significance. They prioritize the sound quality of their performances. The audio cassettes and CD recordings are also geared towards making pleasant sounds from the traditional musical instruments for commercial purposes. This justifies their use of musical instruments and crossing the traditional boundaries of playing styles and other rituals. Rubin Kumar Shrestha, flutist of *Kutumba* band, says "the traditional wooden flute just has an octave, I can play two octaves with the bamboo flute." Raju Maharjan, a drummer from the same band adds, "it is harder to play the wooden flute, we can play only a single note in one breath. It is hard and quite impossible to play two half notes, for example, in the same breath in wooden flute" (interview, April 30, 2017). The musical scales can also be configured easily in making the bamboo flutes. Since the traditional musicians neither follow a precise system of pitches nor use any instrument to produce standard melodic pitches or scales that can be used as a reference, the discussion of pitch and tuning in traditional music is, as Widdess writes, "virtually impossible" (2013: 142). In contrast, fusion bands pay particular attention to tuning and temperament.

The whole idea regarding the standardization of the musical instruments and the sound quality is to make the traditional and fusion music sellable so that listeners feel it comparable to other recorded music. The commercialization has given opportunities to the emerging artists and the bands to make a living playing music, which otherwise was not possible through the performances in the traditional setting.

conFusions

While the music produced by fusion bands is widely appreciated, it is not beyond controversy. Fusion bands have challenged many traditional boundaries, and for some people, that is problematic. Rather than promoting their music as fusion music, the bands promote their music as Nepalese folk music. Some people think this is the first point of confusion. They argue that it is confusing as their music is not authentic. Apart from the repertoire, the position and arrangements of the musical instruments, the playing styles and the performance itself have created debate.

The bands have gone beyond the traditional boundaries with their different instrument set-ups. With any traditional Newar drum, the right-hand hide known as *nāsaḥ,* which sounds higher, is always stored facing up whether it is placed on the floor or hung up on a wall. It is considered inappropriate to store or hang the drum with the left-hand hide, the *mānkaḥ* or *haimā*, facing up. The right hand hide *nāsaḥ* is considered an emblem of *nāsaḥ dyaḥ*, the Newar god of performing arts. This hide thus represents the *nāsaḥ* (Nepalbhasa: the charm or charisma). The left hand hide *haimā* represents fear or hesitation of performing in public. This hide, *mankāḥ* or *haimā*, is associated with *haimā dyaḥ*, the god worshipped to get rid of the fear or hesitation to perform publicly. The whole philosophy behind placing the drum with the *nāsaḥ* hide up is that the fear or hesitation should always be at the bottom, it should always be overtaken by the *nāsaḥ,*

the charm or charisma. This hidden significance is also seen in the *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* temples, where the *haima dyaḥ* representation is at the bottom of *nāsaḥ dyaḥ*. *Haima dyaḥ* are worshipped after worshipping the *nāsaḥ dyaḥ*. There is also a practical reason for putting the *nāsaḥ* hide up. When the drum is set with the *nāsaḥ* hide up it prevent the drum from absorbing cold and moisture from the floor resulting in the lowering of the pitch of the drum.

When I mentioned the significance of the two hides of a drum, many younger musicians said they did not know about it and they did whatever was easiest for them. The drummers from *Kutumba,* Pavit Maharjan and Raju Maharjan, informed me that they did get some negative comments in earlier days about the drum position and the new drum playing technique. They did not get many comments in later days. They clarified that they only concentrated on performing the music, making use of the traditional drums, and never intended to break any traditional rules.

In addition, they said it was easier for them to position the drums that way and use only one microphone for two kinds of sounds; it would require two microphones if they carried the drum over the shoulder. The drummer of *Vairabi* band, Naresh Prajapati, said if two *dhimay* drums are placed vertically, one right hide up and the other down, the bass and the treble sound are distinctly audible.[19] He added that it is more comfortable, and it looks more "standard" to perform the drums sitting rather than carrying them over the shoulder.

A senior musician, Ratna "Behoshi" Bajracharya, who has been into music since the 1950s, sees this new arrangement as a "disrespect to the musical instruments" (interview, June 14, 2017). He says the musical instruments should be played in their regular form, otherwise it's just a destruction of culture, a destruction of the traditions. Another senior singer and musician, Bhrigu Ram Shrestha, also showed his dissatisfaction with how the musical instruments are

[19] Naresh Prajapati, interview, April 28, 2017.

treated these days (interview, May 14, 2017). Some old music gurus I talked to expressed their dissatisfaction with this saying, "*thauṅ kanhe yāpiṅ manūta khañ nyanīpiṅ makhu"* (Nepalbhasa: the people these days won't listen to us). A renowned pop singer, Deepak Bajracharya, also thought that neglecting the original repertoire and playing style is disrespectful to the tradition. Recently he has been incorporating traditional instruments in his pop songs through his "Cream of Rhythm" project. He says:

> Traditional drummers in our team are from the traditional music group who've learned in traditional group, know the traditional repertoire and play the *dhimay* or *dhāḥ* as how these instruments are played in a traditional way, and not as a western drum set. If we use *dhimay* and *dhāḥ* only as the instruments but play it as a western drum set, we'll be destroying the [traditional] music … There are few bands who are seriously working. They should not forget their *dharma* (responsibility). Just for one's self-interest, they should not play [the traditional drums] haphazardly and start destroying these. People like me come and go, but these instruments have thousands of years of history, that should be justified" (interview, April 10, 2017).

Bajracharya emphasizes using traditional musical instruments with the same techniques and repertoires as they have in traditional contexts. He has recently produced remixed versions of his pop songs using traditional musical instruments. His concerts with traditional musical instruments have been a great hit. For the performances, he hires traditional musicians and not those who learned few pieces only for stage performances. His new song "*Man Magan*", which incorporates *dhimay, mādal* and *sarangī*, has gotten over four million hits on YouTube in three months. After the popularity of the Nepali version of his song, he has also released Nepalbhasa and Hindi versions.

The founder of the Nepali folk musical instrument museum, Ram Prashad Kadel, says the new bands are not producing fusion music, but producing confusion music instead:

> People can do the experiments, we should do experiments, but the authentic repertoires should be documented. *Cho tāla* should be documented as *cho tāla*, *palemāṅ tāla* should be documented as *palemāṅ* and *jati tāla* as *jati*. The *sitalā māju* music should be preserved as it is, and music played in *gaijātrā* should be preserved as it is [traditionally] played. People these days do not know what needs to be played and where it needs to be played. They pick some random pieces from random repertoires haphazardly. They

> arrange musical instruments in one way or another and play. It is total deformation. It's not a fusion music, it's a confusion music (interview, May 26, 2017).

Kadel argues that it is the most dangerous situation right now. He says that the musical instruments are being mistreated now. He continued:

> We can produce sound any way from the musical instruments, sounds can be produced even by beating the table. Our ancestors treated musical instruments as gods. The sounds produced from the musical instruments are acknowledged as the divine words. One should purify him/herself first to play any musical instruments. One should know to respect the musical instruments (ibid).

He fears that these days people play the traditional instruments haphazardly, upload the videos on YouTube, and one who does not know about the traditional music would think what is presented on YouTube is authentic traditional music. Therefore, he stresses that musicians should first learn all traditional repertoires from traditional gurus in a traditional setting. S/he should play these in front of the guru, then document it. Only after that he should do other experiments.

Zakir Hussain, on the other hand, a well-known Indian *tablā* player and composer, who has also done many collaborative works across different music genres around the world does not see the fusion music as a threat to the traditional music:

> For us to someway criticize that fusion music is harming traditional music is wrong. Fusion music is just another branch of where the music is going today, or the interactive conversation between different genres of musicians is a natural process. And it will not destroy the traditional forms, but it will help the interacting musicians to understand what the traditional forms are and therefore hopefully learn to respect it more or find a way to incorporate it in a more copasetic manner (interview, November 8, 2017).

Hussain was speaking in the context of the Hindustani classical music which has a strong preservation system and currently does not have a threat of extinction. Therefore, his views regarding the fusion music might not quite be applicable in traditional Newar music. Nevertheless, fusion music can be a starting point for some people to create enough enthusiasm to learn more about the traditional forms of music as Hussain indicates. If fusion music is not

affecting the traditional form of music and if these two genres exist side by side, probably no problems will arise. The emergence of fusion music itself might not be a major concern. But one concern to look at is what the impacts of the emergence of fusion music on the traditional musical scene are.

Eclecticism, Appropriation, Indigenization and "Alternative Modernity"

David Henderson argues that "musicians working in Nepal continue to be haunted by Herder[20] like notions of identity, compelling them to put a distinctly Nepali spin on the sounds that they're producing, making the real or imagined past resonate in the mix of sounds that constitutes the present" (2002: 20). The appearance of the *lok gīt* (folk song) genre in the 1950s and *lok pop* (folk pop) genre in the 1990s were motivated to construct a symbol to represent a sense of national pride. I perceive the recent appearance of the traditional/folk fusion music genre as another wave of the practice.

Lok gīt was aimed at collecting the folk songs typically from the hill regions, translating them into the Nepali language, and recording them with traditional and contemporary instruments. State-supported Radio Nepal acted as the main catalyst for the growth of this musical genre. *Lok pop* is essentially a Nepali pop song containing lyrics and sound effects reflecting mountain village life, as Greene describes:

> … most *lok* pop songs seem to construct a sense of the Nepali folk through key scalar forms and melodic figures from folk music, song texts concerning themes from village life, words from Nepal's ethnic languages borrowed into Nepali-language song texts, and melodic and studio engineering effects designed to create a sense of mountain echoes (2002/2003: 49-50).

[20] German scholar Johann Gottfried Herder (late eighteenth century).

Lok gīt was embraced by the rural villagers and *lok* pop mostly by the urban listeners. In both of these genres, the language used is Nepali and focused on culture from the central-western hill region. Not all ethnic groups accept the notion of the nationalism presented through these genres because of the Nepali language and the hill-region dominance in a multilingual and multicultural country like Nepal. The discontent of some minority groups with the issues of ethnic and regional exclusion in a nationalizing project through music which started with emergence of *lok* and *ādhunik gīt* is still relevant. Noting the exclusion then and Radio Nepal paying lip service by starting half an hour of non-Nepali language songs beginning in 1964, Stirr adds:

> With this "domesticating" attempt to bring other musics and cultures into the fold of unitary national culture as tokens of diversity, Radio Nepal performed the musical equivalent of the 1854 Civil Code, incorporating these groups into an alien system in cultural rather than legal terms. This attempt at top-down imposition of unitary national culture continues to have wide-ranging effects yet has never encompassed the entirety of cultural expression in Nepal. Expressive forms that were not included in Panchayat visions of national culture continued during this era and form significant parts of cultural production in Nepal today (2017: 36).

The new fusion music to some extent reforms the notion of the nation's "imagined community" (Anderson 1991) that used to emphasize the Hindu religion, the Nepali language, and the culture from the hill areas. Many ethnic groups in Nepal advocate that a single language, a single religion, and a single culture from a single community cannot fully represent a plural Nepal. *Lok gīt* in the 1950s was intended in part to impose Nepali language. On the contrary, fusion bands disregard any particular language and focus on instrumental music. It thus counteracts the existing lingual dominance.

Many of the musical pieces the bands perform are still from the hill region.[21] Songs, when performed, are also in Nepali. The Nepali language and hill Hindu hegemonic values are

[21] The bands are sometimes criticized for just performing music from the hill area. Due to this criticism, *Kutumba* recently released an album, *Mithilā*, focusing on music from *terāi*, the southern plain.

still enacted and reproduced in musical performances; however, they incorporate musical instruments from different ethnic communities and appropriate them, bringing a sense of eclecticism. In my opinion it is one of the reasons for their popularity. The bands perform a few tunes or at least present musical instruments from various ethnic groups, but they do not seem conscious to present it as music from any particular ethnic group. Rather, they present it as "Nepali" music, belonging to all the Nepalese and not from any particular ethnic group. Bands like *Kutumba,* which was founded by all Newar musicians and which uses Newar musical instruments the most in their performances, is cautious that the people will think them communal if they present it as Newar music or music from any ethnic group for that matter. Some people, especially the youngsters, think that regarding any music or culture as belonging to a particular community or caste group brings the sensitivity of racial segregation. For the bands, it might also be their strategy to get more fans and commercialize it better by just labeling it as "Nepali" music.

The practice of representing Nepal as a homogeneous community, especially through music with the help of media, had started as early as 1950s. The 1950-51 revolution that overthrew the Rana oligarchy brought with it political reforms that aimed to modernize the country. The initial impact in was a sudden proliferation of Indian films and film songs (Greene 2010: 93). It was in this circumstance that *ādhunik* and *lok gīt* genres in the Nepali language were fostered and a sense of Nepali nationalism was advanced. It was also in the post-World War II period when western industrialized countries started designing their foreign aid programs to assist third-world countries. Stacy Pigg notes that "Nepal's newly defined project of modernization tapped directly into this expanding system of international development" (1993: 45). She adds:

> social services, such as schools and hospitals; the infrastructure of roads, bridges, and dams; the economic initiatives such as land reform; the training and mobilization of a

> national elite; the administrative organization of agencies and manpower-all this was put in place in Nepal in the name of "development" (ibid).

The development, or *bikās*, of physical infrastructures became central to Nepalese visions of modernity, and it still is. The particular forms of modernity certainly were an influence of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century global flow of people, capital and ideas, by which "European rulers imposed their versions of modernity as the only valid and universal ones" (Hosagrahar 2005: 2). Therefore, for many, "modernity" is another term for "westernization," which asserts that being "modern" is not being "traditional." Generally, modernization is often assumed as westernization, with social transformations in terms of certain elements, such as industrial economics, rule of law, mass media, increased mobility, literacy and urbanization. This "modernity" developed into two major versions: "bourgeois modernity" which was historically associated with the development of capitalism in the West; and "cultural modernity" which mainly focuses on self-exploration and self-realization. Against these two versions of modernity, Baudelaire argues, abstract opposition between tradition and the modernity:

> Baudelaire's aesthetic seems caught up in a major contradiction. On the one hand, he calls for a rejection of the normative past, or at least for a recognition of traditions' irrelevancy to the specific creative tasks the modern artist is faced with; on the other hand, he nostalgically evokes the loss of an aristocratic past and deplores the encroachment of a vulgar, materialistic middle-class present (Calinescu 1987: 58).

Later, scholars Feenberg (1995), Gaonkar (2001) and Hosagrahar (2005) sought the plural forms of modernity rather than accept the binary scheme of modernity and tradition. These studies were done in different fields: Feenberg on technology; Gaonkar on multidisciplinary subjects,[22] and Hosangrahar on architecture and urbanism. Among these, some scholars use the term "alternative modernity" while others use "indigenous modernity"; however, the base of

[22] Gaonkar's work is a compilation of articles by authors from various fields.

these studies lies on the ground that "modernity" does not always mean "westernization," and there are other forms of modernities which are yet to be explored.

Hosagrahar notes that "Indigenous modernity" denotes "the paradoxical features of modernities rooted in their particular conditions and located outside the dominant discourse of a universal paradigm centered on an imagined 'West'" (ibid, 6). Feenberg identifies it as a modernity that "involve attempts to incorporate Western technology into an ethnic culture through a mutual transformation" (ibid, 35). "Alternative modernity" brings the notion of the development of new things and thoughts that do not merely copy the western culture but use local or indigenous tools instead. Drawing from the idea articulated by Feenberg, who identified both global and local social strategies of "alternative modernity," Nancy Cooper used "alternative modernity" for a contemporary Indonesian music genre *campursāri* that involves incorporating "indigenous technologies and practices as well as Western cultures, but with less impact" (2015: 58).

In my opinion, many techniques introduced by fusion bands in Nepal, for instance, changing the Newar drums to be used as a western drum set with new playing techniques, are also a form of "alternative modernity". It does not directly change the traditional Newar music system. It is effectively a mixing of the indigenous musical instruments with western rhythm and playing techniques, producing a new form of identity. Alternative modernity is also seen in other forms of Newar culture, as Weiler argues in discussing changes in twentieth century Newar architecture: "'Modernity' for the Newars was not only geared to contemporary European design. Local forms were still preserved and renewed; there is an inevitable 'Newarness' about the facades owing to the builder's cultural, social and religious background" (2009: 144). She argues the facades often mirror the traditional spatial arrangement of the Newar house, but also contain copied and transformed western patterns. Comparably, fusion bands indigenize Western

and Asian cultural influences, combining them with native musical instruments with popular tunes and producing a new modern pan-Nepalese identity. The setting of the musical instruments for the performance and the dress of the musicians are emblems of an indigenous musical identity and at the same time an expression of modernity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that with the emergence of the fusion bands in Nepal, fusion bands are promoting an "alternative modernity" (Feenberg 1995, Gaonkar 2001, Hosagrahar 2005). Through the analysis of westernized playing techniques, orchestral style mixing of the different groups of musical instruments and the performance setting with the use of native instruments, I have demonstrated that the fusion bands foster the idea of "alternative modernity".

Here, I presented discourse on fusion music in Nepal context and how bands are constructing a pan-Nepalese identity with a few elements from various ethnic groups fused with western elements. It is important to evaluate its impact on the traditional Newar music, if any. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: RETROSPECT, CIRCUMSPECT, & PROSPECT

Introduction

In previous chapters, I discussed traditional Newar music, how it has changed, and how it is being used by fusion bands in different contexts. Now, let me take a step back to examine two opposed perspectives on traditional Newar music and try to find a correlation. On one hand, there will always be a group of people who try to preserve "authentic" distinctive historical styles. And on the other hand, there will always be a group of people who purposefully experiment with combinations of various musical instruments and styles. I discussed these two perspectives in chapters three and four respectively. In this chapter, I begin with an examination of how one group has influenced another in the Nepalese context. In particular, I analyze how fusion music groups have influenced traditional music groups.

Based on case studies of two newly formed musical groups, *Fayagan Dhimay Bājaṅ Khalaḥ* (a drum ensemble) from Jyā Bāhā, Kathmandu and *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* (a flute ensemble) from Bode, Bhaktapur, I argue that new traditional music groups are changing the system rather than making changes within the system (Blacking 1977) to maintain the health of traditional Newar music. I examine social, financial, religious and musical subsystems and demonstrate how these musical groups are promoting a financially sustainable model with an all-inclusive music group. I conclude with a reflection on contemporary Newar identity with respect to the traditional music and argue that ethnic identity is overtaking caste identity.

Traditional vs. Fusion

Purists always attempt to resist cultural change and try to maintain or re-establish an equilibrium. They will always advocate for authenticity. The term "authenticity" is used in several senses relating to music, and is often controversial. The most common use and what I seek to highlight here are "'historically informed' or 'historically aware' or employing 'period' or 'original' instruments and techniques" (Butt 2001). In contrast to purists, there is always another group of people who experiment with new things and try to do something different, such as with fusion music. If these two groups of people exist and work separately in traditional and fusion music genres, hypothetically, both forms of music will flourish at the same time. In reality, however, these two groups will always influence each other.

Influence of Fusion Bands on Traditional Music Groups

As fusion bands are getting popular, traditional music groups are integrating some of the techniques these bands introduced. Some of these techniques are clearly visible and some are very subtle.

The most visible influence of the fusion bands on traditional groups is the mixing of musical instruments. For instance, traditionally, the *dhimay* drum is played as a purely percussive instrument, generally with *bhusyāḥ* and *sichhyāḥ* cymbals. *Bhusyāḥ* is a bigger pair of cymbals and the most commonly played cymbals with *dhimay*. *Sichhyāḥ* is a smaller pair of cymbals and it is played along with *bhusyāḥ* in *dhimay* ensembles only in Bhaktapur. *Kayeñpi,* a brass bell plate, is also played with it in some places. *Poṅgā*, a trumpet, is also played with "gu" *tāla* in Bhaktapur and *mā dhimay,* a bigger and more auspicious *dhimay* in Kathmandu. Fusion bands started to use *dhimay* with other instruments in combination. Many traditional music groups, particularly the flute ensemble, have also started to use the drum with the flute ensemble, which

used to be accompanied by either *pachhimā* or *khiṅ* drums. These groups, though, do not use multiple *dhimay* drums to form a western style drum set, as the fusion bands do.

Another example of influence is clearly visible in the repertoires. Like fusion bands, the traditional music groups who started to mix various musical instruments do not play the complete drum repertoires on any drum. Rather, they break the architectonic structure of Newar musical repertoires that I mentioned in Chapter 2. For instance, instead of playing any fixed repertoire on the *dhimay* drum, a short and repeated cycle is played over and over through an entire song tune.

The popularity of song tunes such as "*jigu tho man*" (Nepalbhasa: this my mind) in traditional groups also illustrates the influence of fusion bands on traditional musical groups. The influence resulted in the mixing of various musical instruments and shortening of the drum repertoire. *Jigu tho man* was a song written by Durga Lal Shrestha, composed by Ram Man Trashit and sung by Rita Maharjan. Sudarshan Rajopadhaya has also composed and produced a different version of the song. The song became popular after Japanese singer Sundari Mica sang it in collaboration with the fusion band *Kutumba*. Mica slightly changed the lyrics and the original composition. Mica's change in lyrics and composition is not the issue discussed here, as change to these elements might be for better Newar-language pronunciation. I would like to focus though on how Mica and *Kutumba* presented the song in various concerts with *dhimay* drums. The audience liked the song, and particularly the dhimay beat which was used with it. The result was that the tune soon became a popular piece of the traditional flute ensemble repertoire. A number of fusion bands and traditional flute ensembles perform the tune these days with a *dhimay,* along with other drums such as *pachhimā*, *khiṅ* or *mādal*, which groups had been using before. Although traditionally *dhimay* is not played in the flute ensembles, groups have

adopted *dhimay* to perform tunes like this. In doing so, the dhimay drum repertoire has been diluted with a short beat sequence repeated over and over throughout the entire piece.

During festivals, many musicians seem to be involved in traditional music performance for entertainment rather than because of a sense of religious obligation as in the past. Generally, musicians' participation is higher where they can play music and dance together. Musicians often just join in the middle of the festival procession, play some music, dance, and then leave as opposed to follow all the norms to start and finish a public music performance. This tendency might be an influence of the fusion bands. Fusion bands these days do a variety of stage shows with traditional drums where people enjoy listening as well as dancing. I've also observed some traditional groups copying rhythms from the fusion bands which are suitable for dancing. These beats are easier to play and catchy to the ears.

Change in a System

In this section I present case studies of two musical groups: *Fayagan Dhimay Bājaṅ Khalaḥ* from Jya Baha, Kathmandu, and *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* from Bodey, Bhaktapur. Both of these musical groups were newly formed by groups of young musicians a few years ago. They practice traditional Newar music in traditional festivals. Examining these groups' structure and activities, I argue that the new music groups are changing the system rather than promoting change within the system (Blacking 1977).

Before discussing the meaning of this change in a musical cultural system, I'll begin by clarifying what I mean by the "system." The term "system" here resonates with Nettl's "the complex whole" (2005:216) – something that can be considered as a unit, complex because it is so many units but still united. He drew this from Edward B. Tyler's definition of culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other

capacities or habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tyler 1871: 111). A musical cultural system, or simply a system, here implies a systemic whole composed of interrelated and interdependent subsystems, such as the social system, financial system, or religious system. Widdess (2013) uses the term "order" for these subsystems and emphasizes musical, social and sacred orders in the case of Newar culture. To demonstrate the change in system, I'll focus on social, financial, religious and musical subsystems. I discussed various elements of these subsystems in Chapter Three in discussing changes in the ecosystem of Newar music. In this chapter, I'll focus on the whole system through analysis of the major subsystems.

The two performing groups I'm discussing here do not have a fixed source of income from land or other properties as other older *guthi* organizations had, nor do they have the strict rules other older *guthis* have. I analyze how these musical groups are shifting their focus from rituals to musical performances only (a change in the system through religious and musical subsystem change), While doing so, I also present how these groups illustrate a new financially sustainable and inclusive model for a traditional music group (a change in the system through financial and social subsystem change).

Fayegan Dhimay Bājaṅ Khalaḥ

It was an evening in Jana Bahal, a Buddhist monastery in Kathmandu. Several traditional music groups started to gather in front of the monastery courtyard for a procession of *Jana Bāhā Dyaḥ Jātrā*.[1] I heard an uncommon beat of the *dhimay* drums and the crashing of *bhusyāḥ* from somewhere. I turned around and saw a group of young people, almost all in their teens and

[1] *Jana Baha Dyaḥ Jatra* is an annual chariot festival of *Jana Baha Dyo* (Sanskrit- *Aryavalokitesvara*) also commonly known as white *Machhendranath* or white *Karunamaya*. It begins on the 8th day and ends on the 10th day of the bright fortnight in April.

twenties. Girls outnumbered the boys in this group. All were wearing black t-shirts with red borders, the *hāku patāsi* design I discussed in chapter four. *Ranjanā lipi*[2] text on their t-shirts read: *fayegan dhimay bājaṅ khalaḥ*. I followed them in the procession of *jātrā* for four evenings: three evenings of actual *jātrā* procession and the fourth evening for the worship and musical offering. On the first day, I followed them from Jana Bahal Buddhist monastery to Ason Square. Similarly, on the second day I followed them from Ason Square to the medieval palace area, the Kathmandu Durbar Square and on the third day from Kathmandu Durbar Square to Lagan. On the fourth day I went to the location where they gather for a procession, basically where they start and end. It was the Jya Baha *twāḥ* (neighborhood) of Kathmandu.

The fourth day was particularly important because I had the opportunity to observe the typical process of how they gather, start a musical activity, participate in the festival and come back to where they began and then depart to their individual homes. On that day, I followed them from the start to the end of the celebration and recorded the entire music they played. In the evening, I went to the courtyard where the few members of the group gathered. As I waited for another fifteen minutes or so, about twenty members arrived. The *guru*, the musical teacher and president of the group, said, "*la sabai janā koṭhā mā gayera dhimay liyera āu, ani nāsaḥ dyaḥ ko agādi dyaḥ lhāyegu bajau*" [3] (Nepali: Okay, everyone go to the room and bring dhimay drums. Then in front of the *nasaḥ dyaḥ*[4] shrine, play *dyaḥ lhāyegu* offering piece.) So, the group went inside a dark room on the first floor of the house where they stored their drums. They carried the *dhimay* drums and *bhusyāh* cymbals and played the *dyaḥ lhāyegu* offering piece in front of the *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* shrine. The guru burned the incense sticks, took some flowers from the

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[2] An artistic script developed in the Kathmandu valley around the 11th century. The script is primarily used for writing the Newar language but is also spread to Buddhist monasteries in India, China, Mongolia, and Japan.

[3] In the Nepali language. Just like many young Newars, they do not speak Nepalbhasa, the Newar language.

[4] Newar god of music and dance.

shrine and gave them to all the members as a blessing. The group then started playing the procession piece and started walking towards Lagan where the chariot was placed and the festival was happening.

On the way, whenever they passed any temples, they played offering pieces. After they reached Lagan, they first played *dyaḥ lhāyegu* in front of the chariot. During the circumambulation they played *dyaḥ chāḥhilegu,* a piece played to circumambulate the temples or idols. They circumambulated the chariot three times. They played one repertoire for two rounds of circumambulation and a different repertoire for the third one. After that, they stayed to the side and played the drums for a while. Later, the guru said, "*pānch wotā dyaḥ lhāyegu bajau – kantinyu narokinana. Ani tyo mandir ghumera ghar jane*" (Nepali: Play five offering pieces continuously without stopping. Then circle that temple and we'll go home.) On the way back, as they did earlier, they played the offering pieces when they passed temples. After reaching the courtyard where they began, they played the *dyaḥ lhāyegu* piece again in front of the *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* shrine. The guru again offered a flower blessing from *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* to everyone. After that, a group member brought a tray with Mountain Dew drink poured in small disposable glasses. Everyone drank glasses of soda and went to their homes for dinner. The whole process from start to finish took about three hours, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

Figure 5.1: Fayegan Dhimay Bājaṅ Khalaḥ in Jana Baha Dyaah Jatra, Lagan – Kathmandu. Photograph by the author.

Besides the musical performance, traditional musical groups also perform limited rituals (rituals related to music such as worshipping *nāsaḥ dyaḥ*) and feasts based on what the group thinks essential. However, they place less emphasis on religion and rituals. *Jana Baha Dyaḥ Jatrā* is one of several festivals celebrated in the Kathmandu Valley. In a festival like this, a traditional music group typically spends the whole day with feast and rituals before and after the actual *jātrā* procession. The ritual will include worship of Ganesh, *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* and other deities with a rooster or goat sacrifice. It will then include *samay baji* (a starter feast) and *bhoe* (the main feast) with several dish items and a lot of *thoṅ* (rice beer) and *ailā* (wine). One reason for the general decline in music related activities is the level of excessive rituals and expensive

feasts because the music groups are also responsible for organizing such feasts. For groups who do not have a fixed income from land or other properties, it is becoming harder to maintain such activities day by day. Due to the financial burden for group members and additional time they may need to devote, members of such groups seem less attracted towards traditional Newar music. Groups with stronger financial support have also started to face such problems because of the rising expenses and limited income from farms.

New traditional music groups are minimizing rituals and focusing more on the music. By saying the focus is on music I do not mean to say their focus is only on the "sound objects" (Schaeffer 1966), but on all the activities that directly relate to music. Roshan Shrestha, the president and guru of *fayegan dhimay bājaṅ guthi,* informed me that their group does perform what they think are essential and directly related to music but does not spend a lot of time, effort and money on rituals and feasts. They rather focus on musical activity the most.[5] He added:

> We do have some disciplinary rules, but do not strictly follow all the rules that a traditional *bajaṅ guthi* (Nepalbhasa: music group) would have. We do *nāsaḥ pujā,* a worshipping of *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* god to begin the training. In traditional groups, it is mandatory to sacrifice a rooster or a goat to *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* for a worship. They say the worship will not be complete without an animal sacrifice, but we only offer an egg to *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* as a symbolic sacrifice. We do follow general cultural norms such as not touching the drums with *chipa*[6] hands, and not worshipping with the left hand. We always play a homage to *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* with musical pieces praying for the good and smooth performance at the very beginning. After returning from the performance, we thank and ask for forgiveness for any mistake in front of *nāsaḥ dyaḥ*. We do not leave the drum in the middle of a procession and go somewhere else without returning where we began, it will be like *nāsaḥ twahtegu*[7] (interview, April 7, 2017).

Rather than organizing large daily feasts, they eat their meal at home and come only to participate in the musical activity in the festival. They drink a glass of soda, for instance, as a

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[5] Interview, April 7, 2017

[6] A rough translation of *chipa* (Nepalbhasa) would be "to soil", however, it has a bigger meaning. *Chipa* signifies a hand from which one has been eating, if one touches anything with that hand, it also becomes *chipa* and remains so until washed.

[7] *Nāsaḥ twaḥtegu* (Nepalbhasa) – abandoning the arts, talent, charisma or charm that one has.

symbolic *prasād.*[8] Their main focus is the musical performance. They do perform all the traditional repertoires they learned from a traditional guru. Roshan explained to me about the repertoires they play: *dyaḥ lhāyegu* at the beginning and the end of practice session and performance, *laṅpo, chalti* or *nhyā*, *gau*, and *twāḥ lhāyegu* during the processions inside town, *dyaḥ chāḥhilegu* for circumambulation of temples and monasteries, and separate repertoires for uphill and downhill processions and for crossing bridges. Among these repertoires, they have five *dyaḥ lhāyegu* pieces which they might choose from depending on time and space. He informed me that he has been teaching and performing exactly as he was taught by his traditional guru and not skipping any repertoires. He added that he also informs the students about the rhythms the musicians play during the festival for the dances that I discussed above. He does so only after all the traditional repertoires.

Fayegan do not have the endowment property that a traditional music group would usually have. They manage funds independently without any external funding, such as funding from the government or other organizations. They believe this is a way to sustain the tradition for a long time. They collect fees from the students for the training. They use this fund for rituals and for maintaining the instruments. Sanjay Shrestha, a member of *Fayegan*, informed me that they have also been collecting a small contribution of ten rupees (roughly equivalent to ten cents) per person every day which helps to manage their expenses. [9]

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[8] *Prasād* (Sanskrit) is a material substance of food that is a religious offering. It is normally consumed by worshippers after worship.

[9] Interview, April 7, 2017.

Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ

The *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* flute ensemble comes from Bodey, Bhaktapur. I met them during a festive procession in *biskāḥ jātrā*[10] in Thimi, Bhaktapur. They were playing the *ghātu* seasonal tune in the procession. They were playing it in *cho tāla,* a 4-beat rhythm cycle, while traditionally this tune is played in *jati tāla*, a 7-beat cycle. Below I present the transcriptions of the two version of the same traditional tune:

Below is the transcription of intro of the tune from its first recording from *Nepalbhasa Ritu Mey* audio cassette (1985), which is in *jati tāla* (a 7-beat rhythm cycle):

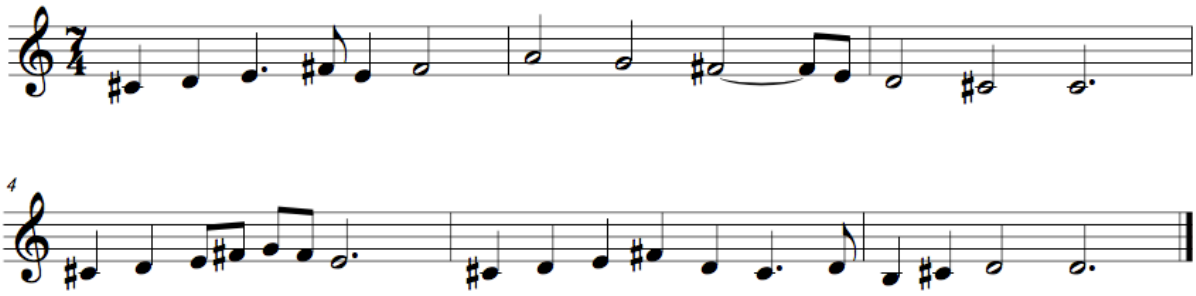

Figure 5.2 Intro of ghātu tune (Nepalbhasa Ritu Mey, 1985).

Below is the transcription of the intro of the same tune from the field recording I conducted in 2017 where *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* performed it in a *cho tāla* (a 4-beat rhythm cycle):

[10] *Biskāḥ Jatra* is a festival celebrated in various parts of the Kathmandu Valley including Bhaktapur, Thimi, Nagadesh, Bodey, Tokha, Chakhunti and Khadpu. It is celebrated according to the solar calendar and falls in the month of April. The essence of *biskāh jātrā* festival is erecting a pole flag, *yahsin*. In many places, the festival also includes pulling or carrying chariots of deities around the neighborhoods and worshipping of various deities with musical procession. In Thimi, it is celebrated for four days.

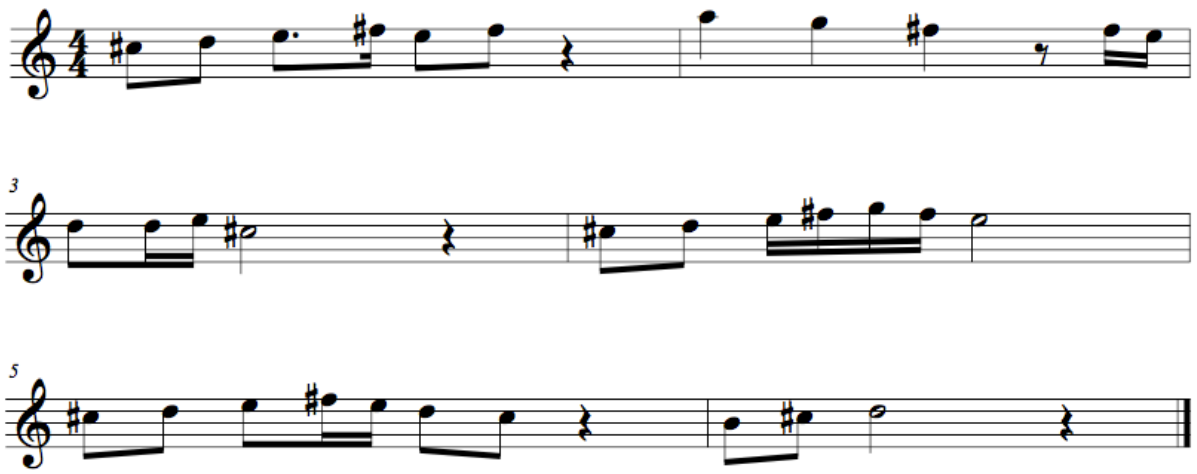

Figure 5.3 Intro of ghātu tune (field recording, Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ, 2017)

Similarly, below is the transcription of verse of the tune from 1985 recording:

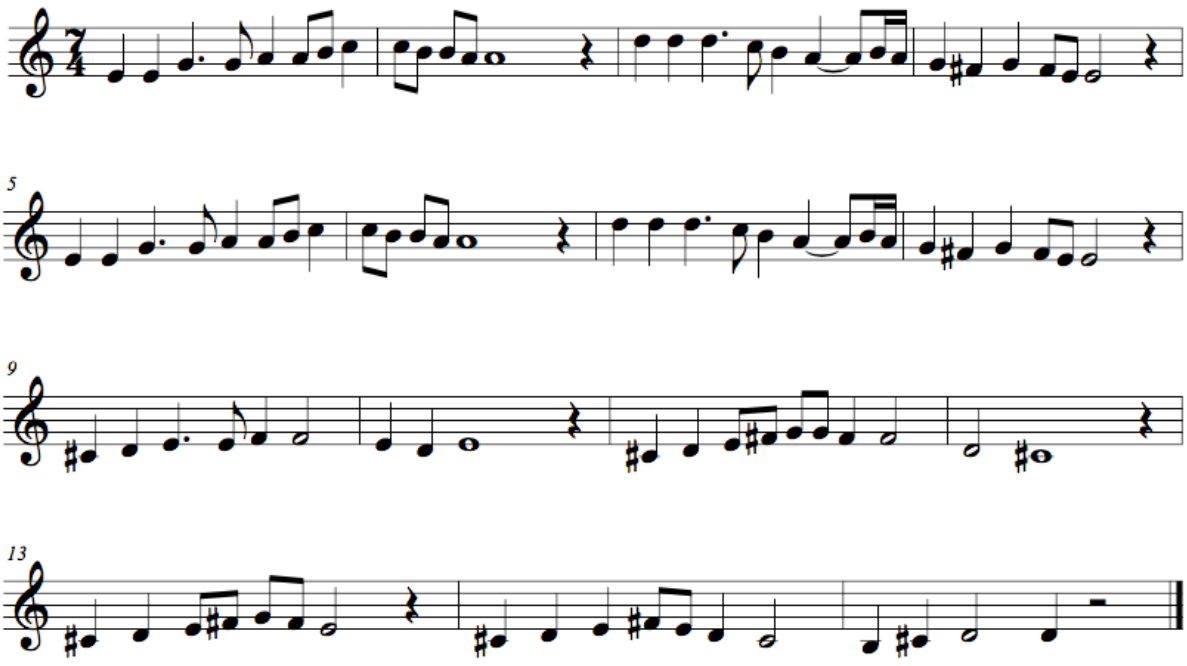

Figure 5.4 Verse of ghātu tune (Nepalbhasa Ritu Mey, 1985).

And *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ*'s version of the verse of the same tune:

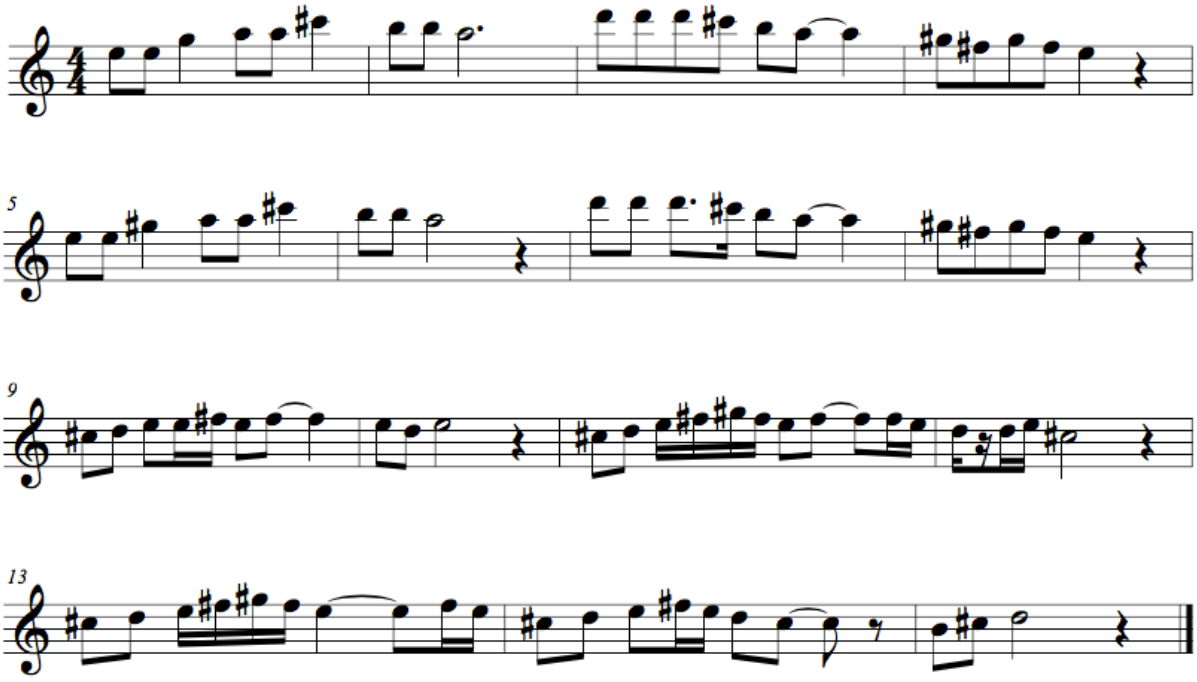

Figure 5.5 Verse of ghātu tune (field recording, Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ, 2017)

I asked *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* team member Rajib Napit why they played this in different rhythm cycle, he explained:

> We played this in a 4-beat cycle instead of a 7-beat cycle, because it is easier to play. We did also learn this to play in a 7-beat cycle. When we play in public and especially in procession, there will be a lot of people watching us and we feel more comfortable to play it in 4 beat cycle. We have a little hesitation that there will be mistake when we play in 7 beat cycle (interview, April 14, 2017).

Converting a 7-beat cycle music piece to a 4-beat piece is an example that demonstrates how new flute ensembles have simplified their repertoires so that many musicians can play together and keep it aligned with the drum beats and the cymbals.

Like the *Fayegan* group, *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* is also a newly formed music group with all young musicians, mainly girls. Rajib informed me that they took flute and drum lessons from

Dharma Munikar from Kathmandu.[11] The group was formed only after they took lessons from him. The first class had fifty-seven students, out of which thirty (53%) were girls and twenty-seven (47%) were boys. They are now conducting the class for the second batch, with twenty-two people, out of which nineteen (86%) are girls and three (14%) are boys. Luni Sahukhal, another musician from the group, informed me that currently, Dhan Krishna Sanjhowa is coordinating the group as guru and teacher, and Suryaman Sahukhal is the current president of the group.[12] Besides this music group, there is another similar new flute ensemble, *Māhālaxmi Bāsuri Khalaḥ* in Bodey.

The *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* has made some modifications to their musical instruments. They use plastic flutes instead of traditional wooden ones. Unlike other traditional flute ensembles which use *pachhimā*, *dāphā khiṅ* and *magaḥ khiṅ* drums, this group has added a *dhimay* drum in their performance. Use of the plastic flute and the addition of *dhimay* drum has become common in newly formed flute ensembles. They generally play all the traditional repertoires, though there has been some lessening in drum repertoires, as I discussed above.

Regarding the rituals and feasts, this music group has a similar approach as that of *Fayegan* but they have a different approach to funding. Unlike the *fayegan* group, this group also performs during private rituals and functions such as wedding processions to generate some funds for the group. Rajib informed me that they typically charge twenty thousand rupees (roughly equivalent to two hundred US dollars) for a full-day performance in ceremonies like weddings. However, they do not charge any fees for their own group members or people from their neighborhood.

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[11] See chapter 3 for Dharma Munikar's experience and views on flute ensembles and modifications.

[12] interview, April 27, 2018

Figure 5.6: Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ musicians in a musical procession

There are no gender or caste barriers in either *fayega* and *bodey* music groups, which is rare in old traditional music groups. Old traditional music groups would generally belong to a particular caste, making it unlikely to have people from other castes in such groups. For instance, traditionally, *dhimay* is played by the *jyāpu* community. Roshan, not being from a *jyāpu* family, had to wait for a few years to get *dhimay* drum training simply because he does not belong to the *jyāpu* community. After he learned *dhimay*, he thought to teach the skill to other castes as well. That's when he formed a new group, *fayagan,* with his friends Sanjay Shrestha, Anup Shrestha, Sushan Maharjan and others. *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* also has members from different castes including Shrestha, Prajapati, Napit and others.

Blacking suggests a musical change must connect with a change in the system:

> If the concept of musical change is to have any heuristic value, it must denote significant changes that are peculiar to musical systems, and not simply the musical consequences of social, political, economic, or other changes (1977: 3).

The formation of new musical groups such as *Fayegan dhimay bājaṅ khalaḥ* and *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* music groups reflect a change in the system of music groups and performance. It illustrates what Nettl calls "radical change" (2005: 278). Nettle sees is as change in a system of music whose new form and old form are easily distinguished (ibid). As I discussed in the chapter three, there are some changes within the systems such as variation in repertoire or the use of musical instruments. Besides these changes, I argue that these new groups are changing the whole system with change mainly focused in social and financial subsystems. The social and financial elements rationalize the change as a change "of" the system rather than "within" the system. First, how groups are being formed with no restriction by gender or caste is a huge leap from how old traditional music groups were formed. The inclusiveness represents significant social change. Second, the self-sustaining financial model also makes it distinct from traditional music groups. A traditional music group heavily depends on an endowment fund/property or big donations from the musicians or other members of society. The new groups are now generating funds themselves through musical training (e.g, *Fayegan Dhimay Bājaṅ Khalaḥ*) or private performances (eg. *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ*). These are self-sustaining financial models. The motivation of these new groups isn't financial. They are promoting the health of tradition with musical performance through innovative ideas. The driving factor here is that youth hope to continue the tradition and at the same time they're also looking for ways to sustain it without endowment funds such as in traditional *guthi* organizations. A shifted focus on musical performance rather than religious rituals also represents a significant change, though these are not as impactful as changes to social and financial systems. The motivational factor for the emphasis on musical activities rather than religious rituals is that by doing so, new groups can accommodate more youths with various modern beliefs.

What is striking is that groups are finding new ways to provide music for festivals. For instance, *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* was the only flute ensemble group from Bodey that participated in the *biskāḥ jātrā* festival procession I observed in Thimi. There are other traditional music groups in Bodey which could not participate, but *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* did continue the tradition. It was possible for them to continue it because of the change in their group wih caste and gender neutral participation as well as financially sustained model.

Newar Ethnicity and Musical Identity in the Modern Period

Although some scholars argue that ethnicity is an "arguable and murky intellectual term" (Chapman, McDonald, and Tonkin 1989: 11), it has been of scholarly interest in the study of social boundary construction and maintenance. Barth argues that "ethnic boundaries are maintained in each case by a limited set of cultural features" (1969: 38). Stokes suggests that ethnicities are "to be understood in terms of the construction, maintenance and negotiation of boundaries, and not on the putative social 'essences' which fill the gaps within them" (1994: 6). Ethnicity helps to define essential and "authentic" bits of identities such as a musical identity. In this section, I examine how Newar ethnic identity is being articulated through music in modern period.

First, let me clarify the use of the word "ethnicity" here and then I'll come to Newar identity. Some Newars debate that the Newar is not a tribe or an ethnic group (Nepali: *janajāti.*) Rather, they suppose Newar is the name of the civilization that developed in the Nepal Valley thousands of years ago. Rather than puzzling around words, I'm using the term, "ethnic group" simply to denate the group of people, Newars, who are distinctly identified by their language and culture.

I discussed in Chapter Two how Newar identity has changed before and after the onslaught of people from Gorkha. For some, Newar identity crystalized into existence only after the conquest of the Newar territory by the *Parbatiyā* [13] under Prithvi Narayan Shah, the king of Gorkha (Toffin 1975: 39, Grandin 1989: 193). Quigley argues that to speak of ethnic identity before this period is to conflate ethnicity (a specific historical condition) with identity (a generalized sociological condition):

> One might say that until this time [conquest of the Kathmandu Valley by the Gorkhalis] the people of the Valley did not think of themselves as "the people of the Valley" at all. If they pondered on their identity, which seems unlikely, it would have been as members of caste or kin groups or, at the outside, as members of a kingdom to which they owed allegiance or at least tribute. The pre-Gorkhali history of the Kathmandu Valley is one of political fragmentation where the idea of ethnic identity is irrelevant (1987: 169).

Political change brought the sense of Newar ethnicity. Newar identity in the modern period has changed substantially. Gellner presents the ideological elements of Newar ethnic identity in the modern period as follows:

> ...a glorious past which contrasts with a subject present; a distinct language now being corrupted by the dominant language of the country, a process which may end in the extinction of the former; a unique culture which is submerged by another less sophisticated one, and which is equally in danger of extinction; an old literature in the given language, older and more distinguished than the literatures of the immediately surrounding languages; a particular script identified as the script of the ethnic group, but which, through its subjection, has fallen into disuse; a calendar and an era, associated with the territory and the group, with its own new year which differs from that of the dominant group, and is given no recognition by it; a particular defined territory which has been overrun by outsiders (1986: 119).

Among these elements, I discussed the changes from the "glorious past" to the present in earlier chapters. One element articulated in music through the submersion process with the "less sophisticated" culture is the lessening of the drum repertoires. By "lessening," I mean the shortening of repertoire by just playing certain rhythmic patterns or a small extracted piece of the

[13] The Nepali speakers from the hills

main repertoire. Too much simplification of rhythm and form can essentially be a loss of Newar ethnic identity.

Another example is changing the tune from a more difficult rhythmic cycle to a simpler rhythmic cycle. When a *dhimay* drum is used in Nepali language folk songs or tunes, which mainly uses a four-beat cycle (for example, *khyāli* or *samalā tāla* on the *mādal*), other *dhimay* repertoires with sophisticated rhythm cycles with 6,7,10 or other beats (*palemāṅ tāla, jati tāla, pratāl, astarā tāla* etc.) will be overly overshadowed. Some musicians think that even with the four beat cycle rhythms, the use of *dhimay* or *khiṅ* drums with a repeated cycle of certain small phrases will destroy the architectonic traditional repertoires.

Various recent changes in musical activities portray how the sense of Newar identity is changing. Commenting on Gellner's argument, "among the young and educated Newars of the three cities, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, there is today a strong sense of ethnic identity" (ibid, 119), Quigley argues that for the population as a whole, the sense of Newar ethnicity is relatively weak and has always been so. He puts forward the reason as:

> the fundamentally divisive nature of caste and particular way in which caste operates in Newar society encouraging the formation of strong local groups and militating against the formation of wider groupings whether these might be based on territory, religion, caste, language or some other culture carrier of ethnicity (ibid, 152).

In the modern period, if anything has changed the divisible nature of the Newars as Quigley argues, it is mainly the music. The formation of traditional music groups such as *Fayegan Dhimay bājaṅ Khalaḥ* and *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ* have created platforms for bringing the Newars from various castes into one place and to work together. The ethnic identity has overtaken the caste identity. This challenges Quigley's argument that the Newars are "militating against the formation of wider groupings." The formation of wider, all-inclusive music groups is noticeable not only in settlements in the three major cities in the Kathmandu Valley, but also in other smaller and relatively conservative settlements such as Bodey, Bhaktapur.

Conclusion

This chapter has not been a summary in any formal sense, even though it has brought together many of the dissertation's more substantial arguments and perceptions. In this chapter, with the case studies of two musical groups, *Fayagan Dhimay Bājaṅ Khalaḥ* and *Bodey Bājā Khalaḥ,* I argued that new traditional music groups are changing the system rather than changing within the system (Blacking 1977) through social, financial, religious and musical subsystems. I demonstrated that new music groups are shifting their emphasis from one caste group to multi-caste groups. I've also showed that how these groups have created financially self-sustained models. A careful examination of new musical groups, particularly the formation of groups with no gender or caste boundaries, indicate the development of a strong sense of ethnic identity in both large and smaller Newar settlements. Ethnic identity has surpassed the caste identity.

A Few Final Reflections

In this dissertation, I explored changes in Newar. Some of these are very subtle while others are radical. During a conversation on musical change, cultural activist Sumana Shrestha told me something stimulating: "what we call traditional music now at some point must have been considered modern music."[14] If the Newars had not welcomed musical changes, new genres, new musical instruments, and styles in different time in past, the diversity and richness of the "traditional" music they are proud of now would not have come to be. Therefore, rather than viewing musical change as good or bad, we should view the change through the lens of necessity or experiment. The only question that remains is the amount and velocity of change. I'd like to end with some of my views, which might open up other discussions or encourage others to explore on these issues further:

a) The involvement of women in completely male dominated traditional Newar music broadly means that the traditional Newar musicians are nearly doubled. If so, has the training and performance also doubled or somewhere close to it? It does not seem so. In my interviews and observations, I noticed that there has been a huge increase in girls' participation (mostly teens and some early twenties) in big ensembles such as *dhimay* or flute ensemble. There is also an increase in elderly women (50+ years) in *bhajan.* I see a gap of people in their late 20s, 30s or 40s becoming involved in traditional music. A closer look at the reasons behind it might open up many socio-cultural factors such as women's economic condition and the decision-making status of these age groups. It might also reveal

[14] Interview, April 4, 2017

that people who have jobs and need to support their families still have not been able to consider traditional music as an occupation.

b) Many organizations, including some municipalities, are into organizing traditional Newar music competitions (*dhimay*, flutes etc.). Musicians put a lot of effort into performing traditional repertoires in the competition. Unfortunately, in many cases, neither these musicians are seen performing in local festivals, nor the revived traditional repertoires played on the stage are heard in the festivals. A better way could be to organize the competition during the traditional festival itself, awarding prizes to the groups who perform best in the festival. Similarly, in the case of event aimed at tourists, cultural or musical schedules are often altered to match tourists' schedules. Probably this type of change should not be encouraged. More emphasis should be placed on the activities which are intertwined with traditional music culture and the lives of people who live in it. I do not mean to say that music should not be separated from the context of traditional rituals and festivals. What I mean to say priority should be given to traditional musicians, at least in the events organized by the government sector, such as municipalities. Traditional musicians do not get these sorts of opportunities easily.

c) I've mentioned in many places the deteriorating condition of music *guthi*, traditional music organizations. Endowment properties, mostly lands, of many *guthi*s are now under the ownership and management of *Guthi Saṅsthān,* a government agency. Because of this, many *guthi* face unnecessary administrative process and the annual reimbursement they get from *Guthi Saṅsthān* is minimal. If *guthis*' property could be returned to the respective *guthi*s for them to handle

their own finances, the condition of the *guthi* would be much improved. Restoration of the *guthi* can be a part of a healthy musical culture and complement the sustainable financial models discussed above.

d) Many people I spoke to raised the issue of documentation of traditional Newar music. Newar music has been transmitted orally from one generation to another. Transcription is not enough for the preservation of the traditional repertoires. Documentation is necessary: transcriptions are a good source of reference. But scores and books are forgotten and left out if the repertoires are not taught or performed. Rather than overemphasizing documentation, continuation of the tradition should be underscored. Living in culture is the only way to preserve and promote it.

e) My observations indicate that traditional Newar music these days has been used more in articulating group and collective identities rather than personal identity. As discussed above, bigger ensembles are growing but musical solos are being outshined. If encouragement could be given to solo performers at least in between group performances, possibly with some accompaniments, a lot of musical traditions could be preserved and promoted and traditional Newar music could also be a platform for improvisation. That way individuals can be more innovative with traditional music and they can improve the personal talent and identity with traditional music.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Anup Singh Suwal (Jyapu community leader). March 24, 2018. Kathmandu.

Bal Krishna Ranjit (Director, Nepal Music Center). May 25, 2017. Kathmandu.

Bhrigu Ram Shrestha (Singer, musician). April 21, 2017. Kathmandu.

Dharma Munikar (Flute and drum teacher). May 12, 2017. Kathmandu.

Deepak Bajracharya (Pop singer). April 10, 2017. Lalitpur.

Fayagan Dhimay Khalah (Teachers and musicians: Anup Shrestha, Roshan Shrestha, Sanjay Shrestha, Sushan Maharjan). April 7, 2017. Kathmandu.

Hari Sharan Nepali (Sarangi player). June 5, 2017. Kathmandu.

Indira Lachhimasyoo (Drummer). April 29, 2017. Bhaktapur.

Kutumba Band (Band members: Kiran Nepali, Pavit Maharjan, Raju Maharjan, Rubin Kumar Shrestha). April 30, 2017. Lalitpur.

Luni Sahukhala (Flutist, Bodey Baja Khalah). April 27, 2018. Bhaktapur.

Mukti Sundar Jadhari (Music teacher). April 18, 2017. Bhaktapur.

Naresh Prajapati (Drummer, Member of Lakhay and Vairabi band). April 28, 2017. Kathmandu.

Nhuchhe Bahadur Dangol (Lecturer, Tribhuvan University and Nepal Music Center). June 19, 2017. Kathmandu.

Punya Shakya (President, Gyanmala Bhajan Khalaa). May 7, 2017. Kathmandu.

Rajib Napit (Flutist, Bodey Basuri Khalah). April 14, 2017. Bhaktapur.

Raju Shakya (Musician and member, Gyanmala Bhajan Khalah). May 7, 2017. Kathmandu.

Ram Prasad Kandel (Founder, Music Museum of Nepal). May 26, 2017. Kathmandu.

Ratna Behoshi Bajracharya (Singer and Musician). June 14, 2017. Lalitpur.

Ravi Kapali (Muhali Player). April 3, 2017. Bhaktapur.

Rojina Dangol (Flutist, Shree Tara band). May 15, 2017. Kathmandu.

Sarada Dangol (Drummer, Shree Tara band). April 4, 2017. Kathmandu.

Satya Mohan Joshi (A 98-year old scholar). April 30, 2017. Lalitpur.

Shree Krishna Maharjan (Journalist, Nepalmandal TV). May 25, 2017. Kathmandu.

Sujina Bajracharya (Sarangi Player, Shree Tara band). May 15, 2017. Kathmandu.

Sumana Shrestha (Cultural Activist). April 4, 2017. Kathmandu.

Zakir Hussain (Tabla Player). Nov 8, 2017. Seattle.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ailā	A traditional distilled alcoholic beverage
Akhā chheñ	A house where music and dances are taught, dance costumes and musical instruments are stored
Astarā	A 10 beat *tāla*
Babūchā	A pair of small cymbals that specially accompany *khiṅ* or *pachhimā* drum.
Bājaṅ	1. A musical instrument 2. A musical ensemble
Bajā	See *Bajā*
Basuri	A flute
Bay	A flute with a whistle mouthpiece, typically played held at an angle between vertical and horizontal
Baji	Flat beaten rice
Bhajan	Devotional singing
Bhoe	A feast
Bhusyāḥ	A pair of larger cymbals that specially accompany *dhimay* or *dhāḥ* drums
Chachā	A Buddhist traditional music and dance. Also known as *Charyā*
Charyā	See *Chachā*
Cho	A 4 beat *tāla*
Chhusyāḥ	A pair of mid-sized cymbals that specially accompany *nāyakhiṅ,* or *pachhimā* and *dhimay* in Bhaktapur. Also known as *Sichhyāḥ*
Dabū	Stage or platform
Daurā	A Nepalese traditional upper wear for men, a variant of *kurtā*

Dhāḥ	A kind of double headed drum played with a bare hand on on one side and a stick on another
Dhimay	A kind of double headed drum played with a stick on right and a bare hand on left
Dholak	A kind of double headed drum played with bare hands
Dyaḥ Lhāyegu	A short musical piece played on drum before and after every practice session or public performance
Dyaḥ Chāḥhilegu	A musical piece played for circumambulation of temples and shrrines
Ghaṅghalā	Ankle bells
Guṅlā	A month according to Nepal Sambat lunar calendar
Guṅlā bājaṅ	Music performed during the month of *guṅlā*
Guthi	A social organization
Gwārā	A musical composition with heterometric *tāla*
Haimā Dyaḥ	A god worshipped with *nāsaḥ dyaḥ* to overcome the fear during the performance
Haku Patāsi	A black sari with red border, a traditional Newar dress for women, typically wrapped around the waist
Jati	A 7 beat *tāla*
Jātrā	Religious festival marked by a public procession, cultural carnival
Jugi	A caste who play *muhāli*
Jyāpu	A generic term to denote the Newar peasant castes including Maharjan, Dangol, Singh and others
Kāhā	A trumpet played in funeral procession
Kayeṅpi	A bell plate

Khalaḥ	A group
Khiṅ	A double headed drum
Koṅchā Khiṅ	
Koṅkhiṅchā	A single headed drum
Machā mey	A children song
Mādal	A double headed drum originated from a Magar community
Mandalā	A symbol through which physical, social, and religious space is imagined. Commonly, it is a generic term for any diagram or geometric pattern that metaphysically or symbolically represents the cosmos
Muhāli	A Newar double-reed wind instrument
Nagarā	A pair of kettle drums.
Nāsaḥ Dyah	Newar god of the performing arts and charisma.
Nāy	A butcher.
Nāykhiṅ	A double headed drum, played by *nāy* (Newar butchers) during funeral procession or other festivities, it is also played by others as a part of the *guṅlā* festival
Nāykhiṅ Choyekegu	Proclaiming news with *Nāykhiṅ* drum
Nekū	Horn
Pachhimā	A double headed drum
Palemāṅ	A 6 beat *tāla*
Piwāṅchā	A two-stringed bowed musical instrument
Pongā	A Newar trumpet
Sī bajaṅ	Funeral music
Sichhyāḥ	See *Chhusyāḥ*
Sinhajyā Mey	Song sung during rice planting

Suruwāl	A traditional Nepalese bottom wear, a trouser
Tāḥ	A pair of small thick cymbals played to mark the *tāla*
Thoṅ	Rice beer