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

1Including bhajan groups, Newar dēpā khālab and the pañca bājā bands of the Damāi tailor-musician caste.
the musicians, historical backgrounds, in order to account for the predominance of the Gorkhā Academy (1987-8) and the Leverhulme Trust (1990).

Māṅgalini

Māṅgalini - 'auspicious women' - are household ritual singers of the Rānā3 and Śaha. The Śaha māṅgalini are based at the old Royal palace at Basantuṇḍ, Kathmandu. They have the duty to sing auspicious songs (māṅgal gīt) during the life-cycle rites, festivals and daily worship (nitya pūjā) of the Royal household. Most of their duties are performed in Basantuṇḍ Darbār, but during the Dasāl festival, three māṅgalini sent to Gorkhā Darbār and five to Nuwakot Satāl Darbār, postings which are rotated annually.4 In addition to singing ritual songs, the māṅgalini have several other duties, including sewing together leaf plates for offerings and feasts throughout the year, and preparing all the plates of offerings required for each Dasāl pūjā. During Dasāl, the most senior of the māṅgalini of ṛītally śaṅk in Gorkhā, Nuwakot and Basantuṇḍ have the duty to escort the sacred kalaś (water pot) during the phūḷārī process, and they are known by the honourable title kalaśīni.

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

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

Māṅgalini are also in attendance at Lāmjung Darbār during Dasāl, but these are young local girls. Lāmjung Darbār has been both a Śaha and a Rānā stronghold in its time, and the māṅgalini tradition here could have been inaugurated by either family.

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

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

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

There is no documentary evidence to contradict or support the women's account of their history. As the māṅgalini are attached to households, rather than temples, there are no inscriptions referring to them, as there are for other ritual musicians. There are several pre-Rānā references to 'auspicious songs' and household entertainments, however, which could relate to household singers, although māṅgalini are never mentioned specifically. For example,
Yogi's collection of historical documents and inscriptions includes the following reference to Drabya Śāha's capture of Gorkhā in 1559 (source not provided):

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

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

In Gorkhā, people of five different castes celebrated with auspicious music and auspicious songs and dances, each according to their caste, after which there was a sidur jāśa, and at the auspicious moment, King Rāma Śāha entered his palace. (Naraharinath VS.2031).

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

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

5The texts of the Rāja mangalini repertoire are still in a Nepali-Hindi mixture.

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

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

It should be noted that these songs are not the exclusive domain of the mangalini. This repertoire has been tailored primarily from songs that are well known across the country. For example, the text of Śī Gapeś pūjā is a virtually unchanged Nepalisation of the first song in a collection of Hindi texts entitled rāg mālaśri published by the durgā sāhitya bhadārā (Varanasī), which contains 25 songs to be sung to mālaśri and a bhagavatī stuti. This booklet is widely available in Nepal during the weeks leading up to Dasāi, enabling devotees to sing mālaśri at the shrines of the Goddess.
procession. At Gorkhā Darbār, the five songs are sung not only during rites on behalf of Kālīkā, but also to accompany the recitation of the Gurukṣa Śāhasranāma in Gorakhnāth’s cave shrine.

The first song in the sequence is Śri Ganeṣa pūjā, sung to the seasonal melody mālasṛi (ex.1) during the propitiation of Lord Ganeṣa at the start of each Dasāri rite. It is also sung at the commencement of other Royal rituals, such as coronations, weddings and vrata bandha ceremonies. The text juxtaposes the worship of Ganeṣa with the attributes of the Goddess in her warlike aspect, and is as follows:

R ganeṣa pūjā nadi kināramā candra vadana mṛgā locani
1 āu gaṅga jamunā triveni saṅgamā madhya āhine kālīkā
canḍa praṇaṇḍa rupini čhattiś vāhana sādhini
2 śānkhā cakra gadā padma khaparū līera
lal labāgī vīra gī čhattiś bāji bājāiera
3 bajā ċīmi ċīmi āmaru ċīmi khaparū dhārāṇī
hāt khaparū trīṣul lieki koṭi senā mārne
R Let us worship Ganeṣa, on the river bank, with moon-coloured
body and the eyes of a deer.
1 Please come, Gaṅgā, Jamunā, up to Triveni, the middle of the
confluence, with Kālīkā on the right. She with the terrifying appearance can control thirty-six vehicles.
2 Conch, discus, mace, lotus, sword and skull are taken. Red dhōṭi, a song of bravery, thirty-six instruments are played.
3 Play āmaru (with the sound) ċīmi ċīmi, The keeper of sword and skull, having taken sword and trident
in hand, kills ten million soldiers.

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

jaya bindya bāsini timī? bhaṇvānī
putā leu mana līera
jaya bindya bāsini timī bhaṇvānī,
mother goddess.
tan mana sārā āpno tīmīmā
Gardeī chaū ārpaṇā
gharkī durgā manābāchaū
hāmī bāṁhā υarṣa
jaya bindya bāsini timī bhaṇvānī,
mother goddess.
amāṁ phūmpāī caṇhāu dōli
bhandai jay jay kālī
dvadā jāgāi janāṇi sīn
kālā rāṭrī manāi
jaya bindya bāsini timī bhaṇvānī.

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

bhairavi devī, timro śaṇaṇāmā
hāmī āyāṁ, hāmī āyāṁ, bhairavi devī
nuvākoṭamā sundar māndirbhitra
basera āsan vādhi sandhyā kālīma dīpa jālāī
nagarā bajāi śabda sunāi, bhairavi devī.

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

Use of the familiar timī rather than tapā, indicates that the Goddess is like a
close personal friend.

Implies 'a long time', not necessarily a fixed period of twelve years.
Le le hānaū le le le (ex.4) is a sacrificial song, sung during all Dasā sacrificial, after Śrī Ganes pūjā. For example, before the phūlpāti is established inside the pūjā room (Dasāi ghar) of the Taleju shrine at Nuwakot, and the Kālikā Darbār at Gorkhā, there are goat sacrifices at the doorways. During the propitiation, the maṅgalinī sing Śrī Ganes pūjā, and for the sacrifice, Le le hānaū le le le, and this pattern is repeated for the many blood sacrifices that ensue. The text reflects the violent nature of the rites it accompanies, and focuses on the fierce, bloodthirsty aspect of the Goddess. Le le is also sung after Bhairavī Devī as the fourth song of the five-song-sequence if the ritual is a lengthy one requiring additional music to cover its duration.

le le hānaū le le le

daisya mārma khaḍa ga cyāpeki
prakata vikāta vadana rūpa
canda mundā māhālinī
kāḷa kāḷa ṣaṅkha ṣaṅkha
sor aruṣṭa vāhana chamcham
prakata vikāta vadana rūpa
unmatā nayana iekī
sor aruṣṭa vāhana chamcham
Tā ha le le le le le

Take, take, let's strike, take, take, take.
She, having sword to kill demons,
With unusual body appearance,
Canda, Mundā . . .
Iaving black, black eyes,
The 16 sounds of the sky jangling as vehicles?
With unusual body appearance,
With very angry eyes,
The 16 sounds of the sky jangling vehicles
Take, take, let's strike, take, take.

The Kālikā stotra (hymn of praise) dhānya dhānya (ex.5) is a song of thanksgiving to Kālikā. It is an 'all-purpose' maṅgal git which is sung at coronations and Royal life cycle rites. During Dasāi it may be sung after le le hānaū le le le as the fifth song of the series if the pūjā is long enough to require more music. The melody is that of a widely known maṅgal git, bhajaD maṅle Nārāyana, a song which describes the ten avatar of Viṣṇu, which is performed by Gāine (itinerant minstrels) and Damaī at village weddings. The text of this version describes the beauty of the Mother Goddess, and lists some of the epithets by which she is known:

R dhānya dhānya māṭā dhānya gūjya kālīkā
1 timnī koṭī candra vādana, timnī unā radhākā
timnī tārā, timnī sārī, timnī gūjya kālīkā
2 siddhi kāli, siddhi Janani, siddhi sarva pujani
dhānya dhānya māṭā dhānya gūjya kālīkā

R Gracious, gracious, gracious Mother, gracious sacred Kālīkā.
1 You have the brightness of ten million moons, you are Unā, you are Radhākā.
You are Tārā, you are all, you are the sacred Kālīkā.
2 Siddhi Kāli, siddhi Janani, worshipped by all,
Gracious, gracious, gracious Mother, gracious sacred Kālīkā.

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

jaya devi bhairavi gorakhnāth
ambike jagadambike
jyoti jyoti viśaśa ṣaṅkha bir git
kathi kathi
tātā thaityā tātā thaityā
nāc saṅga lii jogini
bhaktakā dukha hatā janani ambike jagadarnbike
jaya devi bhairavi gorakdnāth.

Long live Goddess Bhairavi and Gorakdnāth,
Ambike, Mother of the World,
Big eyes, full of flaming light, making songs in the mind,
Creating brave sons,
Tāta thayā, ṭāta thayā
Dance in the company of yogini
Please relieve the pain of your devotees, Mother
Ambike, Mother of the World,
Long live Goddess Bhairavi and Gorakdnāth.

In the original version of this song (i.e. prior to revision by Nir Bikram Piasi), the penultimate stanza bestowed blessings on His Majesty Śri Pāṇe Bir Bikram Saha Dev. The texts of both mangalinī versions of jaya Devi Bhairavi are very similar to the second text in the collection rāg malasāri mentioned above, which includes a reference to Śri Rāṇā Bahādur in the penultimate line, and several other songs in this collection mention “Tribhuvan mangal”. These royal references are typical of this genre of devotional song, frequently found in bhajan and Newār dāphā. Part of the original mangalinī songtext of jaya Devi Bhairavi is included here for comparative purposes, to provide an example of the literary style before revision by Piasi:

R jaya devi bhairavi gorakdnāth, bhairavi devi manāiye

1 aye prathama devi utpanna bhai hai janna liye kaḷāśa ye
jyāi jagamaga he ai, jyāi jagamaga cāhūdiṣa devi
cāuṇḍiṣi yogini sthāanye

2 aye jaya devi bhairavi bardāna pāye hai vakata bhayo nepālaye
kuṭa śimhā sana he ai, kuṭa śimhā sana jīt liye
bhāratīye saba deṣaye

3 aye śīra makuta caṇḍra sabita kuṇḍala jhala kata kānaye
śī māhārāja dhirāja he, śī māhārāja dhirāja birendra bira bākram
śāna dev
śīra devi bāra pāye (etc.)

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

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

he māi paṇḍa kumārī bhakti tiimē pāle
uttar parbat himāl najjik
timnē sthān sabaitīra
rāto vastra rāto candana pūjāna gardachātu
hajtāko bhakti bhāvana jāndainātu
ehi khaśi hou praṇamale
he māi paṇḍa kumārī bhakti bhakti tiimē pāle.

Oh Mother, five kumārī devotees serve you.
In the northern hills, near the mountains,
Your shrines are everywhere.
We offer you red clothes and a red canopy. 
We do not know how to worship you. 
Be pleased with our obeisance. 
Oh Mother, five kumāri devotees serve you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Apart from singing, the maṅgalinī have a number of other important ritual duties to perform during Dasāḷ, and these duties also align them with the benevolent side of the Goddess. For example, at Gorkhā Darbār during the afternoon of daśāmi, they are the main protagonists in phāgu khelne, 'playing with colours', a rite in which they throw red dye and powder (abir) over the priests and their assistants (susāre). The women lean out from first floor windows, joyously drenching the men as they circumambulate the sacrificial courtyard below. After three circuits, the scarlet priests and their assistants storm the building, and a free tussle with the maṅgalinī ensues, until everyone is dyed completely red, in the manner of a holi celebration. The red dye represents Kālīkā' s
menstrual blood, the paramount life-affirming blessing, which the mangalini dispense liberally in this exuberant rite of renewal (Tingey 1994:Ch.7). Thus, the mangalini become the Mother Goddess's handmaidens in a rite which bestows fertility and life during the coming year.

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

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

The mangalini say that they are 'auspicious women' because they sing mangal git (auspicious songs). In other words, they become auspicious through the songs that they sing. However, the concept of the auspicious woman occupies a central place in Hindu ideology, and stems from woman's life-giving powers as mother. Marglin comments, 'Women are the harbingers of auspiciousness, a state which... speak(s) of well-being and health or more generally, of all that creates, promotes and maintains life' (1985a:19). Within marriage, the power of female fertility is controlled and directed for the good of society, and thus, marriage is an auspicious state, and the wedding is the most auspicious life-cycle rite. In such an ideological framework, widows are regarded as highly inauspicious, and it is interesting to note that all the Royal mangalini are married (but not those of the Rānās), and if one of them becomes widowed, she must be pensioned off and replaced.11 Widowhood deprives the mangalini of their auspicious status.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Pāncai bājā**

"Pāncai bājā" (five instruments) is a generic term for the mixed ensemble of shawms, kettledrums, cymbals and natural trumpets and/or horns played by the Damāi. The band is essentially a village ensemble, found across the mid-hills of Nepal, wherever Indo-Nepalese castes have settled. As the ubiquitous village wedding band, it takes a variety of forms and rarely has only five instruments, nine being the optimum number.

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

The repertoires of village pāncai bājā are extensive and varied, but that of the Gorkhā Darbār ensemble is confined to seven highly individual items, each of which has a clearly defined ritual context. Five of these seven pieces are played exclusively in the context of Dasāi,14 and these items demarcate the ritual succession of the festival. At Gorkhā, Dasāi falls into five ritual stages. During navarātri there are two stages - the preparation for Dasāi, from ghāṣasthāpana to phulpaṭi (days 1–7), when the pāncai bājā plays mālāṣtri, the music of the season (ex.6), followed by the sacrificial stage, from bhadrakāli (the seventh night) to mahanāvam, accompanied by the sacrificial music, navaga (ex.7), (a condensation of 'Nava Durgā') and the satar kāṭe bākya (ex.8), 'Big one's cutting tune'. The climactic tenth day marks the third stage - that of joyful celebration, which continues for four days (tenth-thirteenth), when the band plays phāgu (music of the month of Phāṅgūn, ex. 9), to the partial conclusion of Dasāi, when the music switches to ḍāḍā (ex.10). The fourteenth day (cāṭūrdāṣṭ) heralds

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

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

14 The other two items are asāre (relating to Asār), played during the rice-transplanting season, and chasore māṅgal 'auspicious six-sound', which is played throughout the remainder of the year.
the fourth stage - another day of blood sacrifice (with a reprise of the sacrificial music, navagā), and purūnīma ends Dasāi with the concluding rites (resumption of the all-purpose ritual music - chasore maṅgal, ‘auspicious six-sound’).

Mālaśri inaugurates the Dasāi season at Gorkhā. It is played by the paṅcaī bājā first on the āśtami (bhauṃsātami vratam) thirty days before mahāśātri during a ceremony in which the director (bakim) of the Darbār invites all the priests and other personnel to participate in the festival. This is the only occasion on which a full rendition of mālaśri is played. An abbreviated form of mālaśri (given in ex. 6) is played for most of the rites up until the return of the phūlpātī procession on the seventh day of Dasāi. For example, on ghaṭsthāpanā mālaśri is played during the sunrise move of Kālīkā from her usual resting place to join other images in the pūjā room (Dasāi ghar). It is played again during the barley seed (jamaṇa) planting ritual, and for the daily offerings and āstāti pūjā which take place until phūlpātī. Finally, it is played throughout the phūlpātī procession.

At sunset on phūlpātī, the second stage of Dasāi is heralded by a change of music from mālaśri to navagā, the sacrificial piece (ex.7), which is played first to accompany the goat sacrifice that establishes the phūlpātī. From this point until midday on vijayā dasāmi, and all day on caturdāśi navagā accompanies all the sacrificial rites (apart from the sacrifice of the biggest buffalo, the sātār), including the ceremony for the sacrificial knives (khaγgamā pūjā) during bhadraṅkāli, the propitiation of hundreds of sacrificial buffaloes and goats, the sacrifice of a large black goat during kālātri, and of a white sheep during the rites on behalf of the King’s horse (re Atlī pūjā), and the skinning of the sātār.

The paṅcaī bājā also plays navagā for other rites that fall within the sacrificial stage of the festival, for example, during the raising of new banners (paṭāka) for Kālīkā and the hanging of a canopy (canduvā) above the sacrificial courtyard. In addition, it must be played during the preparation of the sacrificial courtyard (paṭaṅgini), which includes the spreading of cow-dung paste (gobar), the drawing of maṇḍala with rice flour (rekhī) and the placing of a lampstand (pānas), immediately prior to the sacrificing.16

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

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

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

On the last day of Dasāi (purūnīma), the piece chasore maṅgal (auspicious six-sound) is reinstated by the paṅcaī bājā during the final stage of Kālīkā’s journey back to her attic room. This piece is played throughout the year (until the next Dasāi), and its

16 At two shrines in Dhading - Jamrang Darbār and Salyankot (Map 1), the mixed functions of navagā are divided between two musical items. A distinction is made between the music to accompany the preparation of a sacrificial area - the rekhī khālne bākya (‘rice-flour putting tune’) or mātu (‘death’) - and the music to accompany the sacrifice - the mār khālne eṅl (‘death-giving till or kāṭne bākya (‘cutting tune’).
resumption marks the re-establishment of the status quo after the turmoil of Dasaśī.

Nagarā bānā

At Gorkhā Darbār, for the veneration of Kālikā, the pañcāi bājā is joined by a nine piece ensemble, also played by Damāli musicians. This band, the nagara bānā (kettledrum ensemble), plays simultaneously with, and independently of the pañcāi bājā. It is used exclusively in the context of the adoration of Kālikā, that is, for the bi-monthly sacrifices on āśṭami (eighth day of the lunar cycle), and at caite and thūlo Dasaśī. It comprises a pair of shawms, nagara (kettledrum), and a number of natural trumpets and horns in various shapes and sizes - karnāl, dhop bānā, kāhal, bijulti bānā, bheri and sikhā. The shawms (identical to the sāhanai of the pañcāi bājā) are called rāsa, after the single musical item which they play, an unmetered and rhapsodic piece.

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

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

The skin of the biggest buffalo (satār) is used for the kettledrums of the Kālikā and Gorakhnāth nagara bānā the right half for Gorakhnāth and the left for Kālikā, and the musicians believe that depending on which side the buffalo falls during sacrifice, that side’s nagara will be blessed with a good tone for the coming year. In their myths, Damāli attribute the origin of their musical instruments to the dismembered body parts of a demon, and each Dasaśī this demonic source becomes reality, when Mahīśāsura is ritually slain, and the skin used for the drums. The skinning of the satār is the first ritual event of vijaya daśāmi and is accompanied by nine mura from the nagara bānā and the sacrificial music of the pañcāi bājā.

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

17A related ensemble of five instruments is in daily use in the worship of Gorakhnāth. These instruments, one each of rāsa, nagara, karnāl, dhop bānā and kāhal, are not used in any other context, or in combination with the other ensembles. The fact that these two ritual ensembles comprise nine and five instruments respectively is noteworthy, these numbers being particularly auspicious in Hindu numerology, and these numbers recur in many musical and ritual contexts.
mornings of phulpāṭi and of Caite Dasāl, and that of Gorakhnāṭh on these two occasions, and again at bhāndara aūṣī.¹⁸

Jor damāhā

During Dasāl, the employment of Damāṭ to play additional kettledrums (damāhā or nagarā) at temples seems to be a fairly widespread practice. Sometimes single kettledrums are played, but frequently one finds pairs of kettledrums (jor damāhā), either with one player, or divided between two musicians. At NuwaKoṭ a kettledrum pair (with a single musician) plays several times daily during navarāṭī at sacred locations (including Taleju and Bhainavi temples, the Satāli Darbār and the dhām’s house), and a single nagarā is played at the vanguard of the phulpāṭi procession.

At GorKhā, throughout navarāṭī there are daily pūja at Upallokōt and Takkolōt, the sites of Magar and Ghale fortresses captured by Drabaya Śāha, on the hills rising to the east and west of the Darbār, and on mahāśītanī and mahānaṇavani there are blood sacrifices at these shrines. The rituals are accompanied throughout by a Damāṭ playing a damāhā with two sticks (ex.13).

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

¹⁸The kul-devatā pūja of the Darbār’s kanplasā yogī, during Srāvan.

Historical background to the damāṭ ensembles

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

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

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

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

In India, as in Central Asia, the naqqārā khānā was a prestigious status symbol reflecting rank and power, and could be conferred by the emperor. Consequently, the ensemble of greatest pomp and magnitude was that which graced the court of the emperor himself. That of AKBar was described by Abūl Fazl in the Aini-Akbari of c.1590 as consisting of:

about 18 pairs of Luwa-ah or damānā (large kettledrums) ‘which give a deep sound’
about 20 pairs of naqqārah (kettledrums)
The function of Akbar’s naqqāra khānā included sounding the hours of day and bestowing auspicious blessings on the emperor.

The arrival of the kettledrum band in Nepal is difficult to date precisely, but the ensemble appears to have been carried into Nepal from Rajputana by court musicians fleeing with their patrons from a succession of Muslim aggressors, from the kettledrum in Nepal, however, dating to Akbar (1568), although it is a wave of migration it arrived (Tingey 1994:24-9). (Regmi 1983:V72). Regmi for example, those of Lele, south of ‘Samvat and at clearly identify the instruments in use, and leave much to conjecture. The most informative Licchavi inscription to mention music is that of Harigaū, north-east Kathmandu, dating from ‘Samvat 30’ (A.D.?), which lists payments to court employees, and includes Jyāndiśānkhaśvādyōḥ as payees, who received ‘25 pu’ (Regmi 1983:V72). Regmi (1983:IV44) translates this as ‘drummers and conch blowers (Jyāndiśānkhaśvādyōḥ), but Bajracarya (BS2030) gives a convincing alternative: nandi (maṅgalā bājā ) bājāune ra sānkha phākulālī 25 purāṇā’ (to the player of the auspicious instrument and to the conch-blower, 25 purāṇa). His translation of nandi as maṅgalā (auspicious) is based on other appearances of the word maṅdava in a 7th century treatise - the Harṣa caritra. It is clear, at least, that the conch was in use in Nepal during the Licchavi era as a court and/or ritual instrument that was paid for by the royal treasury.

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

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

Drums with sacred or military functions have been in use in South Asia since ancient times. According to Shakuntala, the Rgveda (VI, 47, 29-31) hails the drum dundubhi19 as ‘accordant with gods’, ‘thundering out strength’, ‘filling the warriors full of vigour’ and ‘the first of Indra’, and similar phrases are to be found in the Atharvaveda (V, 20 21). On the battlefield, the capture of dundubhi meant defeat, which indicates the high esteem in which it was held (Shakuntala 1968:6). Five types of instrument comprised the band that assembled on the battlefield of Kurukshetra at the outset of the Mahābhārata war (Bhagavadgītā I, 13), including

\[19\] The Vedic name dundubhi has been interpreted as 'kettledrum', but without positive evidence that such an identification is correct. According to Deva (1978:80), today paired nagara are sometimes called dundubhi.
conch and drum (*bheri*). The *jātakas* include many references to the conch in combination with various drums. For example, the *Māgā-pakka Jātaka*’s description of the preparation for a royal journey in which a mixed ensemble of conch and drums forms part of the entourage (Cowell 1907:vi/14). The *pañcamahāśābda* ‘five great sounds’ of the *jātakas* apparently included conch, horn, gong and drums (Fox-Strangways 1914:77; Dick 1984:83). Another ancient drum, a *bheri* mentioned in a Jain text, is said to have had medicinal properties, facilitating the cure of anyone that played it (Kapadia 1953:82-3).

A pair of huge kettle drums, the *dam nagara* of Gorkhā Darbār provide the earliest evidence for this instrument in Nepal. They bear the inscription: *sri Śika 1531 muśe 5 sri mahāraj chaṭra śāhasya kṛiti, ‘provided by King Chatra Śāha in the fifth month of 1531 Śīka Samvat (A.D.1609)* (Bajracarya and Srestha VS2037:1-8). These nagara were installed at a time of political unrest, and it is probable that they had a military function - possibly they were used to sound the call to arms, or to summon people to hear a royal edict. Today, these kettle drums are part of the ritual furniture of the Darbār, which, like the cannon and the temple bells, receive offerings from devotees.

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

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

21 However, there is some confusion as to chronology, as Chatra Śāha ruled for only seven months, from 1505 A.D. to 1605 A.D., and by the year of the installation of the *nagara* (1609 A.D.), Rām Śāha was on the Gorkha throne.

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

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

The honour of *nagara-nisāna* may predate Prthvīnārayan’s era, however. In the *Gokhāvāṃśa* there is a reference pertaining to the early eighteenth century and concerning Udyot Śāha, a son of King Prthvīpati Śāha (1667-1715) by his third wife:

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

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

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

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

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

23 This exodus followed a dispute between Prthvīpati’s sons over the succession, because the late Crown Prince was without heir. Udyot Śāha was a rival for the throne until Narabhupal Śāha was hailed as the rightful ascendant.
References to military music and musicians date mainly from Prthvinārayaṇa Śāha’s period of unification, in the form of army rolls and records, in the various vamsāvalī and accounts of military campaigns. Oral history also provides some interesting data, including the rhyme:

\[ \text{dān dān ra duṇ dān dālāgo bājā} \\
\text{rāṭī rāṭī hīnde Gorkhālī rājā’} \]

‘dang dang and dang dang terrifying instrument,
the Gorkhālī king who walks in the night’

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

Oral history also relates that at least from the inception of the Śāha dynasty, the nagarā was used in Nepal to announce state proclamations. In Kathmandu, this function was known as jhyāli pīnū ‘drum beating’ and in the hills, ghogh hāline, ‘repeating over and over’. The Damāl and watchman (kuṭwāl) shared this duty, and a nagarā used for such a purpose was known as the raja or śahi nagarā (Damāl, R.S. VS.2044:28).

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

Prior to his attack on the Kathmandu Valley, Prthvināraṇya Śāha captured the strategically situated town of Nuwākoṭ in 1744. The ‘Bir Library’ vamsāvalī relates that after the conquest there was a pūjā, during which dipa, kahā and Ganeś were propitiated, Brahmmins recited the Vedas, and the nagarā and other (unspecified) instruments played at the auspicious moment when Prthvināraṇya Śāha entered the palace (Naraharinath VS.2022:358). The Malla forces retaliated, so that Prthvināraṇya Śāha thought it prudent to embolden his army with a rallying speech, upon which the musicians struck up, and they went into battle: ‘bājā bājāundae rana-bhooti taṣpha gayā, ‘as instruments were being played, they went towards the battle-field’ (Naraharinath VS.2022:371).

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

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

Other Dasāl music groups

Apart from the maṅgalinī and Damāl musicians, upon whom falls the main responsibility for the provision of music during Dasāl, a number of other music groups have smaller rōles to play during the festival. For example, the Magar susāre (ritual assistants)
at Gorkhä Darbär have their own band, consisting of a large and a small mydaṅga - barrel drums with unequal heads, played with the hands - and two pairs of large bowler-hat shaped cymbals called jhyāli. The function of the susāre band is to lead priestly processions from the secluded interior of the Darbār, from whence their music eminates prior to their appearance in the visible ritual area immediately surrounding the Darbār buildings. Thus, it does not participate in the phūlpāti procession, but the rites of Bhadrakāli begin with the susāre band leading a procession of priests with their offerings from the Darbār to the sacrificial post in the courtyard for the blessing of the ritual knives (khadgamāli pūjā). On mahāṣṭami the band leads the priests to the gateway of the Darbār for the anointing of the biggest and smallest buffaloes. The susāre accompany the priests during several other preambulations (Tingey 1990: 198-9), and on each occasion, they play a single rhythmic pattern which is referred to as phāgu 27(ex.15). There is no susāre band, or corresponding ensemble in operation at Nuwākoṭ during Dasāl.

During Dasāl at Gorkhä, (but not at Nuwākoṭ) local Gāine - itinerant minstrels - sing their own versions of mālasṛi at the Darbār, accompanying themselves on their four string bowed fiddles, sārānghi, ostensibly for the pleasure of Kālikā, but also in order to beg a few rupees from devotees.28 On phūlpāti, two Gāine take part in the phūlpāti procession, preceding all the other musicians.

Conclusion

The range of music performed in connection with the Royal Dasāl at Gorkhä Darbār and Nuwākoṭ is quite impressive. Each of the separate groups of musicians has its own function within the ritual structure of Dasāl 29

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

The repertoires of both the maṅgalini and the Damāī bands consist of context-specific items and other songs/pieces for more general use. In terms of musical content, only one item is common to both maṅgalini and paṅcāi bājā (in Nuwākoṭ and Gorkhä) mālasṛi, the music of the season, but the functions of this song/piece vary between the groups. There is a coincidence of musical function with regard to the specific items of repertoire to be performed during animal sacrifice (navagā, mār hālne cī and le le hanā le le le performed by the paṅcāi bājā of Gorkhä and Nuwākoṭ and the maṅgalini respectively, and the paṅcāi bājā at Gorkhä has a further sacrificial piece to be played during the dispatch of the satār, satār katne bākyā). Gorkhä Darbār nagara bānī always plays the same music, but the amount of music to be supplied (murārā) is determined by the type of ritual it accompanies.

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

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27 Presumably because it accompanies the phāgu khalane of vijayā dasāmi although in Far-West Nepal, phāg is synonymous with maṅgal gītēbān.
28 In this area of Nepal, Gāine have the tradition of singing mālasṛi from door to door in the villages, in return for which they receive foodstuffs and/or a little money.
29 For a detailed tabulation, see Tingey 1994: Appendix II
the case with the *maṅgalini* songs. A five-song sequence, together with a sixth item sung as an āratī, and a further song performed during the worship of the young virgin girls (*kanyā päjā* and *kumārī päjā*) comprise the *maṅgalini* Dasāi repertoire, and these songs are recapitulated as part of a daily cycle of worship.

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

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

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

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Panta, Dinesraj,

Appendix

Ex.1: Mālālī (māhāgalī)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gāme-sa pūj nādī kā ra-mā cun-dra va-dna mṛg ko-cān ā</td>
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</table>

Ex.2: Jaya Bindya Bāsni

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaya Bia-dya Bā-si-nī ti-mi bha-va-nī Tan ma-na sī rā ṣph-no ti-mi-mā</td>
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Ex.3: Bhairavī Devī

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhai-ra-vi De-vi tim-ro sa-ra-nāmā Hā-mi ṣy-ā-sā hā-mi ṣy-ā</td>
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Ex.4: Le le

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le-le hā-naši le le dai-sy-sa mās-nu khar ga cyā-peki</td>
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Ex.5: Dhanīya dhanīya

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhan-ya dhan-ya dhan-ya mā-ta dhan-ya ga-ja-yā Kī-lī-kā Tī-mi-nu ko-ṣi can-dra vadana</td>
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10

THB MUSIC AT

TEMPLfr ESS;

ON

THE

STYLE

OF

THB RITUAL MUSIC

OF

DAMAI MUSICIANS

Sophie Laurent

The music of the nagara bānā ensemble of Nepal's Damai musicians is a valuable source for the study of the idea of style as well as the notion of a musical piece in the context of traditional ritual music. In this context, a recognizable collective style is manifest since the same musical constraints can be found throughout performances by different ensembles. Yet some elements are specifically regional or even individual. The musical material of a specific piece will never be exactly identical from one performance to another, even if it is considered to be the same by the musicians playing. The musical style seems to allow every performance of a piece to be unique.

Through the changing performances of ritual music, how can we explain the notion of a musical piece? What are the different stylistic elements of its constitution that link the different performances to a specific piece? Is the identity of a piece of ritual music strictly musical or does it borrow its identity from the circumstances in which it takes place?

In order to develop a better understanding of what a piece of ritual music is in the context of the music of the Damai musicians, we will examine the musical style of the nagara bānā ensembles. To illustrate our comments, we will turn to the specific characteristics of the musical style of the nagara bānā ensemble at the temple of Manakamanā in Gorkha District. This particular example will also serve to measure the impact of the socio-cultural context on the style and identity of the musical piece. Our analysis is based on the observation of performances as well as the discourse of the musicians involved. Although musical theory and philosophy are not articulated among the Damai musicians, it is still possible to deduce a non-explicit conception of

1 The Damai people belong to an occupational caste of the hills of Nepal. They have the double profession of tailor-musicians. Serving most of the population, they are hired for family celebrations, community festivities and ceremonies, processions, as well as for religious ritual music.

121