

**Continuity and Change in the Traditional
Folk Music and its Impact on Damai
Community in Sikkim and Nepal**

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By

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Date: 06/01/2020

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "Continuity and Change in the Traditional Folk Music and its Impact on Damai Community in Sikkim and Nepal" submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgement</i>	<i>i-ii</i>
<i>List of Maps</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Charts</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Plates</i>	<i>vi-vii</i>
<i>List of Diagrams</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	<i>ix-x</i>
<i>Summary</i>	<i>xi-xvii</i>
Chapter 1	
Introduction	1-45
1.1. Background	1-2
1.2. Statement of Problem	2-4
1.3. Conceptualizing Folk Music	5-8
1.4. Contextualizing the Problem	8-11
1.5. Damai Community and Naumati Baja	11-13
1.6. Overview of Literature	14-36
1.6.1. Damai Community and Folk Music	14-21
1.6.2. Changing Traditional Occupational Pattern	21-26
1.6.3. Society and Music	26-36
1.7. Theoretical Framework	36-39
1.8. Rationale of Study	39-41
1.9. Objectives of the Study	41
1.10. Research Question	42
1.11. Materials and Methods	42-44
1.12. Area of Study and Sample size	44-45
1.13. Limitation of the Study	45

Chapter 2

Nepal and Sikkim in Retrospect of History 46-68

- 2.1. Introduction 46
- 2.2. Nepal: A Brief Historical Backdrop 46-52
- 2.3. Borders Contestation 52-55
- 2.4. Nepalese Migration Between India and Nepal 55-62
 - 2.4.1. Military Recruitment 59-61
 - 2.4.2. Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950 61-62
- 2.5. Nepalese Settlement in Sikkim and Periphery 62-68
 - 2.5.1. Manpower for Agriculture and Infrastructure 65-67
 - 2.5.2. Socio- Cultural Affinity 67-68

Chapter 3

Understanding Society and Folk Musical Community in Nepal and Sikkim 69-86

- 3.1. Introduction 69
- 3.2. Nepal: A Brief Profile 69-75
 - 3.2.1. Religion and Languages 71-72
 - 3.2.2. Ethnic Distribution 72
 - 3.2.3. Caste Hierarchy 72-74
 - 3.2.4. Service Castes 74-75
- 3.3. Sikkim: A Brief Profile 75-79
 - 3.3.1. Ethnic Composition 76-77
 - 3.3.2. Religion and Language 77-78
 - 3.3.3. Caste Hierarchy and Service Castes 78-79
- 3.4. Damai Community and Traditional Music 79-80
- 3.5. Origin of Damais 80-81

3.6.	Naumati Baja/Panchai Baja/ Damai Baja: A Brief History	81-84
3.7.	Socio- Cultural significance of Naumati Baja: A Historical Overview	84-86

Chapter 4

The Status of Folk Music of Damai Community in Nepal **87-137**

4.1.	Introduction	87-88
4.2.	Field Setting	89-91
4.2.1.	The Study Area	89-90
4.2.2.	Population Composition and Sample Size	90-91
4.3.	Socio- Economic Status of Respondents and the Folk Music	91-102
4.3.1.	Social Status	91-94
4.3.2.	Religion and Traditional Music	94-95
4.3.3.	Age group of Respondents and Traditional Occupation	95-97
4.3.4.	Educational Status of Respondents	97-99
4.3.5.	Economic Status	99-102
4.4.	Out- Migration of Youth: Challenges and Opportunities	102-107
4.5.	Continuity and Changes	108-115
4.5.1.	Traditional Naumati Baja and its Continuity	108-111
4.5.2.	Balighar Bista Pratha: A Journey from Damai Baja to Brass Band	111-115
4.6.	Observations on Traditional Musical Occupation: A Field Account	115-126
4.6.1.	Music Beyond Community	115-118
4.6.2.	Music Across Religion	118-119
4.6.3.	Musical Legacy Across Generations	120-121
4.6.4.	Community Perspective on Traditional Occupation	121-124
4.6.5.	Changing Audience Preferences and Musical Tastes	124-126

4.7.	Perspectives on Changing Occupation and its Impact on Naumati Baja	127-128
4.8.	Additions and Subtraction of Damai Musical Instruments	128-129
4.9.	Socio- Cultural Significance of Naumati Baja	129-130
4.10.	Costumes of Baja Players	130-131
4.11.	Guthi: Community Welfare Social Organization	131-132
4.12.	Initiatives for Preservation	133-135
4.13.	Tourism and Naumati Baja	135-136
4.14.	Conclusion	136-137

Chapter 5

	Status of Damai Traditional Folk Music in Sikkim	138-189
5.1.	Introduction	138-140
5.2.	Field setting	140-145
	5.2.1. Location and Population of Study Area	141-143
	5.2.2. Sample Size	144-145
5.3.	Socio-economic profile of the Respondents	146-157
	5.3.1. Social Status of respondents	146-148
	5.3.2. Age of the Respondents	148-149
	5.3.3. Religious Composition of Respondents	149-151
	5.3.4. Educational Status of Respondents	151-152
	5.3.5. Occupational Pattern of Respondents	152-155
	5.3.6. Income of the Respondents	155-157
5.4.	Factors Affecting Folk Music of Damai Community	157-173
	5.4.1. Changing Religion and its Impact on Traditional Occupation	157-163
	5.4.1.1. Ranapayali Village: A Case study of Religious Proselytization	159

5.4.1.2. Reasons Behind Religious Conversion	159-163
5.4.1.2.1. Poverty	160-161
5.4.1.2. 2. Alcoholism	161-163
5.4.2. Religion and traditional Folk music	163-165
5.4.3. Changing Educational Status and its impact on Traditional Music	165-166
5.4.4. Occupational Diversification and its Impact on Folk Music	167-168
5.4.5. The Peripheral Communities and Naumati Baja	169
5.4.6. Changing Agriculture Pattern and Naumati Baja	169-172
5.4.7. Increased Cost of Baja Performance and its Impact on Traditional Culture	172-173
5.5. Inclusion and Exclusion of Damai Folk Musical Instruments	173-177
5.6. Changing Ragas	177-179
5.7. Orthogenetic and Heterogenetic Change in Damai Folk Music	180-181
5.8. Shortage of Damai Musicians and Coping Mechanism	181-183
5.9. Changing Musical Arena	183-185
5.10. Initiatives for Preservation	185-188
5.10.1. Initiatives at Community and Individual level	186-187
5.10.2. State Government's Initiatives on Preservation of Naumati Baja	187-188
5.11. Conclusion	188-189

Chapter 6

Naumati Baja Across Borders: A Comparative Assessment Through Sociological Lens	190-215
6.1. Introduction	190
6.2. Resemblance of Naumati Baja in Nepal in Sikkim	190-199

6.2.1. Flexibility in Occupational Choices and Music As A Subsidiary Occupation	191-192
6.2.2. Changing Socio-Economic Status of Damai Community	192-193
6.2.3. Additions and Deletion of Instruments and Changing Ragas	193-194
6.2.4. Impact of Electronic Musical Instruments on Folk Music	194-195
6.2.5. New Dress Code	195-196
6.2.6. Revival Strategies and Initiatives	196-199
6.3. Domain of Dissimilarities	199-207
6.3.1. Music Beyond Community	199
6.3.2. Out- Migration and its Impact on Damai Folk Music	200
6.3.3. Commercialization and Modification in Musical Instruments	200-201
6.3.4. Music Exist	201-202
6.3.5. Religious Proselytization	202-203
6.3.6. Changing Inter-Relationship Between Naumati Baja and Agriculture	203-204
6.3.7. Inclusion and Exclusion of Folk Instruments	204-206
6.3.8. Changing Material Qualities of Instruments	206-207
6.4. Traditional Music of Damai Community: Discussion Through Sociological Lens	207-215
6.5. Conclusion	215
Chapter 7	
Conclusion	216-130
References	231-257
Glossary Meanings	258-264
<i>Appendix</i>	<i>i-ix</i>

LISTS OF MAPS

Map No	Title	Page No
4.1	Location Map of the Study Areas in Nepal	88
5.1	Location Map of Study Areas in Sikkim	140

LIST OF TABLES

Table No	Title	Page No
2.1	Emigration from Nepal to India in different census periods	57
4.1	Study areas and the number of respondents of Nepal	91
5.1	Percentage of Damai population under different GPUs in South and West Sikkim	143
5.2	Study areas and sample size	145
5.3	Decadal growth of Christian population in Sikkim	158

LIST OF CHARTS

Chart No	Title	Page No
4.1	Religion distribution of the Respondents	94
4.2	Age of the Respondents	96
4.3	Educational Level of the Respondents	98
4.4	Income of the Respondents	99
4.5	Occupation of the Respondents	102
4.6	Families with or without migration	104
4.7	Migration	105
4.8	Opinion of the Respondents	123
4.9	Children's opinion about traditional music	124
5.1	Age of the Respondents	149
5.2	Religion Distribution of Respondents	151
5.3	Education of the Respondents	152
5.4	Occupation of the Respondents	155
5.5	Income of the Respondents	157

LISTS OF PLATES

Plate No	Title	Page No
4.1	Lamjung Darbar and Kalika Temple, Gaunshahar VDC, Lamjung district	110
4.2	A young Pariyar musician holding a traditional Damai ritual instrument Kahal	110
4.3	The traditional folk instrument of Mangar community, Khajjari	116
4.4	Group of young Magars playing Naumati baja in their traditional festival, Makar Sankranti in Damauli, Tanhau District, Nepal	117
4.5	Group of Magar musicians in their traditional attires and Damai folk musical instruments in Damauli, Tanhau District, Nepal	118
4.6	Members of Panchai Baja Sansakshan Samathi in their traditional uniform; Daura Suruwal and black blazer, in Milanton area, Bashishahar, Lamjung District	131
4.7	Interview with Kazi Ram Pariyar, President of Panchai Baja Sansakshan Samithi	134
5.1	Recently added Instruments Bagpiper and Bugle by the Damai musician at Begha (Dentam), West Sikkim	175

5.2	Damai musicians playing their instruments along with newly included Bugle at Jorethang, South Sikkim	176
5.3	Damai musicians performing their traditional Baja in Sova Yatraa at Jorethang, South Sikkim before starting Nepali festival Dipawali	184
5.4	Members of Kanchandzonga Naumati Sanstha of Barnyak, West Sikkim performing their Baja to welcome the political elite at Jorethang, south Sikkim	184
5.5	Group of Damai musicians welcoming the chief guest with melodious sound of traditional baja in the occasion 203 rd Bhanu Jayanti, Soreng, West Sikkim	185

LISTS OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram No	Title	Page No
3.1	Administrative division of Nepal	71
3.2	Pyramid of Nepali caste hierarchy	74
4.1	Field areas in Nepal	90
5.1	Flow chart of study areas in Sikkim	142

List of Abbreviations

BRO	Border Roads Organisation
BSF	Border Security Force
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistic
CD	Compact Disc
DVD	Digital Video Disc/Digital Versatile Disc
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPU	Gram Panchayat Unit
ICMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
MMSA	Mukhya Mantri Saksharta Abhiyan
NFNC	Federation of National Christian Nepal
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NLSS	Nepal Living Standard Survey
NPCH	National Population and Housing Census
SCs	Scheduled Castes
SLC	School Level Certificate
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

SSEC	Sikkim Socio-Economic Census
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VDC	Village Development Committee

SUMMARY

Nepal and Sikkim shares many socio-cultural similarities, historical roots and common ethnic, language and religious composition. The Nepali community is the numerically predominant population and holds socio-cultural, economic and political dominance in the region. The Nepali community of Eastern Himalayan region is composed of various sub-ethnic communities with considerable difference in physical characteristic, cultural traits, customs and belief systems and follow a hierarchical caste system. The communities such as *Kami*, *Damai*, *Sarki*, *Gaina*, *Badi* are designated in the lower position of caste hierarchy holding lower social position and are considered impure and untouchable. These communities represent occupational castes such as *Kami* (Black Smith), *Sarki* (Cobbler), *Damai*, *Badi* and *Gaina* are traditionally involved in music making.

The Damai community who inhabits in Eastern Himalayan regions like Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling hills is traditionally involved in the musical ensembles popularly known as Nepali *Panchai baja* and *Naumati baja* having huge socio-cultural significance to the Nepali society. The custom of playing Naumati baja is considered obligatory during various social occasions such as marriage, sacred thread investiture ceremony, Nepali calendrical cycle of festivals, religious rituals in temples, leading civil processions and all kind of festivities. With the socio-cultural transformation that has taken place in Eastern Himalayan region has widely impacted the traditional occupations and practices and Damai community and its traditional occupation is also no exceptions. Therefore the present study entitled “Continuity and Change in the Traditional Folk Music and its Impact on Damai Community in Sikkim and Nepal” is an attempt to examine how the Damai community of Nepal and Sikkim has been responding to changing socio-economic realities and how it impacted the

traditional folk music of the community. The study has highlighted the nature and the factors of continuity and changes in the community's traditional folk musical occupation and its impact on socio-economic life of the Damai community. The study has been conducted in Lamjung and Gorkha districts of Nepal and South and West districts of Sikkim in varied socio-cultural and political context. Using purposive sampling, the data has been collected based on in-depth fieldwork method.

The present study has been divided into seven different chapters. The first chapter basically introduces the research topic followed by the statement of the problems, the review of literature with an aim to understand the study from various perspectives and to explore research gaps. The chapter also discusses the research questions, objectives, research methods and techniques, and the limitation of the study.

Based on secondary resources, the second and third chapter highlights the historical backdrop and border contestation between Sikkim and Nepal, which were more extensive than its present form. The chapter also discussed about socio-economic and political context of Nepal that contributed to out migration of various communities to India and Sikkim. The chapter attempts to locate Damai community in caste hierarchy of Nepali society and introduces Naumati baja and its social-cultural significance in Nepali society.

The fourth and the fifth chapters are exclusively based on the empirical study that has been conducted in Nepal and Sikkim. Both chapters made an attempt to explore all the possible aspects of continuity and changes in the community folk music and instruments and its impact on the Damai community in different socio

cultural and political context. An attempt has been made to comprehend the status as well as continuity and changes in the traditional folk music of Damai community.

The sixth chapter is divided into two sections, the first half deals with the comparative assessment of traditional folk music of Damai community, where the focus has been made to draw similarities and differences encountered in the present study in relation to community traditional folk music and instruments in two different geographical space of Sikkim and Nepal. Such variations are the product of their distinct social, economic, political, and religious backdrop. In the second section, the empirical data has been analysed and interpreted using various sociological concepts and approaches of sociologists (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Georg Simmel, and Pritrim Sorokin) along with the concepts of caste propounded by Louis Dumont and M. N. Srivinas. The thesis ends with concluding chapter seven, which contains summary and findings.

The study revealed various dimensions of challenges as well as the changing dynamics of folk music in both regions. As elsewhere, the community and tradition of Naumati baja in the study areas have not remained unaffected by the wider socio-economic and cultural changes that affected social structure. An increasing level of education, changing occupational patterns, the trend of out-migration, evolving employment opportunities, religious conversion, the awareness of low social status, and the impact of information technology leading to an exposure of youth to contemporary music and musical instruments, the use of electronic media and its increasing hiring charges are some of the biggest factors that have adversely impacted the culture of Naumati baja. Nonetheless, the study has also explored many initiatives taken at community and state level with regard to preservation and continuation of folk music. Among other changes, there has been inclusion of new musical

instruments in their traditional ensemble by few members and it is seen as important survival mechanism amidst other challenges. However, despite so many challenges posed by structural change, the adoption of musical occupation beyond community for example by Mangar community and its acceptance by other religious groups in Nepal provided a ray of hope for its continuity and better future, despite challenges posed by the changing socio- economic realities.

An analysis of socio- economic background revealed that folk music of Damai community exists so far because of involvement of elderly people in both regions as majority of the respondents in both Nepal and Sikkim who are actively involved in music making represents old generation, as young generation has been losing their interest because of diverse opportunities in the other fields. It is also been found that the existence of traditional music and instruments has been found possible only because of engagement of those community members who are either deprived of education or achieved low level of education as they have very limited career choices.

Other important observation was the impact of religious proselytization. The influence of religious conversion to Christianity on community folk music varies across regions. The empirical findings suggests that religious conversion does not have much adverse impact on musical cultural practices in the context of Nepal, but Sikkim has felt its negative impact which is visible in study area of South Sikkim.

There are several observations that provide significant insights to understand the present status of Damai community's folk music in the crossroad of continuity and change particularly in the case of Nepal. One such observation was the change in patron- client relationships due to change in the mode of production. Traditionally, known as *balighar bista pratha* which was an exchange of goods and services among

the different occupational castes. This caste-based interdependence has been replaced by the cash economy. With the change in patron-client relationships, now the baja players are no more confined to particular families and their scope of providing the service of baja has become more open to the larger section of the society. The culture of Naumati baja is no more confined to particular community, now Magar community who are placed in higher position in the caste hierarchy began to opt this occupation due to emerging shortage of musicians and its socio- cultural relevance and its inevitability during social occasions. Such new trend has helped to fulfill the shortage of folk musician. The culture of Naumati baja is also gaining popularity among other religious group in Nepal. The surpassing of the caste barriers in opting the traditional occupation indicates relaxation of caste rigidity in following traditional occupation, which is as a result of social transformation.

Despite many common elements, variation has been noticed in the context of Sikkim where the practice of Naumati baja is still confined to Damai community only. Few modification and addition of new instruments to traditional ensemble by few musicians in West Sikkim shows the community's effort to keep the tradition alive and adapt in the age of modernity. The impact of religious proselytization in the culture of Naumati baja has been felt in the field areas in Sikkim.

The flourishing tourism industry has also provided ample space for the promotion of community traditional folk music in the present scenario. Sikkim and Nepal are known for the tourist destination for both domestic and foreign tourists. With the concept of cultural tourism, Naumati baja has become popular during the time of tourist festivals in both the regions.

The emerging scenario of cultural revivalism is a pertinent factor that is instrumental in preservation of the culture of folk music. Efforts are being made at individual and community level working for its preservation. The state is also concerned about the facilitating culture of Naumati baja, by providing many promotional initiatives. However, despite its survival amidst challenges, the cultural space for playing Naumati baja has seen noticeable changes. Apart from wedding and various rituals, now it has been extensively practiced in the political gathering, tourist festivals, and other important programs.

The factors that have prompted change in the community's traditional folk music and instruments in both the region are diverse and structural. The low social status attached to it and its economic inconsistency has been the biggest demotivating factor for youngsters in pursuing this occupation. The study also shows that there is an inverse connection between the increasing costs of Naumati baja with its diminishing popularity. The high hiring costs as well as the substitution of baja by portable and handy electronic media has considerable impact on the popularity of traditional music.

Theoretically, the theory of rationalization has been found relevant in understanding the entire genre of traditional folk music resulting from transformation from Panchai/Naumati baja to Band baja and also in terms of inclusion and exclusion of folk musical instruments, replacement of traditional ragas with the popular songs to cater the audience's demand. According Max Weber and Simmel, the music is an artifact having socio- cultural meaning and function. The study revealed, despite folk music is an important cultural artifact, the traditional music of Damai community has been disassociating itself from its traditional and functional significance in the changing scenario of modern society. The concept of social mobility is found relevant

in terms of occupational shift among the Damais of Nepal and Sikkim in the changing socio- cultural context. Although the vertical mobility among the sample population has been found restricted, the horizontal occupational mobility assures them comparatively decent work and better social status.

While studying continuity and changes, the study revealed the socio-economic status of the Damai community has been changing and social mobility taking place. There has been considerable relaxation in social discrimination that characterized the traditional caste system in Nepali society. The caste rigidity has become open in terms of occupational choices in both regions. Such changes are result of the structural change due to changing socio- economic forces.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1. Background

Folk music has been an important component of culture in every society since time immemorial, having its own socio-cultural connotation and significance. The folk music and instruments have symbolic importance and often have a close inter-relationship with the society and culture, particularly of the traditional societies, which were homogeneous in nature and usually existed in isolation. Nnamani (2014: 305) stated that folk music basically refers to music of rural group of people, who are relatively unsophisticated and uneducated that exists through oral tradition, which usually represents the activities of a community's everyday life such as religious rituals, work, games, war etc. The traditional folk music and instruments can be considered as one of the major elements that make such community and land completely distinct from the rest. Despite having several socio- cultural and religious significance folk music is also attached to the economic aspect of the society. This is particularly valid in traditional societies where occupation is ascribed and folk music is naturally considered as one of the traditionally ascribed occupation.

The Nepali community inhabiting in the Eastern Himalayan regions viz., Sikkim, Nepal and Darjeeling has numerous musician castes among which the *Damai* caste/community has been traditionally engaged in folk music and instruments related occupation within the social structure of Nepali society. The nomenclature *Damai* itself which is a caste in Nepali caste hierarchy is said to be derived from the musical instrument called "*Damaha*", meaning the large kettledrum. In addition to musical occupation, traditionally the community also had ascribed tailoring occupation,

however, there is no such clarity as to which profession they opted initially. Darnal (1993: 30) claimed that in the changing social structure, the society has provided more space for tailoring, which resulted in identifying the community as tailor first and then the musician, maybe because of the profession related to folk music lost its meaning over time due to its socio-economic factors. What is interesting but paradoxical is that traditional folk music of Damai community symbolizes auspiciousness and its presence is regarded as inevitable in most of the Nepali's rituals and socio- cultural occasions, despite the fact that the community is placed in a low position in the caste hierarchy. The musical ensemble the community plays is known as *Naumati baja* when it contains nine instruments or *Panchai baja* when it contains five instruments. In common parlance, it is also known by Damai baja, being identified with the community. In the case of Nepal, the ensemble is identified as national music and is commonly known as *Rastriya baja*.

With the passage of time and changing socio- economic realities impacted by wider structural transformation, some remarkable changes have been observed in the present scenario of Sikkim and Nepal in relation to community folk music and instruments. Therefore, the present study entitled “Continuity and Change in the Traditional Folk Music and its Impact on Damai Community in Sikkim an Nepal” is an attempt to explore various aspects of continuity and change as well as examine the factors contributing to such changes and its impact on the present status of Damai community musicians.

1.2. Statement of Problem

The origin of the sociology of music can be traced back to the genesis of the discipline of Sociology itself. The classical sociologist Max Weber was the first

person who made reference of sociology of music in his preliminary work, “Rational and the Social Foundation of Music” in “Economy and Society” (1921). However, it has become a predominant field like other specialization in sociology in the last decade of the 20th century and early 21st century as evident in the increasing number of publications (Dowd, 2007). Methodologically, sociology offers a distinct perspective on how music has been produced, received and used in everyday life (McAndrew, 2017).

Max Weber analyzed music in two distinctive ways, as an artifact of the historical rationalization process, which brought the development of capitalism, particularly in the West and music as a meaningful part of a human society. The social structure has a deep influence upon the music, as the qualities and the form of music are determined by the kind of social structure that prevails in the society. When societies move from tradition to modern, usually its music eliminated the mystical and irrational qualities are replaced with other forms (Turley, 2001). In the similar vein, Georg Simmel pointed that music helps to represent and express the social meaning and its function. The music interprets the social relationship further help to structure and restructures the social relations. The community musical instrument usually regarded as symbolic and emblematic of people and place thus conveys the socially constructed meaning. Etzkorn (1964) further substantiated the argument stating that musical instrument has a culture-specific meaning that has been used in different socio-religious ceremonies, which are completely shaped by their desires, experience, skills, and prerequisites, further it is also attached to ethnic and cultural identity as a mark or emblem.

Music has often been categorized as an important medium that can help to unveil many unseen forces and interpret the hidden aspects of the society. Through

music, people may understand the past and present social condition, and experiences many other social aspects. Music works as an intermediary to bridge the gap between the past and the present. The interlinkage between social structure and culture are reflected in the production of music (Firth, 1989), as it can be considered as one of the active ingredient of social formation, which reflects the structural similarities between music and social behavior (William, 1978).

Music is a powerful means of creating a sense of belongingness, either to a specific ethnic group or place (Hargreaves and North, 1997) and is a socially meaningful part of the society, which provides and recognizes the community's identities (Stokes, 1994). Thus, it is safe to conclude that traditional folk Music and instruments reflects the cultural identity of a particular community along with their structural position in the caste hierarchy, gender and ethnic group. Denora (2000) argues that music helps to define the relation between the individual with social order, situation and institutional relation of human society. Similarly, Miller and Shahriari (2012) also highlighted that people might express their identity in various ways as the attires they wear, food they consume and the language they speak. In the similar vein music also helps to portray one's ethnic identity in everyday life.

As a constituent unit of cultural aspect of the society, music also reflects in individuals' belief's system, religion and rituals. Talking about its relevance in religious domain, Nzewi (1980) argues that music also establishes a bond between descendants, living and gods and helps to articulate and reaffirm during and after satisfactory offering and sacrifices and provides an atmosphere in which gods/spirits accept such offering.

1.3. Conceptualizing Folk Music

The society is composed of various social class and castes and each social category having their own distinct style of music, ranging from religious group to the ruling class to the general people (Hargreaves and North, 1997). Generally, folk music is anonymous which is sung to simple melodies accompanied by simple instruments. It has close connections with people's everyday social life where the content is more important than the forms. It has the multidimensional aspects ranging from praise of nature, seasons, sowing, reaping in agricultural cultivation, childbirth, marriage and so on (Joshi, 1982). The folk music is the product of musical tradition evolved through the process of oral transmission (Karples, 1965: 312).

The role and the function of traditional folk music often changes according to society as it moves from simple to complex. Consequently, over time the musical genres, tastes and customs have been changed. Usually, tunes are developed from the words and sounds of existing environment which signify the different times and seasons (Nyachhyon, 1993). The social dimensions are bound to be affected in various ways by changes in social structure, political, economic and religious institutions and in the values in terms of which music is practiced (Nketia, 1982). In context of India it was D. P. Mukherjee, a prominent sociologist who made the first reference of sociology of music in his prominent work "Sociology of Modern Indian Music" in 1947. He basically argued the impact of economic forces upon Indian traditional music and also marked some of the important aspects that lead to changes in the existing traditional music in the society. The factors of change includes the proliferation of innovation and training and expanded rules of recruitment, new occupational and performance role, the diversification of public listening, the changed patron role relation and the changed social identities and role relations of musicians

(Joshi, 1982).

Traditionally, the folk music and instruments were linked to the traditional occupational pattern of the community. In the traditional caste-based societies like Nepal and India, each community has been entitled a hereditary and specific kind of role and duty in the society aiming to maintain the equilibrium and stability in society collectively. In the traditional patron -client relationship with hereditary occupational specialization, some communities have been assigned the traditional role of playing folk music and instruments during individual's or societal thick and thin social situation. However, the changing socio-cultural and economic realities in the present society are creating the biggest threat to such established traditional culture.

Booth (1997) argued that the music making occupation has always been given to the low castes because such occupation was considered as pollutant or unclean. Traditionally each community was confined to certain occupational demarcation according to the caste system, but when the society progressed, such rigid hereditary occupation began to be diluted. The change in the socio-economic reality facilitated the changes in traditional occupation with the passage of time. Various studies (Mukherjee, 1947; Khadria, 1990; John, 2010; Bhattacharjee, 2014) revealed that the newly emerging occupation does not only provide a decent and constant source of income but it also provides relatively better social status in the society. In the context of Nepal, the argument has been supported by the Parajui (2009) and Chettri (2010) where they argues that the community's traditional occupations are declining mainly due to its low social status and market intervention.

Contextualizing in the present study, Damai community occupies comparatively low social position in the caste hierarchy of Nepalese/Nepalis¹ society and has been traditionally playing music during social occasions and rituals. However, various forces of social change have affected the traditional social structure that in-turn have impacted the caste system, occupational pattern and specialization of Nepali society, and these factors have been affecting the traditional occupation of community's folk music and instruments. Consequently, the status of Damai community of Eastern Himalaya especially Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling hills have also witnessed change.

According to Hollanda (1964), the age of revivalism started in the later phase of the 20th century and thus created the space to realize and reproduced the endangered traditional culture among different communities. Baumann (1996) also substantiates the argument stating that at present the traditional folk music shows tendencies of the ideas of preservation, protection and cultivation. In both Nepal and Sikkim also, the trend indicates that while the musical community has been adopting different economic strategies to sustain better economic sources and to achieve higher social status by changing an existing traditional occupational pattern. Simultaneously, the state as well as sections of the community, are trying to revive and preserve the lost tradition through various means.

There are countless ethnic communities present in Nepal and Sikkim having their own peculiar traditional folk music and instruments. Some even exist without any preliminary documentation. Only limited research has been done so far in the field of Nepali folk music and instruments (Norton, 1996), few of them being the

¹Nepalese are the citizen of Nepal and the Nepalis are descendent of the inhabitants of Indian Territory, viz., Sikkim, Darjeeling Meghalaya, Assam Dehradun etc. (Subba and Sinha, 2009).

study by Ram Saran Darnal (2004, 2011) and Carol Tingey (1992, 1995) in the context of Nepal. In the case of Sikkim, barring (Manger, 2014, 2015 & 2018) there is no such comprehensive research being done till date despite traditionally having many folk music and instruments. Therefore, this present study is an attempt to fill the gap and highlight the issue of continuity and change in the traditional folk music of Damai community, which exists across the borders.

1.4. Contextualizing the Problem

Background: Sikkim and Nepal share a common ethnic composition, religion and socio- cultural condition. Nepali language is the lingua franca and Nepali-speaking community has been holding dominant socio-economic, cultural and political position in the region. There are various historical interpretations behind the migration and settlements of Nepali speaking population in the Eastern Himalayan region comprising Sikkim, Darjeeling and Nepal.

Nepal has a long history before the formation of nation state. The historical reference advocated that Nepal was ruled by the Lichchhavis during 14th century. This particular era was considered as the golden era of Nepal as the country was developed in many aspects. International relationship was one such aspect that brought Nepal into close relationship with India along with Tibet and China (Shrestha & Singh, 1972). Another significant development was also observed in the history of Nepal during the 14th century with the infiltration from the plains of India when the non-Brahmanical Khasas, Indo-Aryan speaking people became Hinduised and absorbed into the Chettri caste. Later on they have been included to the upper hierarchies of Nepali caste structure along with other hill men including the Brahmans and Rajputs. The Nepali caste structure was peculiar in view of the absence of *Vaisya* and *Sudras*

but there is the existence of occupational castes like *Damai*, *Kami*, *Sarki* regarded as untouchable and hence are outcastes outside the *Varna* system (Pradhan, 1991: 174-175).

The conquest of Gorkha during 1768 brought further changes with the imposition of horizontal divisions based on caste hierarchy and transformation of *jati*, tribe or nationality to *jat* or caste. The *parbate* castes were sub-divided into *thars* or *tharis* (sects or clans). Except for the occupational untouchables castes, the Nepali castes formed subsequent to the Gorkha conquest were actually tribal and did not have an occupational basis. Thus, the endogamous tribes became endogamous castes (Pradhan, 1991: 175-76). Historically, Pirthvinarayan Shah led Gorkha kingdom (1743) was expanded from time to time due to riots and oppressions. The economic hardship and social discrimination were the main causes that resulted in the socio-economic and political domination of the higher caste, *tagadhari* over *matwali* of mongoloid origins and untouchable low castes. It was one of the reasons that many people left their land and migrated to Sikkim, Darjeeling and the adjoining territories as they were left with no other option (ibid: 221).

During late 18th to early 20th century, the Nepali movement was mainly eastward which resulted in permanent settlement of Nepali speaking population outside the kingdom's modern borders. The historical evidence shows that in 1780, the Gorkhas conquered the Darjeeling hills and portions of West Sikkim and detained these territories until 1816. They were encouraged to migrate to the less densely populated part of Eastern region due to their cultivation ability (Hutt, 2005: 109-111).

Consequently, there are millions of Nepali origin population living outside Nepal including Sikkim, Kalampong, Darjeeling and the surrounding areas (GRP,

1992: 29-30). The study by Grandin (1995) also substantiated that besides Nepal, large number of Nepali population also settled in places like Sikkim, Darjeeling, Bhutan and Tibet. However, despite many historical claims, it is also not clear that the whole of the Nepali diaspora community has descended from Nepal as Hutt (2005: 103) claims that there were probably villages inhabited by Limbus/Limboos and Magars (People now often classified as Nepali) before Nepalese migration in Sikkim. The migration of Nepalese to Sikkim can be explained in terms of British Policy, who encouraged migration of Nepalese merely for developing agriculture and other required unskilled and semi-skilled labour (Sinha, 2009: 280; Dewan, 2012).

The Nepali community is composed of various sub-ethnic communities with considerable difference in physical characteristic, cultural traits, customs and belief systems. There are many service castes having their own respective traditional hereditary caste based occupation, basically to meet the occupational need of the society. As widely substantiated by various studies (Haralambos, 1980; Booth, 1997; Newpane, 2013), occupational system has its root in the caste system and individual is committed by birth to a particular caste group and his membership in that group substantially affects the course of his life by limiting his choice of occupation, marriage partner, residence etc. Each caste group is associated with a particular occupation or set of occupations which link it in an interdependent, hierarchical set of relationship with other castes in the society (Horan, 1974).

In such traditionally caste based ascriptive society sections of population are traditionally involved in crafts, arts, folk music and instruments etc. related occupations. Such occupation and position are fixed and ascribed and are transmitted from one generation to another through rigid system and have less scope for innovation at both the individual and collective level (Bourdieu, et. al., 2019).

However, in the late 19th and early 20th century, such established and rigid occupational structure and caste barrier to occupational choice has begun to break down (Reddy and Swaminathan, 2015: 96).

In the Nepali caste system, there are various occupational castes that includes; *Kami, Damai, Sharki, Badi* and *Gina* etc. who have some sorts of contractual agreement with their clients for service. *Damai, Gaina* and *Badi* are the traditional musicians' castes performing music during auspicious occasions, as they have been making their livelihood through music making (Newpane, 2013: 326). The *Gaina* and *Badi* are mostly concentrated in Nepal but a considerable number of *Damai* community are also settled in Sikkim and Darjeeling. The Census of 2011 enumerated the population of *Damai* community constituting 1.78 per cent out of the total population of Nepal (National population and Housing Census, 2011) and Sikkim also shows more or less same figure of *Damai* community accounting to 1.73 per cent out of total population (Social Welfare Department Gangtok, Census 2011).

1.5. Damai Community and Naumati Baja

As discussed the name *Damai* has been believed to be derived from the instrument, *damaha* and they have been placed very low in the caste hierarchy of the Nepali society. They are Hindu caste of tailor-musicians performers of the ensemble known as Nepali Panchai baja and Naumati baja (Clayton, 1995).

The Naumati or Naumati baja is a multifaceted nine musical instruments used by the community during festive occasions, religious ceremonies etc. (Siddiqui and Basu, 2015). The traditional folk ensembles plays are all sacred or semi-sacred in character and providing such music is considered to be an auspicious. Tingey (1992) stated that the community's traditional occupation as musician is considered to be an

indispensable and the fundamental requirement during most of the Nepali Hindu rites of passage. Apart from such occasions, it has a significant role during *bethi*², when the band is played on the paddy terrace in order to appease the serpent-god that is believed to reside there to ensure a good rice harvest.

Thus, the playing of folk music is an indispensable part of Nepali socio-cultural life and is inevitable in all socio-cultural occasions. However, in recent years, it has been generally observed that very few Damai populations are indulged in traditional musician occupation. As the global trend, the forces of modernization and globalization have widely affected the traditional occupation of Damai community also. The diversification of occupational opportunities, the flexibility in occupational choices due to weakening and flexibility of rigid traditional caste based occupation, the opportunities thrown by the affirmative action by modern state in the form of reservation policy, the spread of modern education coupled with various employment avenues, exposure of youth in contemporary music and musical instruments have widely affected the interest of youth in opting the traditional occupation. Coupled with these is the low status attached to the traditional musical occupation that has primarily contributed to the lack of interest and motivation in pursuing traditional occupation as baja player. The argument by Ling (1997) also speaks in similar vein, who pointed out that things changed radically when the fixed traditional structure is broken down and replaced with a freer choice of occupations and greater mobility of the population. Various forces of social change are accountable for such changes in social behavior, social structure, cultural values, norms, role etc. (Kuppuswamy, 1997) that resulted in the process of alteration of the structure and functions of society (Davis, 1960). The old fashion being either modified or replaced by the new in the life

²*Bethi* is a Nepali word which basically signifies day of rice transplanting in terrace field of Himalaya regions.

of people (Mazumdar, 1966) cited in (Pati, 2004: 99), often causing same sorts of crisis sometimes largely triggered by the process of modernization and various factors of social change.

While changes are widely conspicuous one can also notice the concern for the lost and endangered traditional culture like folk music and instruments, which are on the verge of extinction. In an attempt at cultural preservation, various strategies have been taken in the community and the state level as well, both at Nepal and Sikkim in order to revive the lost cultural heritage. An Association called *Khanchendzonga Naumati Sanatha* is one of such initiative taken by the Damai community in Sikkim to protect, promote and revive the endangered traditional folk music and instrument of Damais (Manger, 2015: 64).

Therefore, keeping in mind the social and cultural significance of traditional musicians, the present study is an attempt to explore the traditional musician occupation of Damai community of Nepal and Sikkim in changing perspectives. The study will take into account the community inhabiting in Nepal and Sikkim who traditionally held the musician occupation. The study will explore the status of traditional music, continuity and changes, the socio- economic factors that contributed to the changing trend and its impact on traditional folk music, the options and trend of occupational diversification, their involvement and outlook of young generation towards the traditional occupations. This study will also try to dig out the occupational shift among Damai community and its impact on traditional folk music and instrument.

1.6. Overview of Literature

The overview of literature is the most important aspect of research that helps to identify a research gap before conducting any study. It provides both the theoretical and methodological understanding of particular issue through published and unpublished information. Without proper examination of existing literature, a researcher may fail to understand its existing and future scope of particular subject. Therefore, the section of overview of literature is thematically subdivided into three sub-sections. The first section deals with the study of Damai community and their folk musical instruments studied mostly in the context of Nepal. The second section incorporates the various studies related to changing occupational pattern among the various communities and its impact on traditional folk culture. Finally, many relevant literatures have been reviewed to understand and bridge the connection between the society and music and its importance through various sociological studies conducted in different time and space.

1.6.1. Damai Community and Folk Music

Tingey (1992) talked about the origin of the *panchai baja* and *nagara baja* of ensemble lies in the Middle Eastern military band *tablkhana*, which was carried into North India by Islamic invaders and adopted by their subjects. It probably arrived in Nepal with Rajputs settlers between 14th to 16th centuries. The Gorkha, ancient seat of ruling Saha Dynasty which was established in 1559 was transferred to Kathmandu after the unification of Nepal in 1769, but *Gorkha Darbar* continued to be important as ritual site. The two most important shrines at *Gorkha Darbar* are the deity (*Kalika*) and his protecting deity (*Gorakhnath*) each of which has its own *nagarbana*; a nine-piece and a five-piece band respectively.

There are various literature and versions on the origin of Damai and Panchai/Naumati baja. Dunipale (2010) assumed that Damai probably came from Rajasthan as early as 1400s, like the *Gandharba (Gaina)* in the 15th century and their instruments were carried into India by the Muslim invaders adopted to Indian Hindu tradition and later on eventually carried out to Nepal by the Damai fleeing with the same invaders. Laurent (1997) the combination of instruments is varied from one region to another and used for different occasions. Even an overall sound of the ensembles varies from temple to temple depending upon the instruments availability and the musicians who are playing. They were often engaged in temples, the first of these recorded at Pashupatinath in 1798.

Tingey (1992) argued that the Panchai baja grace the *Kalika's* shrine during the *Dasai* festival with additional pair of kettledrums the *jordamaha*. The pair of huge kettledrums, the *dam nagara* of Gorkha Darbar provides the earliest evidence for this instrument in Nepal. The instruments had a political and military function. Possibly sound of such instruments was used to summon people to hear a royal verdict and call to armies during the time of social unrest. The *nagara* was used to announce royal proclamations during unification of Nepal (1769). Many of the musicians believed that the function of the *jordamaha* was used to announce the people that all is well at the Gorkha Darbar (Darnal, 1987: 107).

The ensembles of Damai are found at the temple devoted to goddesses and even at those devoted to *Siva or Bismu*. The ritual music of *nagara bana* heard twice a day at the temple, Manakamana each morning and sunset (*arati*). Laurent (1997) states that the quality of Damai rituals is elevated to a higher level because their musical event is directed towards the divinity. As such music draws attention to the ceremonial events and the presence of the divinity.

Wegner (1992: 129-131) stated that the *Newari* of Nepal believed that the musical instruments or musical structure could be channel mental processes of human in a specific direction. Musical invocation serves a focusing purpose, in the same way because the presence of the divinity is linked in this context to the sounding of the instruments. The music becomes the medium for the focusing of the attention on the ritual and on the present moment.

Newpane (2013) explained that among the huge racial diversity, there are mainly five occupational castes in hilly region of central Nepal viz; Black Smith (*Kami*), Cobbler (*Sharki*), *Badi* (music instruments maker), Tailor cum Musician (*Damai*) and *Gaina* who have some sorts of contractual agreement with their clients for service. Out of them the *Damai*, *Gaina* and *Badi* are the traditional musicians' castes, who have been making their life through performing and practicing auspicious music. But at present context of Nepal, many of them changed their profession due to modernization and economic liberalization.

Hoerburger (1970), states that one cannot understand the different styles of Nepalese music in their cultural context without understanding the caste system and its effect on the music. *Kusle* and *Damai* are the musician's castes in Nepal having different kind of oriental folk shawms. From Northwest Africa to the Balkans and down to Southern Asia, whenever these types of shawms are found, are always played by the outcastes in Balkans states and in Turkey by Gypsies, in Arabic countries by Negroes, in Afghanistan by *Jats* or by the socially low members of the barber profession.

Newpane (2013) further states the musician castes are tied up with castes in *balighar bista pratha*, a traditional exchange system where these occupational castes

provide services and get the wages during crops harvest (*bali*) on annual basis. It is the traditional way of patronage in harvest crops between artist castes and others or it can be the economic interaction between them. The musician caste accepts '*bali*' (harvest grain), the traditional system of rewards that patron harvest. But when peasantry became fragile and weak, patrons-client ties also has become weak. The influence of modern music and musical instruments, radio, television and other forms of audio and video record displaced the locally made instruments and traditional way of musical performance. They have virtually lost their traditional occupation along with other occupational castes.

Kumar (2013) states that when the agriculture system got mechanized along with spread of modern education, the *Zamindari System* was abolished from the Indian society and the relation between Jajmani and kinship ties, handicrafts and cottage industries became weak. These provides extra impetus to workers in the rural areas, the near coming structures provide the new direction for social mobility to link themselves to a new system of diversification of occupation. Newpane (2013) also has similar findings and states that, the old socio-economic institution of patron-client relation has undergone several changes over the years. Open economy and political system provide opportunities to the musician caste to overcome the traditional occupation.

Parajuli (2009) stated that the traditional occupation of Damai are declining because of mainly two main reasons, it has been greatly affected by modernization and most importantly its low social prestige. Most of them discard their occupation even though it has good earning. Changing social structure and the rise of mass media in Nepal continuously impact the lives of Damai musicians and their music. The demise of the patronage system had a significant economic impact on the Damai with

their major source of income from musical event removed, many Damai have adopted other more lucrative professions. Raju Pariyar (2005) has similar findings that the musicians of the young generations know much less of the seasonal and secret repertoires, these songs and music now exist mainly in the memory of older players.

Regmi (2003) advocated that if we review the economic status of the *Kulse, Damai and Doom*, employed in the temples and shrine to play music, the evolving scenario would be pathetic, music as profession has failed to stabilize them and bring change in the equality in the quality of their lives. In the case of Central Nepal, Adhikari (1996) noted the changing occupation pattern among occupational castes due to easily availability of tools produced from factory on a mass scale. Sharma et. al. (1994) also arrived at the similar conclusion that the availability of factory produced, readymade clothes, and cheapest footwear creates threat to the traditional occupation of *Kami, Damai and Sarki*.

According to Ram Saran Darnal (2005), the projection of modernization induced threat to traditional music and musician community. The Damai community is one of such community facing this situation and forced to change the inherited traditional occupation, because such traditional occupation is unable to maintain and sustain their livelihood. They have abandoned the Panchai baja for the Band baja, one reason for this may be that the clarinet, trumpet snare and bass drum band receives more than twice the income of the traditional ensembles. Damai have not focused sufficiently on forming organizations to improve their social status and continue their musical tradition. Social status of the Damai as a group and the popularity of the music that they play are affected by many factors which vary according to location and individual situation.

Similarly, Stirr (2007) argues that social status of Damai as a group and the popularity of the music that they play are affected by many factors and may vary according to location and individual situation. The musician, residents of Central Nepal takes great pride in the music that they make and hope to continue their traditions.

Tingey (1990) states the silent factors of declining Panchai baja in urban settings are an access to education and heightened status consciousness amongst young Damai. While some Damai chooses other occupational means to avoid the social stigma attached with playing baja. However, others may win popularity with their peers by demonstrating an ability to play the latest film hits. Besides caste restriction, education also opens doors to others means of livelihood.

Hoerburger (1970) further mentioned about various castes in Nepal that have been professionally engaged in music viz., *Kusle or Jogi*, *Gaina* and *Damai*. M. Helffer and A. W. Macdonald (1966) stated that *Gaina* is the only caste exclusively engaged in music combined with music making. They are selling their musical instrument (fiddles) to tourist as a souvenirs which somewhat altered their traditional meaning in the society. However, their profession was to spread the news of the world, latest political events etc. through the medium of music. Even the *Garos* of Meghalaya are also forced to sell off their priceless traditions due to their poor economic condition (Thomas, 2007: 80).

Broughton & Ellingham (2000) pointed out that the repertory of *Gaina* songs comprises two quite distinct styles. One of the recent change is old folk ragas are mainly forgotten and most of the younger generation sings the *Jhyaure* in a style that has little relation to old folk ragas as people are no longer enjoying such old folk

ragas. It is probably influenced by the modern Indian entertainment music broadcasted in radio Nepal (Hoerburger, 1970).

Broughton & Ellingham (2000) accounted that the advent of Radio Nepal in 1952 and later on the arrival of cassette players produced a dramatic change in the soundscape of Nepal. Similar importance of Radio Nepal was pointed out by Gradin, (1989: 114) as the most powerful medium of communication in Nepal with broadcasting for about twelve hours a day and reaching at least 55 % of the population including people in remote villages

Tingey (1992: 171) also noted that Hindi film recording or Radio Nepal often dominated the soundscape of Indo-Nepalese villages. The traditional music are heard especially on festive season only. The hills resound with the music during certain confined auspicious months of Hindu wedding. Among the Indo-Nepalese marriage, the groom accompanied by his male relatives must go in procession to the home of the bride and marry her there and escort her back to his family home where the *Damai* musicians played to lead marriage processions of all caste above their own.

The study by Gradin (1989) shows that the fusion of Nepali folk song/music with Hindi songs/music has become common to produce a type of Nepali national light music. The popularity of such *adhunikgit* (modern songs) and radio *lokgit* (folk-songs) are probably due to their simple “folkly” melodies which are accompanied by a mixed ensemble of Nepali and western instruments and the basic subject matter of these two is generally love, human emotion and patriotism.

Norton (1996: 1052) argued that an increasing urbanization and communication system brought a new musical genre in the society that is completely cash based. The modern values turn from the religious to entertainment and young

Damai are less willing to accept that benefits from their role as auspicious that justify their low socio-economic status. The process of change assesses the way Damai are interacting with modernization and the degree to which their adaptations are affecting their music and the auspicious character of the Panchai baja.

Bhattachan (2002) states that *Dalit* have great skill in specific areas such as metal, leather, music and so on, but traditionally were not allowed to teach others and work in industry or institutions related to their work. If their skills being recognized by the central for technical education and vocational training, they could get job in different institutions. According to Dahal (2002) the main economic activity of the majority of Dalit is wage laborer.

Kay Norton (1996) had conducted research on the various musical communities of Nepal, where he found more than thirty culturally and linguistically distinct ethnic groups having their own musical traditions. Some are existed even without preliminary documentation. There are only few personalities like Ram Sharan Darnal who worked on Nepali music with broad knowledge of Nepali culture (Tingey: 1992). In 1983 Carol Tingey had conducted an ethnographical study on the Damais and their traditional occupational and sets a high standard for future research.

1.6.2. Changing Traditional Occupational Pattern

Karade (2014) highlighted there are various factors responsible for the traditional occupational mobility among the occupational castes. The higher education level of communities, government's job-reservation policy, migration, parent's educational awareness, and the sources of motivation as Ambedkar's appeals to leave traditional occupations and to migrate to urban areas. These factors are closely associated and

very effective during the process of inter and intra-generational occupational mobility among Dalits.

Parajuli (2009) states, Dalit category refers to artisan or occupational caste among the Hindu. The term Dalit (oppressed) is used as an alternative to traditional ones with pejorative connotation for the lowest caste hierarchy considered as *acchut* (untouchable). Moreover, they are socially ostracized, economically deprived, and politically excluded. Deshpanda and Palshikar (2008) exclusively focus on the question of whether families from different occupation move upward in terms of the status and potential for income generation from the established traditional form of occupation. Parajuli (2009) pointed out that the traditional occupations are declining because of modernization and its low social prestige and most of them become discarding their traditional occupation despite decent earning. Chettri (2010) argues the traditional occupation of the Dalits people were threatened and could not continue further because of industrial production and open market.

In an article “Socio-musical Mobility among South Asian Clarinet Players” Booth (1997) found that in case of Hindu culture, low or outcaste groups are often associated with the wind and percussion instruments of professional music. Theoretically, the pollution resulting from performance on *shahanai* or clarinet will not significantly affect individuals whose status is already extremely low in the social hierarchy. Pollution stems from contact with excretions of the body in case one’s saliva and excessive contact with products of dead animals (such as skin drumheads) is polluting. The musician castes associated with performance drums and other polluting instruments such as *shahanai* and more recently clarinet are at bottom of caste hierarchy.

Lowell H. Lybarger (2011) states the Pakistani Punjabi musical *Mirasi* belongs to low social status of professional musicians. People have considerable ignorance of many diverse sub-groups of musicians who have a wide range of socio-musical identities and role. Regarding the Mirasi's occupation, there are many versions of interpretation. British orientalist H. A. Rose (1970: 106) described the position of Mirasi vary according to patron and their role as public performers. The Panjabi musical instruments are mostly played by either played by Mirasis, *Jogis or Faquirs*. The social position of the Mirasi as of all minstrel castes is exceedingly low. They are engaged in some sorts of public performance genre that ultimately lowered their social status in the wider social scheme apart from them, portion are also engaged in non musical activities such as harvest cultivation.

Nayyar (2000), a contemporary ethnographer of Punjab observed that professional musicians belong to one of several endogamy groups that are ranked hierarchically according to their performances, content and sophistication of repertoire. Wayne McClintock (1991) explored that Mirasi are those who resides in the rural areas and work for their patrons and practices their traditional role as entertainers and genealogists has been weakening with their patron castes.

Lybarger (2011: 126) noted when the old patronage system was eliminated after the dissolution of the princely states after 1947, many musicians was forced to find patronage in new institutions, which created new classes of musicians. Some lived and played in the red-light districts and other disassociated themselves by moving to the suburbs and obtaining employment through radio Pakistan, PTV and the private and public concerts. The technological innovations changes in farming practices and land tenure system in 1960s transformed the entire rural economy. Consequently, many small-scale farmers were forced to migrate to urban settings. In

the same note, McClintock (1991) argues the traditional work of Mirasi as musician genealogists had declined considerably and this shift was accompanied by increasing numbers of Mirasis being employed in other fields such as agriculture, trade and professional artist.

John (2010) also pointed out that the traditional craftsmen serve the purpose of fulfilling some of the socio-cultural needs of the society and they are generally identified by their traditional occupation. There are particular socio-cultural group present in the society, which are traditionally responsible for such specialization. Connah (1987) argues in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, archaeological evidence has shown the existence of social differentiation amongst people with functional specialization, which gave a special status to craftsmen such as blacksmith and stone sculptor (Connah, 1987: 206).

John (2010) made a study on *Kullatar, Malai Kuravar and Muslim Labbai* communities in Southern Tamil Nadu who are traditionally specialized in pottery, basketry and grass mat weaving. Although, they are engaged in other cultural traits, they are known by their traditional occupation. Their traditional folk crafts are seriously affected by the modernization and urbanization as their traditional product being replaced by plastic and metal products. At present the amount that they earn from the crafts is not enough to meet their daily basic needs. The transmission of such traditional knowledge of folk crafts is nearly impossible among younger generation as traditional craftsmen emerged as the most marginalized section of the society.

Chettri (2010) conducted research on changing occupational pattern among the *Bishowkarmas* of Hamja VDC (Nepal). The study found the least number of Bishowkarmas' family member were involved in the caste based occupation due to

the gradual change in the socio-political scenario of the state and the advent of education had made these groups to realize their status in the society. Besides that an increasing rate of mechanization and cost of raw materials and the involvement of other caste in similar occupation are also the replacing factors of such traditional manufactured goods.

Similarly, Khadria (1990) noted in Assamese society, there are many artisans castes viz., *sutar* (carpenters), *hiras* (potter), *dhobas* (washer man), *napits* (barbers), gold workers (*sonowal*), silver washers, and iron smith etc. who have been departed from their traditional occupation because people had started importing articles from others sources which were cheaper and better as compared to products produced by the local artisans. An industrial development in the neighboring states also reduced the export demand of raw materials in the valley. Such situation pushed some of them to full-time agricultural worker while others combined agriculture with other crafts of livelihood. The indigenous artisan population had mixed or changed their occupations and identified themselves as belonging to multi-occupational caste.

Jyothi (2013) argues one's social status is determined by his/her occupation and their economic condition. Kumar (2013) states, in the traditional Indian societies, the choice of one's particular occupation is determined by their caste. An occupation adopted by sons is mostly inherited from the father. Gradually, such traditional taboo of occupational adoption has been changing. Deshpanda and Palshikar (2008) also gave similar argument that in modern industrial social context, idea of status and hierarchy operate insidiously through occupation and therefore the occupational category happens to be one of the most crucial differentiating factors in understanding class relation. Paul (2000), further points out that the greater opening up of

opportunity structure is due to the changing nature of work and technology related change and as a result the trend towards greater upward mobility.

Bhattacharjee (2014) argues the *Dhulis* of Barak Valley in Assam are the depressed section of society who occupies a much lower social status in the ladder of caste hierarchy. The main occupation of this community is beating *dhools* or drums, a musical instrument made up of wood and skin. The present generation of the community do not interest in age-old occupation as most of them considered it as unrewarding both in terms money and status. There are only handfuls of *Dhulis* who are continuing with their traditional occupation due to lack of any other source of earning. Similarly, the *Beda tribe* of Gandara village of Karnataka involved in traditional occupation is also not sufficient for their livelihood (Jyothi, 2013).

Thompson (1993) highlighted the *Barot community* of Gujarat is traditionally associated to musical activities with the role of genealogist. The role of *Barot* seems still to include both to maintenance of *Vansavali* (genealogist) and the performance of some sort of musical activity. Such activities seem to be introduced both for the client and the patrons. They have been selling their genealogies which tend to have marginalized the role of music in their lives and are shifting to the non-genealogical non-musical occupations. In general, music is much less important to new generation as compared to their descendants. They have no longer kept their traditional occupation alive as they have been following new occupational pattern and selling their to the lower-ranking castes like drummer caste.

1.6.3. Society and Music

Karina (1996) highlights in 1955, the international Folk Music Council defined folk music is one that has been submitted to the process of oral transmission. It is a

product of traditions rural communities who remained impervious to influences from other genres such as popular and art music. The first volume of the journal of the International Folk Music Council (1949) claims for the scientific, social and artistic aspects of folk music. The volume says that an immediate action must be taken to preserve the cultural heritage and artifacts not only for the own but also for future generation, as culture of folk music has been disappearing gradually. The condition of folk music is very different as compared to 1947 when the council was established. Formerly there were comparatively limited available field records, but now lot of such facilities are being generated by the tape records and achieves in which the researchers can find materials for study (Karples, 1965: 308).

He further states, in some parts still such study remains untouched and unexplored either due to lack of human resources or financial support. Musicians and musicologist have been slowly recognizing its value and included it as a subject for serious study. Even there are few universities where the subject has given an academic status. The sociologist, anthropologist and folklorists are conscious about the study of folk music and bearing on their particular disciplines, perhaps even more important, the musicologist recognizes that folk music cannot be excluded from the general study of music. At Sao Paulo conference in 1954, the council formulated that folk music is the product of musical tradition evolved through the process of oral transmission, which help to link the present with the past (ibid: 312).

Christian Onyeji (2006) states the term folk music is used to denote all types of indigenous music created by unknown composer within the community for social, religious or cultural activities and context other than popular music. Anthropologists Thomas Turino (2008) pointed out music is an art central to human evolution and human survival which can be understood in several ways.

Arguing from perspective of rationalization, Max Weber (1958) noted that in case of western society, the theory of changes in music is determined by socio-economic developments and increasing level of rationalization, particularly the organization of pitch.

So far ethnomusicologists had concentrated on their own perception of musical change and learning little about the perception of musical continuity and change in various societies across the world. Some of the ethnomusicologists including Marriam (1964) and Blacking (1978) tried to understand the important role and the complexity of music and they adopted a single theory of change. One way of seeing the regularities is to recognize the distinction between changes brought by a society from its own internal resources or intercultural contact. There are hardly known cultures that have not been exposed to others. Marriam further states, an ethnomusicology need a theory of change that will apply to both internal and external factors. General theory views musical change as a product of stability, continuity and disturbances brought by outside contact. Internal change may normally follows certain patterns established in a society and the cultures' technology and social structure (Nettl, 2005: 278).

Singh (1986) discussed about two basic forms of changes that lay in the process of cultural change i.e. orthogenetic and heterogenetic changes. All civilizations passes from primary or orthogenetic level of cultural organization to heterogenetic in course of time not only due to internal growth, but also more importantly through contact with other civilizations. An increasing cross-cultural contact among various civilization changes the direction of societies from folk to urban cultural structure and to universalized pattern of culture.

Earlier music was confined to the certain time and occasions, and it was always community centric which embodies the experiences of a group of people, and often encapsulates the history and existing social conditions (Smith, 2001). Caroline Bithell (2006) also argues in similar line and states music as an intermediary between past and present. It also helps to bring the whole issues related to past experience, ideas, feelings, and beliefs and traditional rituals of communities. Music can be referred as past as well as the carrier of numerous tradition, culture, and customs of the society. Musical performance occupies a special position in small-scale, non- literate societies where history can be created and interpreted through repeated performances.

John Sheperd (2005) argues musical structures and practices resonate the identities or structure positions of social classes, gender and ethnic group. People had realized the importance to ethnomusicology to the issue of cultural study of music since 1990s. However, the ideas regarding the music connection exist between the social groups and the characteristic was flourished much earlier in 1970s. Scholars had started articulating the social reality of particular social group through their music.

Paul William (1978) argued that early rock 'n' roll and progressive rock articulated the social realities of Biker Boys subculture and Hippie counter culture. But musical activity today is cultural space within which a variety of processes of differentiation and according to widely variety trajectories of change and cross-fertilization.

William G. Roy (2010) explained that history has witnessed the contribution of music on social movement. Music and popular songs plays an important role in the process of symbolic redefinition and the creation of social movements in a much

wider, faster and convenient way. Music works as a catalyst to incorporate the masses need for solidarity and consciousness. Roy (2010) advocates there is a close nexus between the music and social movements, as it elevates the human condition.

Nepal and Waiba (2011) also addressed the importance of music for the creation and demand of Gorkhaland a separate statehood in Darjeeling district. There were two phases of Gorkhaland movement in the 1980s and 2007, where music played a very crucial role to bring about solidarity and consciousness among the masses in both phases of movement.

Simon Firth (1989) argues the production of music always had the cultural and structural influence. This statement has supplemented by explaining that why England had produced so many pop musicians in the 1960s and 1970s. The educational system of art schools that offers as an alternative to university or vocational program provided an insulated community of artistic young adults and this gave rise to the Beatles, David Bowie, The Six pistol and Pink Floyed. Key to Firth's method was an exploration of the culture and institutions of the music and musicians. Paul William (1978) highlighted the music and its social presence reflected the structural similarities between music and social behavior and music as an active ingredient of social formation.

Tia Denora (2000) conceptualized the nature of music has been changed due to its circumstances of production, distribution and consumption and as a result people failed to recognized music's power. Music mobilized as a resource for production, assumptions and occasion that constitute social life. He further states music helps to reflect the human identities, emotion and memory and its role to construction of self.

Music describes the relation between the individual with social order and the situations, scenes and institutional relation of human society.

An occupation related to music and listening to music is no longer signifying some sorts of social differentiation due to democratization of musical life reinforced by market situation (Spicic, 1987: 171-172, Weber, 1994: 178). Alexandros G. Baltzis (2003) argued that in the era of modernization, the musical life in societies is constructed on the basis of commodity relation, regardless of musical genres, social status of listener and musicians, their value orientation or musical preferences. A sociological approach to music could hardly overlook the changes that occur in commodity relations, which have a strong impact on every section of musical life, particularly in a globalized economic environment. The domination of commodity relations and the construction of musical life is the outcome of an age-old process of transformation.

Durga (2004) advocates music sometime makes travel things, objects and technique into their new cultural settings. Richard D. Wetzel (2012) argues an introduction of new genre of music cause threat to the indigenous music. Even Indian music and musicians were influenced by western classical and popular music such as Jazz, Rock and Hip Hop, and contributed to the creation of multiple fusion.

In the book called “Music and Musical Instruments of the Garo Tribe of North-East India” Thomas (2007) states the *Garo* learned to use many natural resources in an innovative ways to produce musical instruments and to accompany their songs. The religious proselytization among the Garos to Christianity forced to putting them aside of the old and taking on the new culture. The lack of interest among the Garos regarding their musical heritage has been brought by the influence of modern and

Indian music. The influence of Bengali can be notice in the border areas of west Garo hills in the musical instruments such as *Sanai* and as well as in the form of singing (Thomas, 2007: 81).

The arrival of public concerts and the development of institution contributes a lot for the formation of market for music and when it became technically possible to store, reproduce and transmit music and the dominance of commodity relation in musical life become universal and absolute (Baltzis, 2003). The predominance of commodity relations in musical life stabilized the disjunction between music and the audience. The relationship between them could only function through a system of institution, such as music publishers/press, concert organization, the musical industry, mass distribution and promotional networks, the mass media etc. (Kretschmer, et. al., 2000: 2).

In case of Nepal, Preetha Malla (2010) highlighted the witness of fusion music in Nepal, in which he expressed that the fusion expresses both the tradition and modern scenerio of the country. Megill and Donald (2005) said such new musical style appears either because the listening public, or musicians, have grown tired of the old or because a succeeding generation wants a style of its own. The amalgamation of tradition and contemporary styles gave birth to fusion music.

Roger Elbourne (1975) states, there are two categories of change in the traditional music viz., endogenous and exogenous. There are changes within resulting from the creative efforts on individuals or groups; and there are changes of the entire structure of a traditional as a result of internal or external processes. The author is concerned with the sociological approach regarding changes in traditional music and the relationship between changing social structure and musical life. The most

common method to observe such changes is to study acculturation situation. Most documented causes of changing repertoires and musical genre are probably due to contact among the people and cultures and the movement of population. A group changes their original inhabitant often experience greater and more rapid musical changes than the one who remains in same inhabitant and neighborhood. The former might have also a higher rate of elimination of musical materials.

Art-historian, Ernst Fischer (1963) argues an increasing industrialization irrevocably destroy folk art. Traditional music unable to withstand the pressure of complex industrialized societies, the defensive powers of ingenuous music is weak against the strong offensive powers of cultivated urban music. Folklorists have highlighted variety of causes behind the decline in traditional music. The most frequently mentioned are education and literacy, the disruption of the continuity of communities through improved communications and transport and the influx of alien cultural material in the form of modern amusements and mechanical music.

Thomas (2007) states, Garos had a very unique institution through which they preserves their arts, crafts and culture. It was assured by the institution, *Nokpante* (Bachelors' dormitory) where the young boys were imparted knowledge in all fields of life and where they used to resound with the sound of various instruments every evening to improve their skills. Such important institute got disappeared with the introduction of modern education system. Gradually, the boarding schools have been replacing the culture of *Nokpante* which was supposed to be guide the youth and to preserve the indigenous art and culture. Numbers of such traditional dormitories has disappeared from the Garos' social-culture life. For instance, in case of Emangre village in the South Garo, were the nine *Nokpante* were found in the past none of these are exist today.

Rhodes (1987: 8) stated when old beliefs and ceremonies become dysfunctional in the life of society; the songs and music associated to them tend to pass into oblivion. The process of change resulting from acculturation is age old. Now the process has been greatly accelerated by modern transportation and communication.

MeikiNzewi (1980) argues person born in the musical families have limited choice to opt other occupation and achieve higher social status as compared to parents. Their proficiency in folk music is mostly categorized as ascribed. The proficiency among the communities in folk music skills further enhanced with the help of practical know-how due to increasing level of education. It has been also promoted by other agencies through organizing performance competitions and more recently an overwhelming culture of nationalism.

Folk music work as an agent to bond between the living, gods and ancestors, it also helps to articulate and reaffirm during and after satisfactory offering and sacrifices and provides an atmosphere in which gods/spirits accept the offerings. Nigerian societies used traditional folk music as a watchdog to look after the societal matter. Similarly in case of Gorkha Nepal it was treated as powerful public medium to broadcast news and information during unrest and peace (Nzewi, 1980).

The advancement of media and music industry in the 20th century has been threatening the traditional folk music, but in contrast many schemes been implemented to organized and maintain such valuable culture through museum and collection Kevin Dawe (2003).

Christian Onyeji (2004) argued, in Nigeria many folk songs and music became lost due to breakdown in oral tradition and lack of interest among new generation. Now folk music feature during special events and such events are functioning as

cultural revival events. People have become rarely involved in folk music making which was considered to be the integral part of different social situation and ceremonies. Preference for popular music and computer-generated sound has drawn people away from the natural acoustic sound of human music.

The situation is quite critical as many folk music and songs have completely vanished from memory and many more are endangered. Onyeji (2004), states the situation requires an urgent action to be taken to prevent the complete loss of the folk musical heritage of Nigeria. The present generation have to work to ensure that coming generations do not lose the traditions which defined their culture. The establishment of a library of Nigerian folk music would be one attempt to preserve the folk music heritage of Nigeria for future generation. Nketia (1959) said in Kumasi also there was a museum of art and a culture for the teaching and cultivation of drumming and dancing which provided recognition to cultural activities and ensuring passed to other generation.

Thomas (2007: 82) states, at present various kind of competition being organized basically to boost the interest among the school children about the traditional music and instruments which are at the edge of extinction. The disappearing traditional music and instruments are also using to accompany gospel songs and Garo modern songs, which somehow able to keeping alive and revive the traditional music in the life of Garo tradition. However, there is a big entry of local pop culture. Since 1976, a group elders came together and introduced the “Hundred Drums” festival which has since been successfully celebrated every year as a way of preserving and promoting Garo traditional songs, music, dance and the games.

Timi Karina Rannarine (1996) said that Finnish educationists' stress the need to formulate strategies for the transmission of folk music in the changing contexts of the modern world. Folk music is no longer confined among the rural community, but the musicians concentrated in urban centers also promote such traditional culture. In the 1980s Finland had adopted a formal strategy for the transmission of folk music at the level of the state education system. Bholman (1991) states worldwide people have shared and experienced the diverse music, such conglomeration consequently gave birth to an idea of cultural revivalism and revitalization instead of homogenization of folk music genre. In case of contemporary Finnish folk music, such influence was noticeable when they came into contact with the music of other different communities.

During Manila Declaration of 1980, the World Tourism Organization stated the relevant influence of tourism on various aspects of progress with respect to politics, economic, environmental and cultural sector. Tourism plays a relevant role in developing the cultural awareness of contemporary societies (Zsuzsanna, 2010).

Bennett, et. al. (2006) reported the annual street event in Bassano, Northern Italy that included the local carnival, celebration of regional heritage and local tradition. Such events become an inter-subjective field in which they allows both local and tourists to showcase and constructing narrative of the place. It also provides space to the local people to involve physically during such events which dramatically brought back their traditional life.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

Theory is an amalgamation of concepts and the set of ideas that provide the statement of reasons about the particular facts or issues and permits the systemization of

knowledge about the social world (Ritzer, 2003; Macionis & Gerber, 2010). Usually, theory is an attempt to bridge the statements in a best possible way about the future events through its broad understanding, perspective, interpretation and analysis (Calhoun, 2002; Little, 2010). Further, it also helps to widen the horizon of subject matter in a much better and bigger way. The study seems merely impossible and incomplete without an implementation of such theories and conceptual framework. Therefore, the present study deals with the various theories and conceptual frameworks propounded by Max Weber, Georg Simmel and Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin and is an attempt at strengthening the scope of the study sociologically.

The study has been conducted using Max Weber's theory of rationalization and Pitirim A. Sorokin's theory of social mobility. Max Weber had done a commendable contribution for the introduction of music in the discipline of sociology. Weber analysed music in two ways: music as an artifact of the historical rationalization process that brought on the development of capitalism in the west and music as a meaningful part of the society's culture. The most prominent assumption in Weber is that the process of rationalization exists in music. Rationalization theory of music states that the movement from ancient to modern music gradually eliminated the mystical and irrational qualities of art and replaced them with rational qualities. Tones in the music that musician might make or a singer might sing was replaced by the organized rational principle of chordal harmony which is the rationalization's effect on music (Turley, 2001).

With this conceptual framework, the study attempts to understand the process of rationalization on folk music and instruments of Damai of Nepal and Sikkim. Darnal (2005) and Mathema (2017) had pointed out that the process of rationalization on Damai folk music have already begun in Central Nepal, the Panchai baja and

Naumati baja used by Damai has been replaced by the modern Band baja because it receives more than twice the income of the traditional ensembles. It has been also generalized that the original tones (ragas) is no more significance and is being replaced by the tunes of modern and latest Nepali filmy songs.

Georg Simmel propounded that the music helps to represent and express the social meaning and its function. Music portrays the social relationship by which individuals communicate among one another and also maintain structure and restructure the social relations. Musical instruments are regarded as a symbolic and emblematic of people and place that help to shape the society and culture. The function of the musical instruments is to convey the socially constructed meaning to the masses via sound. Musical instruments has a culture specific meaning and has been used in ceremonies and ritual practices that are thoroughly shaped by their experience, skills, needs and desires and it has also great importance as emblem and marker of ethnic and cultural identity (Etzkorn, 1964).

The conceptual framework of Simmel's "music's social and symbolic meaning and function of music" is also relevant to explore social and symbolic meaning and mapping the socio- cultural significance along with the function of folk music and instruments played by the Damai community.

The occupational shift among the Damai community can be studied using the concept of social mobility. Sorokin defined social mobility as "*any transition of an individuals or social object of value anything that has been credited or modified by human activity from one social position to another*" and the transition always connected with a dissolution of old and an established of new social relation (Hoberle, 1928: 220). Socio-economic status is the most important dimension of occupational

mobility (Haut, 1984: 1383). Such mobility provides economic and social benefits to the individuals. Sociologists have identified various forms of social mobility viz; Horizontal, Vertical (upward/downward), intra-generation and intergeneration mobility. Sorokin mentions various conditions for inter-generational mobility, which include “change in occupation structure” in which he explains that with the passage of time, occupation became upgraded and downgraded and their socially defined importance has changed.

It has been observed that occupation mobility is taking place in case of Damai community of Nepal and Sikkim. The Sorokin’s model of social mobility has been applied in this study to understand the pattern, condition and dimension of mobility among the Damai community of Sikkim and Nepal.

1.8. Rationale of Study

Nepal Census 2011 accounted that the Damai community constitutes 1.78 per cent of its total population in Nepal, while it accounts to 1.73 per cent of total population of Sikkim. Traditionally, the community upholds the occupation of playing an ensemble of nine musical instruments called Naumati baja during many social occasions and rituals. In the caste based social structure of Nepali society, Damai community is placed at the bottom of the caste hierarchy and is considered as *achut* or impure or untouchable. In contrary, the traditional occupation of playing folk music and instruments by the community is considered as auspicious and has great socio-cultural significance among Nepali speaking population both in Nepal and Sikkim. The folk music is an indispensable part of auspicious occasion like rituals, weddings etc., which deeply reflects the unique cultural heritage of the community. Traditionally,

there is no Nepali social occasion and rituals which can be done without these instruments being played.

However, with the passage of time various endogenous and exogenous factors forced the community primarily to change in two ways i.e. change in structure and change of structure (Elbourne, 1975). Contextually, the flexibility experienced in caste-based occupation resulted in wide diversification of occupation. Consequently, the choice of occupation has been shifted from caste based hereditary and ascriptive occupation to individual choice based on achievement, which made the younger generation to opt for new occupations. The low social status attached to traditional occupation coupled with the opportunities provided by modern education, employment opportunities and state initiatives of protectionist policy for the community in the form of reservation collectively facilitated such trend. The impacts of modernization forces have also widely affected the traditional folk music and instruments in these regions which adversely affected particularly the rich traditional occupation of the community related to folk music and in general the cultural heritage of entire Nepali community.

An exhaustive review of literature shows that there are literatures available on the Damai community of Nepal done by the Carol Tingey (1992, 1995), Ram Saran Darnal (2004, 2011) and so on. However, there is no comprehensive study on the traditional music of the particular community in Sikkim and Darjeeling. The study therefore, is an attempt to fill up the gap and understand the Damai community and their rich folk musical culture beyond borders in comparative perspective. It is also an endeavor to analyze the pattern and extent of changes and adaptability, which may vary due to their different socio-economic, cultural and political boundaries and situation.

In this backdrop, the present study is an exploration of traditional Naumati baja of Damai community of Nepal and Sikkim in changing perspective focusing on its continuity and changing trends, the factors contributing to such changes and its impact on socio- economic condition of the community. The study further focuses on its symbolic significance and meaning, community perception, the significant link between the changing social structure and their occupational pattern, its impact on folk musical genre of the community as well as the community's initiatives for preservation.

1.9. Objectives of the Study

Based on the foregoing section on rationale of study and statement of problem, the main objectives of the study are as follows:

- I. To understand the patterns of continuity and changes in the tradition of folk music among Damai community of Nepal and Sikkim.
- II. To analyze the factors that contributed to such changes in their traditional occupations.
- III. To study the symbolic and socio-cultural significance of the Naumati/Panchai baja of Damai community.
- IV. To explore if there is any occupational mobility among the community and if so, its impact on socio-economic life of Damai community in general and folk music in particular.
- V. To understand the perception of the youths and their awareness on significance of Naumati baja.
- VI. To investigate the initiatives and strategies adopted at the community and state level to preserve and promote their traditional folk music.

1.10. Research Question

- What are the symbolic and socio- cultural significance of the Naumati/Panchai baja in Nepali society?
- What are the changes and continuity in the folk music of Damai community?
- Has there been any occupational change and mobility among the Damai community? If so, what are the factors that contributed to occupational changes?
- What are the impacts of occupational change/ mobility on socio- cultural and economic condition of Damai community in general and folk music in particular?
- How has the Damai community of Nepal and Sikkim responded to the changes in traditional occupation?
- What do the community members and youths perceive about their folk music and its changing trend?
- Has there been any initiative at the community and the state level to preserve and promote the folk music of the community? If so what are the various strategies adopted?

1.11. Materials and Methods

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The secondary data has been collected from published and unpublished materials like research articles, books, magazines, dissertations, and census data etc. Primary data has been collected particularly from the allotted fields in Sikkim and Nepal. Various research techniques have been used to collect the primary data like interview schedule, which included both close-ended and open-ended questions. Furthermore, with the help of semi-

structured interview both quantitative and qualitative data was accumulated which has been used for data analysis. In addition to quantitative information on socio-economic background, the study has also made use of qualitative information through collection of narratives, case study and life history and experiences of the key informants. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also conducted especially among the Damai musicians to extract and cross check the collected information about the issues.

The research is based on purposive sampling as the issue is confined to the Damai community. The respondents are inclusively taken from the community those who have lived experiences about their traditional folk music and instruments. It was difficult to find the sizable number of resourceful respondents those who can provide in-depth information and narratives related to the pertinent issue more effectively and thoroughly. Therefore, snowball sampling was used to select such respondents.

Non-participant observation has also been used to collect the primary data by involving in various musical festivals, programs, and social function, which were held in the vicinity of study areas to have an in-depth understanding about the conducted study. It helped the researcher to provide direct access to the social phenomena that helped in observing and recording the behavior of the people within the context and situation. The respondents were selected taking variables like age, occupation within the Damai community to get a holistic understanding of their perception and opinion of both the old and younger generation. This helped to have a better comprehension about the continuity and changes developed over the years on Damais' folk musical culture in Nepal and Sikkim. Since the Naumati baja is being played by male members of the community, gender wise only male respondents have been taken for the study.

Theoretically, the study has used various sociological concepts, however the analysis mainly focuses on Max Weber's rationalization theory of music, Georg Simmel concept of social and symbolic meaning of music and Pitirim Sorokin theory of social mobility. For understanding caste related issues, the concepts of caste given by M. N. Srivinas and Louis Dumont has also been used for analytical purpose.

1.12. Area of Study and Sample Size

The study was conducted in Sikkim and Nepal. The specific areas have been selected from each region with the help of census data and pilot survey. In Nepal, the study was conducted in two districts viz., Gorkha and Lamjung districts of Western Nepal. Further samples have been collected from different Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Municipalities of each district. The details regarding the names of VDCs/Municipalities and the distribution of population has been discussed elaborately in the fourth chapter. The districts are located adjacent to each other taking into consideration what Tingey (1992) highlighted about the location of the ancestral home of the royal family of Nepal in Gorkha district where various traditional ritual music are still observed mainly at the shrines of old places. The ethnic and economic diversification of Gorkha population facilitates a range of festivals and a variety of styles of wedding. Gorkha is a major crossroad for trade and communication and during wedding seasons, Naumati/Panchai baja from the surrounding villages frequently come to or passed through Gorkha (Tingey, 1992: 171-172).

In Sikkim study was conducted in South and West districts, where the concentrations of Damai population are 22.4 per cent and 18 per cent respectively out of its total population (Social Welfare Department Gangtok, Census 2011). Similarly,

further samples have been extracted from the various villages under different Gram Panchayat Units (GPUs), which is discussed in detail in chapter five. The selection of the area of study in Sikkim is also based on purposive sampling considering the availability of the musicians along with their traditional occupation.

The total size of the sample population is 140 collected from both the regions taking equal number and percentage from Nepal and Sikkim. The comprehensive details regarding the distribution of population and the study areas are provided in chapters four and five, which are exclusively based on field study in Nepal and Sikkim.

1.13. Limitation of the Study

The present study has also certain shortcoming and limitation. The study was conducted in two different geographical regions of Nepal and Sikkim. Being a native of Sikkim to accomplish field survey here was not challenging, but the situation was reverse in case of unknown places like Nepal. To reach and conduct field survey in the uphill mountain was not an easy task, as it required perseverance and daylong walk. Most of field areas covered in Nepal were underdeveloped in terms of road connectivity. Particularly in case of Gaikhur and Bashaishara VDCs, the condition of roads and public transportation was pathetic. In the remote villages in Nepal it was very hard to convince respondents about the research aims and objectives, as they expected something back in return for their participation.

CHAPTER2

Nepal and Sikkim in Retrospect of History

2.1. Introduction

Nepal and Sikkim are located in the Eastern Himalayan region. The region lies between 82.70° E and 100.31° E longitude and 21.95° N to 29.45° N latitude covering a total area of 54,190 sq. km and the region extends from the Kaligandaki Valley in Central Nepal to Northwest Yunnan in China encompassing Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling hills, Southeastern Tibet and parts of Northern Myanmar (ICIMOD). Nepal and Sikkim have many similarities in socio-cultural features, social structure, the ethnic and religious composition and Nepali language as lingua franca. Historically, both of the places were monarchy ruled by the kings in the different historical epoch. Sikkim was a Buddhist kingdom before 1975, until it was not incorporated within the Indian Union as the 22nd state of India. Nepal was a Hindu kingdom up to the first decade of the 21st century, which was ended with the establishment of parliamentary democracy in 1991 and later on it became a secular state in March 2008.

2.2. Nepal: A Brief Historical Backdrop

The present form of Nepal as a nation-state came into existence in the late 18th century. Prior to that, the territory was divided into multiple independent principalities and kingdoms ruled by different local kings or tribal chiefs (Whelpton, 2005). Since the late 18th century Nepal went through different phases of transition. Categorically, it can be divided into four different periods ruled by the different rulers and the political system. Nepal was ruled by two giant dynasties including the Shah dynasty (1796- 1846) and the Rana dynasty (1846-1951) under different kings. After the

downfall of the Rana regime, Nepal experimented with the short-lived democratic form of government. In 1960, the then King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev took emergency power to ban all the political parties and adopted the party-less Panchayat system over democracy (Millard, 2008). The party-less Panchayat lasted almost for 30 years, till 1990. The system was replaced by the parliamentary democracy in 1991.

Historically, Derbya Shah, the successor of the royal family of Lamjung principality took control over Gorkha in 1559 by defeating the local tribal chief and established Shah Dynasty and ruled Nepal for the next two centuries. Gradually, their successors initiated the process of territorial expansion, among them Pritivi Narayan Shah was the most influential figure who successfully conquered most of the principalities of the surrounding localities and unified them into one single nation (Regmi, 1995: 4). He took the throne of Gorkha in 1743 and his twenty-five years of continuous planning and relentless attempts brought some of the major principalities of Nepal valley under his command. In 1769, the capital was shifted to Kathmandu from Gorkha that laid the foundation of Nepal's modern kingdom (Pradhan, 1991: 114).

The Gorkha Empire successfully annexed most of its vicinity principalities and took under their control in between 1768 to 1814. The Gorkha extended their kingdom from the river Tista in the east to the river Satluj in the West, which covered almost sixty principalities. Therefore, in order to maintain consensus, harmony and unity among such culturally diverse country, the king Prithivi Narayan Shah introduced some major principles according to which the king possessed supreme authority and power over the nation and their subjects. Hinduism being accepted as the national religion, caste system was introduced effectively to fulfill the division of labour and brought the society under one framework of social stratification. In

addition Nepali was accepted as the official language of Nepal. Such action and administrative policy can be termed as the process 'Hinduisation' and 'Nepalisation' (Sharma, 1992). However, Tilouine (2009) views that the seized principalities were already in Hindu caste system before they came under the Gorkha fold. Pradhan (1991) also recounts that much earlier Jayasthiti Malla had introduced a well-organized caste system in the Kathmandu valley before the arrival of Shah Dynasty.

The process of territorial expansion was continued by the Gorkhas forbearers after Prithivi Narayan Shah, which finally came to an end after the Anglo-British war of 1814-1816. It broke out due to the border dispute between the East India Company and the Gorkhas. The war ended with the signing of the treaty of Sugauli on 4th March 1816 (Pradhan, 1991: 156) and according to the treaty most of the Nepal Terai, the southern plains was surrendered to the British (Whelpton, 2005; Pant, 2000).

The first war of independence broke out in Indian subcontinent in the year 1857 to end the British Raj in India, where the Ranas played a significant role to help the British by rendering their support. In return, the British bestowed the earlier ceded Terai region to the Ranas as a token of gratitude for such subservient service. Possibly, with the inclusion of the western Terai region, the present boundaries of Nepal were drawn in 1860 (Pradhan, 1991).

An era of Rana regime began in 1846 with Jang Bhadur Rana who was the commander of the armed force who assassinated all the important courtiers of the palace and then seized the position and the power of the prime minister and adopted the title Rana. After that incident, the succeeding prime minister was appointed hereditarily within the Ranas (Rai, 2017). An oligarchy Rana regime lasted for almost 104 years after they came to power. Jang Bahadur Rana introduced and

institutionalized the '*Mulki Ain*³' the law code in 1854, in order to assimilate different castes/communities of Nepal by including them in the Hindu caste hierarchy of hill order. The newly established law brought all the hill and plain communities under the fold of Hindu caste structure forcibly (Riaz and Basu, 2010). The highest position in the hierarchy was occupied by the hill Hindu, whereas the lower position was held by the alcohol and buff consuming Newar castes of the Kathmandu valley and Indian caste of the plains (Talouine, 2009). The newly established law transformed the status of the territorial tribe group *jats* (tribes) into the social group of *jati* (caste). All the groups were graded in the layers of caste hierarchy on the basis of purity and pollution (Hofer cited in Millard, 2008).

Nepal went through a tough time during the Rana period, when the country was kept under isolation in various ways, as outsiders were not permitted to enter Nepal, development was impeded and the voice of the opposition group was suppressed in order to hold a good relationship with the British East India Company (Lawoti, 2007). The regime completely lacked representative politics which was supposed to be given to its citizen (Jha, 2014). They never tried to promote the education in the history of Nepal, as they knew it would threaten their power to control the country (Whelpton, 2005). This resulted in very low literacy rate of only 5 per cent in Nepal in the early 1950s (Raiz and Basu, 2007) and the institution of higher learning was viable only for ruling class.

In the course of time, strong opposition arose against the autocratic Ranas aiming to end the regime. In 1951, people successfully dethroned the Rana regime from Nepal by making an alliance between the Nepali Congress activists, the modern Nepalese intellectuals and the royal Shah family of Nepal. It was further supported by

³ *Muluki Ain* is the old legal law of Nepal.

the neighboring country India which was newly independent. In the same year, Nepal became a parliamentary democratic nation and the first parliamentary election was held in 1959. The new government was formed by the Nepali Congress under the leadership and vision of B.P. Koirala, but lasted for 18th months only, when King Mahindra Bir Bikram Shah removed him from the post of Prime Minister (Welpton, 2005). The king opted the third model of democracy instead of western democracy, as it legitimized the continuity of the traditional tyrannical rule in the name of democracy (Upreti, 2008). After the end of Rana period, the democratization process began in Nepal, but it was functional only for a year and a half after when the party-less Panchayat system was introduced in Nepal. It was believed that this phase only retrieved the shift of autocratic powers from the Ranas to the traditional monarchs (Rai, 2017).

King Mahindra Bir Bikram Shah viewed the democratic political system as incapable of improving the law and order situation of Nepal and subsequently took over the emergency powers and banned all the political parties in 1960. He introduced the Panchayat System, which indirectly closed the door for democracy permanently (Jha, 2014). The system existed for the last 30 years in order to end all forms of exploitation and to develop the nation. The basic input was to promote education, transportation and communication system across Nepal. In between many private educational institutions were opened along with one of Nepal's oldest University-Tribhuvan (1959). Consequently, the literacy rate was raised from 5 per cent to 39 per cent by 1990 and the road connectivity increased from 276 Kms. to 7330 Kms. The new constitution also declared equality before law to all Nepalese citizens and also promoted the abolishment of untouchability in 1963 (Whelpton, 2005).

Subsequently, in 1979, the protest was initiated especially by the students in the urban areas demanding the installation of democracy instead of Panchayat system in Nepal. Within a month later, a referendum was carried out to calculate the peoples' opinion on the Panchayat System which resulted in 54.7 per cent voting in favour of retaining the existing system (Raiz and Basu, 2007). In 1980 Nepal introduced universal adult franchise but the political parties were still prohibited. However, many political parties started operating secretly after the referendum. In Nepal, the caste and ethnic mobilization considerably begun since the 1980s as the government enlisted certain caste and ethnic communities to gain support for the Panchayat system (Whelpton, 2005).

Exactly, after a decade later, the Jan Andolan I, the first people's movement was triggered in Nepal on 18th February 1990. The Andolan was collectively organized by the Nepali Congress party and other Communist parties aiming to seize the absolute monarchy and restoration of democracy and multi-party system in Nepal. People from all sections of the society equally participated in the process of paradigm shift, to switch power from the palace to parliament. On April 1990, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah finally lifted the ban on political parties in Nepal and drafted the new constitution by the members nominated by the king and the leaders of Nepal Congress and the left parties (Jha, 2014). Democratic Nepal has witnessed many political upheavals within a short span of time since the installation of democracy. At first, the Congress government stayed in power for only three years and the subsequent government kept changing, failing to sustain their power and position even for a year. Nepal faced a series of unstable government from 1990 to 2002, resulting in a total of twelve different governments within the time frame of twelve years (Lawoti, 2007).

Topographically, Nepal has been divided into three different geographical zones based on its ecology and elevation. These regions are separated in terms of their physical landscape, which run horizontal to one another from West to East of Nepal. It comprises the mountains, hills (middle region) and terais (lowlands). These regions are inhabited by numerous groups of people with different demography, social, cultural and political condition (Rai 2017). The mountain or the upper part of Nepal was thinly populated with the tribes like *Bhotiyas and Sherpas*. They are similar to Tibetans in terms of their socio-cultural, racial, religious and linguistic pattern. The hilly region comprises Hindu caste groups such as *Bahun, Chettri, Kami, Damai and Sharki* along with other ethnic communities like *Newar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Mangar, Gurung* and so on. They are all culturally identified as Nepalese. The southernmost part of the country is commonly known as *Terai or Madesh*. This region is an amalgamation of distinct groups which comprises plain Hindu caste groups (*Madhesis*) and Muslims, the indigenous ethnic groups (*Koches, Meches, Tharus, Satars, rajbhansis and Dhimals*) and the hill communities. They have migrated to this part of land especially after the 1960s when the government implemented the resettlement program (Pradhan, 1991).

Apart from this horizontal geographical division, administratively, Nepal has been divided into various developmental regions, administrative districts, VDCs and municipalities etc. A detailed discussion has been dealt in the next chapter.

2.3. Borders Contestation

There are historical references, which indicate that Sikkim had huge territory that stretched up to the present territories of Tibet Autonomous Region to Nepal and to Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Historically, the Shah rulers of Nepal made an

invasion to Sikkim multiple times between 1774 and 1810. The first settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim was at the first wave of the Gorkha invasion in 1774. However they flourished much later after the establishment of the effective Indo (British) and Sikkimese contacts in 1835 (Sinha, 1973). Initially they came up to the river Teesta and subsequently Sikkim lost some of its territories including Limbuwan⁴ and Darjeeling hills, which are now within the borders of Nepal and West Bengal respectively. Until the last decade of 19th century even the Chumbi Valley was a part of Sikkim (Sinha: 275). The political boundaries between these two kingdoms have not been the same throughout the period of historical evolution in the past. At one point of time, parts of Nepal were under the jurisdictions of Sikkim and similarly the parts of Sikkim were under Nepal (Subba, 2008).

As has been discussed earlier, King Pirthivi Narayan Shah consolidated his kingdom in Nepal in the mid 19th century and extended its boundaries to the east and west of the country. Meanwhile, the Gorkha generals overpowered Namgyal authority in Sikkim and started controlling the territories of the west of river Teesta in 1789. Sikkim regained its lost territories in 1817 with the help of British which forced them to leave Sikkim's east of river Mechi under the Treaty of Sagauli⁵ (1816). But within a few years they returned to eastward because of the British policy to locate Nepalese on the Eastern Himalayas. The British took Darjeeling as a friendship token from Sikkim in 1835 and converted into sanatorium. After that the British had started many developmental projects that encouraged huge Nepalese migration (ibid: 78).

⁴The landmass of Limbuwan was lying between the Arun River and the Teesta River. It was the land of Limboos/Limbus, which was popularly known as '*PalloKirat*' by the Nepali natives of the region (Risley 1894; Chemjong 1976; Sanyal 1979; Shrestha 1985; Subba 2003; Pradhan 1991).

⁵An agreement between the Gorkha chief and British Indian government that ended Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16).

Ashley Eden (1864) reported that formally Sikkim was a considerably huge country that extended from the Arun River on the west to the Taigon pass on the east, from Tibet on the north to Kissingunge in Purneah on the south. Further Risley (1885) clarified that the Mochu valley or Amochu or Chumbi valley was very much part of Sikkim. Sikkim has also lost a bulk of its original territory including both Darjeeling and Chumbi valley.

In 1861, a treaty was signed at Tumlong between Britain and Kingdom of Sikkim, which declared Sikkim a de-facto protectorate of the British. In 1888, the British Government appointed John Claude White as the first political officer in Sikkim for administrative purposes. For the development of Sikkim, a large number of labourers were brought from the neighboring countries of Nepal and Bhutan, where slavery was a common practice. Besides that, the newly discovered land became a favorable place for many criminals and political fugitives of the surrounding regions. Sikkim provided them with new opportunities and offered a decent earning through better wages. With the advent of the British, the demographic composition of Sikkim underwent rapid changes as Nepali settlers soon outnumbered the Lepcha- Bhutia combined population in Sikkim (Sinha, 1975: 9). However, Pradhan (1982) and Hutt (1997) argues that there were already large numbers of Nepalis present in Sikkim and Darjeeling, and the culture of people coming and going between these border regions was much more visible. Risley (1894) accounted, under the British inspiration the Nepalese began to settle in western and southern parts of Sikkim, because they found them loyal, trustworthy and obedient as compared to people of Tibetan origin (Bhotias) and the Indian plains.

An increasing population across borders was highly responsible for short distance, close affinity and unrestricted provisions of entry and exit (Subadi, 1991).

Weiner (1973) also mentions that such variables are crucial as one's decisions are intimately influenced by each of these factors. The Nepalese movement was mainly eastward between the late 18th and early 20th centuries as their permanent settlement was outside the kingdom's modern borders. They drifted mainly eastward because they have strong connection in terms of culture, language, religion, agriculture and occupational pattern (Hutt, 2005: 110-111).

2.4. Nepalese Migration Between India and Nepal

Before the Muslim invasions in India, the migration from India to Nepal was confined to the kings, nobles and their attendants. During the Muslim invasions in India, a large section of Indian population took shelter in Nepal to avoid proselytization into Islam and political persecutions. Most of the intruding refugees were Hindus, who encroached on the fertile lands of the indigenous tribes and convert them to the slave of hills. Later on, they introduced the caste system and conversion of original inhabitants into Hinduism which greatly affected the socio-religious structure of Buddhism and Animism (Kansakar, 1984: 49).

The migration between these two countries was always encouraged by its geographical feasibility, easy accessibility and open borders. The movement of people between these two nations relied more on economic reasons than political and religious from the last 18th century. The period of unification and expansion of Nepal's territory during late 18th century to early 19th century was accompanied by movement and settlement of the Nepalese in Darjeeling, Sikkim, Kumaon and Garhwal. The economic opportunities were the leading factors behind such huge Nepalese emigration, which started after the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-15. The

territorial expansion was completely stopped after signing the treaty of Sugauli in 1816 (Kansakar, 1984: 50-51).

By the time, the war ended in 1815, about 4,650 Nepalese soldiers took service with the company in response to the invitations of the British commanders (Pemble, 1971: 348). Later on, the British raised three Gorkha regiments that included Gurkha Rifles I, II, and III (Tucker, 1957: 86-87).

The British kept the Indo- Nepal border open between both countries in order to ensure the unrestricted migration of Nepalese hill people and unrestricted flow of raw materials from Nepal for Indian industries. India maintained the status quo of the open border after independence and formalized the movement of people and goods by the Indo- Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 (Kansakar, 1984: 66). The movement of people, goods and cultures between these countries continued without any difficulty and interruption. The relations are not the handiwork of treaties or agreement but natural and enclosed by common geography, history and heritage of religion and culture (Sharma, 1970: 2).

After India's Independence many seasonal labourers came to the hills of Darjeeling and Sikkim to carry oranges from the remote villages to the nearest towns of Nepal. Tea plantation in the hills of Darjeeling was the other major factor, because the production of tea is labour intensive. Since Darjeeling hills had limited number of potential labourers, they were forced to employ workers from outside, which also facilitated migration. Till 1876, the Britishers had established ten tea industries where they had employed 19,000 workers out of which over 90 per cent came from the hills of Eastern Nepal (Hutt, 1997: 112). Gradually, the diasporic Nepali population increased each season because most of them stayed back. Most of the immigrants

were from the economically marginalized section. But, after Nepal was hit by Maoist insurgency in 1996, many rich people were forced to migrate due to the fear of extortion and loot. In India, there are many Nepalis densely populated settlements with retired army personnel where they have been actively encouraged to settle by British (Subba, 2000: 225) in many parts of the India in place like Kumaon, Garhwal, Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, etc. (Dutt, 1981; Devi, 2007).

Table 2.1: Emigration from Nepal to India in Different Census Periods

Census	Absentee population living in India	Percentage of total absentee of the country living in India	Male	Female
1952/54	157323	79.4	87.7	12.3
1981	375196	93.1	82.1	17.9
1991	587243	89.2	83.8	16.2
2001	589050	77.3	88.4	11.6

Source, Kanaskar, 2003: 110- 113.

The above information (Kanaskar, 2003) indicates that the out-migration from Nepal has increased considerably in-between 1981 census (3,75,196) and 1991 census (5,87,243). The 1981 census recorded the highest percentage of Nepalese emigrants with 93.1 per cent in India; a marginally lower 89.2 per cent was recorded in 1991 census. However in 2001, the percentage of total absentees from Nepal living in India has come down to 77.3 per cent. Nevertheless, the overall scenario indicates that since 1952 to 2001 census, with more than 77 per cent of total outmigration population of Nepal living in India, it can be concluded that India is the most favored destination for Nepal.

Similar facts have been reported by Bhattarai (2007) taking reference of the census of 1991, which revealed that the number of emigrants from Nepal has increased considerably in between the periods of 1981- 1991 with almost 3.6 per cent of the total population of the country. India has been always a favorable destination and nearly 9 out of 11 of these emigrants went to India, which is around 89.2% of the total emigrants. However, they started heading to other parts of the world particularly since Nepal was hit by Maoist insurgency in 1996, but the first choice of 80 per cent illiterate, unskilled and marginal population of rural Nepal was migrating to India as a preferred destination mainly due to its proximity, open border, cultural affinities, easily convertible currency and affordable traveling option

There is no evidence, which reveals an increasing number of emigrants in India during 1951-1961. Even Dixon (1977:123) observes a constant rate of emigration in 1971. The same is true in the period between 1971 -1981 because of the nativist movement in India. India had over 1.5 million Nepalis population by 1970 in which one in every ten Nepalis had emigrated. The annual rate of migration in 1961 was 82,000 persons per year out of that 20,000 remained in India permanently each year. While the total Nepalese living outside Nepal might reach almost 2.5 million, the majority were emigrated and settled in India (Dutt, 1981). Many ethnographic studies done in Nepal revealed the people from the central hills and mountains crossed the considerable distance and settled in northeastern parts of India (Bruce, 1934; Caplon, 1970; Fuhrer-Haimendorf, 1975; Macfarlane, 1976; Ross, 1981; Dahal, 1983; Fricke, 1986).

It was mainly due to socio-cultural similarities and open border with no restrictions of people's movement in either side where people have easier access and interaction (Kansakar, 1984: 21) and later on, the unrestricted rule of entry and exit

has played an important role in the flow of military recruitment from Nepal to India (Subba, 2000).

2.4.1. Military Recruitment

The Anglo- Nepal war of 1814-16 opens the doors for Nepalese recruitment in the British Indian Army. After that British actively recruited Nepalese into the imperial armies in whose service Nepalese travelled throughout India and abroad, which led to some permanent Nepalese settlement abroad. The Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-1825 also promoted the huge number of Nepalese recruitment into the British army. After this war the British, successfully gained control over the entire northeastern part of India, which further enhanced the value and demand of the Nepalese army personnel. The Nepalese were available as regular army, police, constabulary etc. to restore the law and order situation (Sinha & Subba, 2003: 15-16). During the World Wars, the government encouraged Nepalese emigration for army recruitment. During the First World War, 1.1 lakh Nepalese were brought to India to serve British India (Dutt, 1981).

Kansakar (1984: 63) argues only a few young adults of the military classes were left in the Nepal hills during World War I and II which induced shortage of able-bodied youth in the hills particularly amongst the Magars and Gurungs. It resulted in drastic decline in agricultural activities and a shortage of food grains. More than two lakh Nepalese took part in the war with a casualty of twenty thousand men. In recognition of this assistance, the British government gave Nepal an annual gift of Rs. one lakh. The amount was further increased to 1.2 lakhs after World War II (Mansergh and Moon, 1970).

Most of the retired and released personnel from war, stayed in India instead of going back to Nepal. They worked as police, Para-military, security guards in factories and offices where they had a great demand for their honesty, loyalty and hard work (Kansakar, 1984: 10). During Rana regime (1846- 1951), especially when Jung Bahadur Rana was in power, Nepal restricted such recruitment in the foreign army, as the emigration rate was very low (Subedi, 1991).

The Nepalese government was against such recruitments and it was extremely difficult to get Nepalese in the Indian army. If somehow they managed to recruit in British Indian Army, the Nepalese government took strong actions against them by putting to death and confiscating property whenever they returned home during leaves (Mojumdar, 1973: 11). Moreover, it was difficult for them to return after discharged from army service, most of them stayed back in India to work either as watchmen or even to work in the police under the government or in the other position available to them. Indian merchants had good faith in the Gorkhas because of their honesty and servitude attitude (Bruce, 1934: 200). Out of the 10,932 Nepalese discharged after World War I, only 35 per cent returned home (Mojumdar, 1975: 73), and the remaining settled permanently in India. Somehow such restriction had gone after Bir Samsher Jang Bahadur Rana came into power in 1885 (Subedi, 1991: 92). The fall of the Rana regime (1846-1951) in Nepal in 1951 permitted huge number of Nepalese to return to their homeland who were exiled in India since a long time (Kansakar, 1984).

Owing to the harassment meted out by the Nepal government to the families of the Nepalese serving in the Indian army and to make the recruitment easier, their families were encouraged to establish their settlements in the hills of India (Kansakar, 1984: 51). Lahore located in present day Pakistan was the first and biggest recruitment center for the Nepalese of Western Nepal. Even today many young men

leave the hills of Nepal to try their luck at the recruitment center for the army and paramilitary forces like Assam Rifles, BSF and the Central Reserve Police Force (Subba, 2000). As mentioned the socio-cultural similarities and open border were the main factors that pushed the Nepalese to serve in a foreign land.

2.4.2. Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950

The British government kept the Indo-Nepal border open due to two main reasons. Firstly, to encourage the Nepalese from the hilly region of Nepal for recruitment in the Indian army. Secondly, for free flow of British and Indian manufactured goods into Nepal as well as to Tibet, as Nepal was the only easy and accessible route from India. But, the discovery of the Chumbi Valley route in 1904 turned the attention of Britishers towards the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim (Kansakar, 1984: 9; Datta, 2014).

Both countries accepted unrestricted entry and exit without passport and visa in either direction and stay as long as they desire. The Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950 has further instigated such free movement (Subedi, 1991: 90). The peace and friendship treaty was signed on July 32, 1950. Article 7 of this treaty states the government of India and Nepal agree to grant on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same privileges in terms of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce (Bhattraï, 2007).

The concept of open border has economically benefited both the nations. Those engaged in agriculture have economically benefited from the sale and purchase of agriculture and livestock products in hat bazaar (town) taking place regularly in different places on either side. It has also provided employment to the people on both sides in the transport sector as well (Kansakar, 1984: 16- 21).

Many scholars from Darjeeling and Sikkim raised an issue about how it becomes a hurdle for a clear and unambiguous Indian identity. Scholars also believed that as long as these provisions of the 1950 treaty exist, the Nepali-speaker of India would be for all practical purposes treated as nationals of Nepal. Even though Nepalis settled in India prior to the implementation of the Indian constitution in 1950 were declared as natural citizens of India, the general notion of other Indians is that Indian Nepalis are immigrants. This suspicion that Indian Nepalis are actually Nepali citizen was almost evident in various writings that appeared in the Calcutta-based newspapers and magazines during the Gorkhaland movement of the 1980's (Subba, 2002: 131).

2.5. Nepalese Settlement in Sikkim and Periphery

The present section deals with the historical background of the study that helps to understand how the Nepali-speaking population flourished outside its mainland and settled in the neighboring regions in general and Sikkim in particular. History depicts that Nepal had an extended relations with Sikkim and Darjeeling and the people of the region came from different parts of Nepal in different epochs led by various circumstances. However there are references of some Nepalis communities like the Limbus and Mangars already existing before the huge Nepali migration (Hutt, 1977). Such extended relation and the free flow of people in the border areas created a cultural similarity among the people of Sikkim and Nepal. They have common ethnic groups, language, religion, tradition, rituals, belief system including the culture of folk music and instruments.

Nepali is an umbrella term under which there are many castes and communities, the Damai community is one of them. The history of Damai community

cannot be understood in isolation. Hence, for locating Damai community in the region, it is important to understand the history and society of Nepalese in the region irrespective of the regional boundaries. It helps in a comprehensive understanding of Nepalese regarding their settlement in Sikkim led by different socio-economic and political forces in both Nepal and Sikkim.

The Nepali population increased in Sikkim since the 19th century, however they began to influx in the beginning of the 17th century (Phadnis, 1980). Sinha (1973), states that the initial Nepali settlement in Sikkim in 1774 was the first move of the Gorkha invasion. In 1788 Nepali Gorkha soldiers invaded Sikkim and had overran most of its territory from the *terai* to the hills but was unable to annex the territories surrounding the present day state's capital, Gangtok. The Gorkha took some parts of Sikkim including Limbuana, which became the permanent part of Nepal and Rabdentse, the former capital of Sikkim in 1788 despite the peace treaty signed in 1775 (Tuker, 1957). Hutt (1997) argues that the people's migration to eastward from Eastern Nepal probably began on a comparatively small scale as a response to the Gorkha conquest of a district mainly inhabited by the *Kirati* (Rais and Limbus) population. The Gorkha conquered the Darjeeling hills and the portion of Western Sikkim in 1780 and occupied these territories until 1816.

Nepalese were encouraged to settle by the British colonial administration because they valued the community for agricultural work, clearing the forests, tea garden labourers and construction work on roads and bungalows. More importantly, they found them loyal, trustworthy and obedient as compared to the people of Tibetan origin (Bhotias) and the Indian plains. Gradually the Nepalis became one of the dominant groups of this region including Sikkim and Darjeeling and they have had a great influence upon the socio-economic, cultural, religious and political scenario of

the entire region. However, the population size may have varied from region to region (Sinha & Subba, 2003: 12-13).

Nepalis contributed for many changes in the field of agriculture and religious faith, by overshadowing the prevailing pastoralism and semi-settlement agricultural pattern by introducing settled agriculture and following the Hindu faith. Along with this, they also brought distinctions of a highly stratified social order based on the caste system. The Nepali settlement created a new ethnic balance by 1891 (Phadnis, 1980: 1237- 1238).

Sinha (1975: 83) also states Nepalis became the dominant ethnic group consisting nearly 75 per cent of its total population combined with 25 per cent Lepcha- Bhotia population, and they also enjoyed the political, administrative and economic gains. Sinha (1975: 9) further states that with the advent of the British, the demographic composition of Sikkim underwent rapid changes. The Nepali settlers soon outnumbered the hitherto claimed indigenous communities. Pradhan (1982) also argues that there were already large numbers of Nepalis in the district and the way he produced the kinds of literature written in Nepali in 1815 and 1826 supports the idea of much coming and going between Eastern Nepal and Darjeeling.

According to the census 1891, Sikkim recorded that 51 percent of its population were Nepalis and remaining were *Lepchas, Bhotias and Limbus* (Risley, 1894). Rustamji (1971: 141) reveals a slightly higher number of Nepalis population in Sikkim at the end of 19th century i.e. two-third of its total population. Written some three years ahead in the fourth decennial census of 1911, White (1909) mentions so far the greater number of the inhabitants of Sikkim were the *paharis* (people residing in hills) who number nearly 62.5 per cent of an estimated population. The last census

figure of the ethnic affiliation is available for 1931, where out of the total population 77.2 per cent were Nepalese. The official figure was increased by 26.4 per cent of the total population of Sikkim from 1891- 1931.

The Nepali population in Sikkim remained probably stagnant about half of its total population till the year 1931. The census figure of the year 1971 recorded their population reached to 64 per cent. Similarly in the case of Darjeeling, Nepalese population constitutes more than half of its total population and in Bhutan more than one-third.

The Nepali castes in Sikkim are represented by the *Bahun, Chhetri, Kami, Damai, Sarki and Majhi*. In addition there are many other *Matwali* communities like *Rai, Limbu, Mangar, Gurung* etc. Due to diversity in socio- cultural distinctiveness and dialects, Nepali is used as their lingua franca and it was said that such linguistic similarity was the main factor that facilitated the high rate of cross border migration (Subedi, 1991: 90).

Historically, there are many references of factors that contributed towards Nepalese settlement in Sikkim that basically includes the manpower required for infrastructure and agriculture development, labour requirement for tea garden etc. and similar culture and language. These factors pushed the Nepalese migration towards the other parts of the Eastern Himalayan regions including Sikkim, Darjeeling and Nepal. Nepalis soon became one of the most dominant ethnic groups. A detailed discussion on these factors has been presented in the following section.

2.5.1. Manpower for Agriculture and Infrastructure

The Nepalese settlement in the northeast including Sikkim was not always confined to ex-soldiers but also included many other Nepalese peasants particularly those from

eastern Nepal (Dutta, 1981). The British recognized Nepalese as hill cultivators and could constitute an ideal group with which to penetrate and form strategic buffers in the northeast. Their migration brought a technological change in agricultural practices because until that none of the communities in Sikkim had the know-how about settled cultivation (Chakrabarti, 2012: 3). In Sikkim, Nepalis were the first who introduced hill terracing and pioneer agriculture. Their settlement in the colonial period accelerated demographic change to enhance colonial security (Dutta, 1981).

The Border Roads Organization (BRO) found Nepalese as a most suitable option for the construction of many developmental projects such as construction of roads and bridges. Such process further added Nepalese population into the hill regions of northeast India including Bhutan. Dutta (1981) argues that Nepalese settlement in the northeast has not been part of an insidious scheme, but it was the outcome of development process itself. Being a poor and mobile hill community, they played a part in frontier areas, where roads and towns were being built and expanded and the areas were being more fully exploited.

Notwithstanding, the Nepalese were also encouraged to settle in Sikkim as to counterbalance the Bhotias influx. Herbert Risley (1894) states, in terms of religious conflict between the Hindu Nepalese and the Buddhist Bhotias where he predicts that the Hindu Nepalese would have their way where religious play a leading part. In Sikkim he predicted that Hinduism will assuredly outcast Buddhism and prayer wheel of the lama will give place to the sacrificial implements of the Brahmins (Sinha and Subba, 2003: 16).

However, such flow of manpower into the neighboring kingdom had the negative consequences on agriculture and food production in the hills of Nepal. The

immigration of Nepalese to Sikkim had many negative implications with significant losses of revenue and productivity of the land in Nepal.

2.5.2. Socio- Cultural Affinity

People usually manage to move in areas where they have similar culture, language and have a kinship bond. Nepal and India share common religious, beliefs, and landscape as they observe common festivals and religious shrines. There are considerable ethnic similarities among the people of India and Nepal. The hill communities of Nepal and India, especially Eastern Himalayan region are similar to each other in terms of their socio-cultural, religious and linguistic matters (Subedi, 1991: 88).

Subba (2000) and Kansakar (1984) also states that since long time back, these two kingdoms used to exchange their royal members through matrimony in order to maintain strong socio-cultural bond. Kumar Pradhan (1991) stated that there was matrimonial alliance between the ruling class population of Sikkim with that of Nepal. The second king, Tansung Namgyal (1670- 1700) had married three girls, each from Tibet, Bhutan and Limbuan (Nepal). The Limbu bride was accompanied by seven Limbu girls who were taken as wives by the highest Kazis and Ministers of Sikkim and with the entry of the Limbu girls into their new home, Su Him in Limbu, the land came to be known as Sukhim, later Anglicized as Sikkim, in fact, Sukhim rather than Sikkim.

The kinship network across the border of Nepal particularly in tarai and North India is relatively intense and marriage between them is common. But, in case of the hills, the situation was different. It has been observed that in the middle hills, upper class Hindus tended to marry in Assam, Sikkim, and Darjeeling areas. There was a

tradition prevailing among the Nepali ruling classes to marry in India, which helped to represent a continual and active reinforcement of the cultural ties between people of Nepal and India (Subedi, 1991: 91).

However, despite many years of settlement in Sikkim, the Nepalis did not enjoy many rights as other indigenous communities like the Lepcha, Bhutia and Tsong (Limboo) till 1961. They were equated with other communities when the then King granted them the status of Sikkim Subject⁶. This in turn becomes the basis for acquiring the citizenship of India vide the Sikkim Citizenship Order, 1975 issued by the government of Indian (Thapa, 2012: 11). After that Sikkim got many constitutional provisions. In 1978, Lepcha and Bhutia in Sikkim were included into the list of Scheduled Tribes and the Nepali communities like Kami, Damai, Majhi, Sarki and Lohar got the status of Scheduled Castes under the Scheduled Castes Order, 1978 (article 341) and Scheduled Tribes Order, 1978 (article 342) (Arora, 2007). Therefore, Damai community of Sikkim now enjoys the constitutional status of SC and avails the benefits of protective discrimination meant for the social category.

⁶The Maharaja of Sikkim provided the Sikkim Subject Certificate to the different indigenous ethnic communities of Sikkim on 3rd July 1961 under the Sikkim Subject Regulation 1961 vide the Government of Sikkim Notification No. 156/S-61, in order to grant the legal Sikkimese status to all these indigenous communities (Sikkim Darbar Gazette, dated 3rd July 1961).

CHAPTER 3

Understanding Society and Folk Musical Community in Nepal and Sikkim

3.1. Introduction

This chapter basically deals with the social structure of the Nepali society and attempts to locate the Damai community that is folk musical community in Nepal and Sikkim within it. The first section of the chapter contains a brief socio-economic profile of Nepal and Sikkim, which will be followed by a discussion on social structure of Nepali society in general and Damai Community in particular. The section also deals with their musical community and the origin and historical significance of folk music.

3.2. Nepal: A Brief Profile

Nepal is a landlocked country located in the Central Himalayan Mountains and is sandwiched between two rapidly changing countries India and China. It covers a landmass area of 1, 47, 181 sq. km and is fragmented into the three geographical areas that comprises the hills (*Pahad*) region, which consists of the small mountains that varies from one another in terms of elevation; the mountain region incorporating the mighty Himalayas range that includes the portion of northern part of Nepal; and the terrain in the southern plain bordering India.

The National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) 2011, recorded Nepal's total population as 2, 64, 94504 with an annual average growth rate of 1.35 per cent with the population density of 180 average number of population per square kilometers. The sex ratio exists at 94.2 per cent. The NPHC census 2011 further

detailed that the literacy rate of Nepal is considerably gone up as compared to 2001, which has increased from 54.1 per cent in 2001 to 65.9 percent in 2011. Comparatively the male literacy rate, 75.1 per cent is higher than the female literacy rate of 57.4 per cent with a gender gap of 17.7 in literacy. The highest literacy rate of 86.3 per cent has been found in the Nepal's capital district of Kathmandu and the lowest literacy rate of 47.8 per cent is recorded in Humla district, located in mid western part of Nepal.

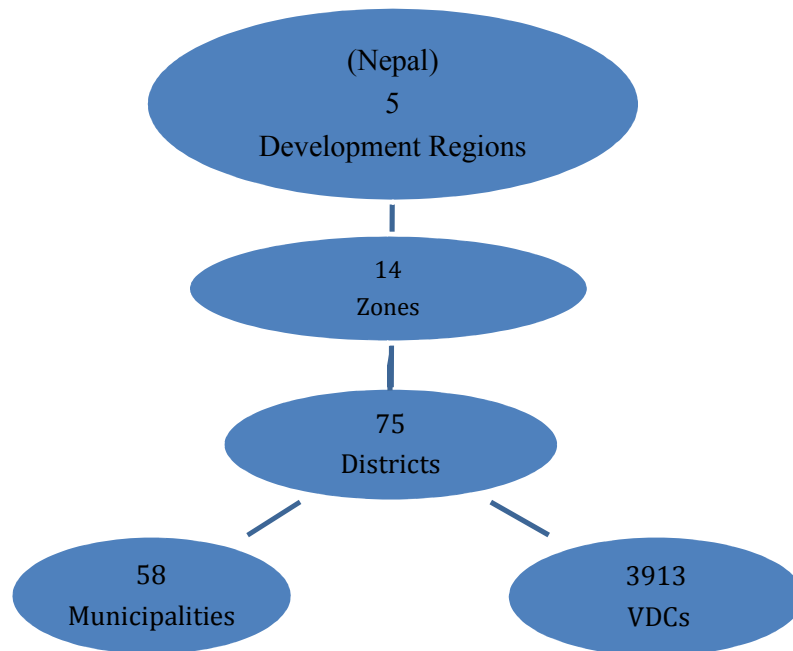
Nepal is one of the underdeveloped countries and ranks in the 31st position in the list of the poorest countries of the world as reported by the World Economic outlook, April, 2019, with its per capita GDP at Rs. 10, 03335 (USD 1004) in the fiscal year 2017-18 (Nepal Economic Survey 2017/18). Nepal confronted huge number of out migration especially since 1990, basically due to the lack of proper employment opportunities and also faced severe problem of insurgencies. According to NPHC 2011, in every four households in the country and at least one of its members is found to be absent or living outside of country. The household size of Nepal has decreased from 5.44 in 2001 to 4.88 in 2011. Comparatively the female-headed households increased by about 10.86 per cent from 14.87 per cent in 2001 to 25.73 percent in 2011 as the trend of out migration is prevalent among the male members of the society. The decreasing household size and the increasing female-headed households in the country are somehow linked to the increased rate of absent population due to out- migration in the country.

Organizationally/ Administratively, Nepal is divided into five development regions viz, Eastern Development Region, Central Development Region, Western Development Region, Mid-Western Development Region and Far-Western Development Region. These are further classified into 14 zones, 75 districts, 58

municipalities, which is further sub-divided into 3913 Village Development Committees (VDCs) highlighted in Diagram 3.1. The country has diverse ethnic groups with several castes, tribes, races and religious backgrounds. Nepal comprises 126 castes/ethnic groups, 123 languages are spoken as mother tongues and 10 religious groups co-exist with peace, harmony and unity (NPCH, 2011).

Diagram 3.1

Administrative Division of Nepal



Source: Prepared by Author.

3.2.1. Religion and Languages

Nepal consists of Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid races that are mostly Hindus, Buddhists, Animists and Muslims. The religious diversity was much more visible after Nepal became a secular state. There are two major religious groups in Nepal that includes Hindus (81.3 per cent) and Buddhist (9 per cent) along with other religious groups. That comprises Islam (4.4 per cent), Kirat (3.1 per cent), Christianity (1.4 per cent),

Prakriti (0.5 per cent) and a section of the population also believes and practices religions like Bon, Jainism, Bahai and Sikhism (NPHC, 2011).

It has been recorded that Nepal has 106 languages and dialects, of which the Indo-Aryan language family constitutes 79.15 per cent, which includes Nepali (48.6 %), Maithili (12.45 %), Bhojpuri (7.5 %), and Tharu (5.95 %). Tibeto- Burman languages accounts to 18.45 per cent that comprises Tamang (5.2 %), Newar (3.6 %), Magar (3.4%), Rai- Kirati (2.2 %), Gurung (1.5 %) and Limbu (1.4 %). There are many other languages and dialects spoken by a small number of people. It is said that 58 languages are spoken by less than 10,000 speakers and 28 by less than 1000 (Nepal Census, 2001).

3.2.2. Ethnic Distribution

There are more than hundred castes and ethnic groups inhabiting in Nepal. There are no such castes and ethnic groups in Nepal which form a single majority group. The largest ethnic group in Nepal is Chhetri which constitutes 16.59 per cent of total population followed by Hill- Brahman (12.17 %), Magar (7.12 %), Tharu (6.55 %) and so forth. The eight ethnic groups belong to the service castes viz; Kami constitutes 4.75 per cent followed by Damai (1.78 %) and Sarki (1.41 %). There are few other small ethnic groups viz; Sunuwar, Lohar and Sudi have population below 1,00,000 (NPHC, 2011) and 23 groups have less than 10,000 population (Pradhan & Shrestha, 2005).

3.2.3. Caste Hierarchy

Nepal has caste based social structure. The origin of caste system in Nepal can be traced back to the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla (1382- 1395). He introduced the caste system in Nepal, under which all the Hindu groups were divided into different

castes' hierarchy. Each caste groups present in the strata were separated in terms of their occupational pattern, eating habits, marriage, association and residence. Later on Jung Bahadur Rana made some changes in the caste system by adding the non-Hindus groups into the system including the inhabitants of high mountain region influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and the other inhabitants in remote forest and valley areas having Shamanistic or Animistic beliefs. Further he introduced *Muluki Ain* in 1854, which was a historical, legal and traditional document by which all the high and low-status people in Nepal were judged. It became the major determinant of their social status, life chances and, identity (Bennett, et. al., 2006). At present the population of Nepal has been classified into 64 castes having different functions and occupational patterns (Sharma, 2010).

Chettri (1999) identified that caste system in Nepal fragmented the people into three-tiered vertical order viz., *Tagadhari* or twice-born castes, *Matwalis* (ethnic/tribal groups) and the Untouchables. Whereas, the classification by Andras Hofer (2004) divided the caste system into four hierarchy:

- (i) *Tagadhari* (caste wearing sacred thread)- Upadhaya Brahmin, Thakuri, Jaisi Brahmin, Chhetri, Sanyasi, Dew Bhajus (Newar Brahmin) and many other Newar castes who wear *Janai* (holy cord).
- (ii) *Matwali* (Alcohol drinkers caste)- they are further subdivided into two categories i.e. non- enslavable alcohol drinkers or *namasinyamatwali* and enslavable alcohol drinkers or *masinyamatwali*. Magar, Gurung, Sunwar etc. falls under the former category and Tharu, Haya, Kumal and Gharti were the *Masinya Matwali*.
- (iii) *Paninachalne chhoichittohalnunaparna* (impure but touchable caste)- Kasai, Kusle, Hindu Dhobi and Kulu.

(iv) *Paninachalne chhoichittohalnuparna* (impure and untouchable caste)-
 Kami, Damai, Sarki, Gaina, Badi, Kandara, Pode and Chayme.

The higher castes among the impure caste was Kasai followed by Kusle, Hindu Dhobe, Kulu, Kami, Sarki, Damai and so on. Chayme, the scavenger was lowest in the caste hierarchy (Subedi, 2012). The hierarchical form within Nepali caste system has been presented in following diagram.

Diagram 3.2

Pyramid of Nepali Caste Hierarchy



Source: Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal, 2006.

3.2.4. Service Castes

There are many service castes in the Nepali caste system, who are mostly known as the occupational or artisan groups, and each caste name denotes the type of work a community or group does. They had a traditional inter-caste relation with other higher caste and had been indebted to a certain amount of labour to the upper caste households and in return, they were provided with a fixed amount of food, clothes and other basic needs after each harvest and rituals. Such traditional caste based

occupation used to be hereditary and intergenerational. They are considered as impure and untouchable because they are placed very low in the caste hierarchy. This group consists of many castes like *Kami*, *Damai*, *Sarki*, *Gaina*, *Badi* etc. inhabiting and wide spread all over the country. Each of these castes possessed expertise and specialized in different kinds of occupation such as Kami (blacksmith) who makes and repair agricultural implementation, arms, construction tools for farmers, masons and carpenters, Damai sew clothes and play musical instruments called Naumati Baja/ Panchai Baja during social occasions, Sharki (cobbler) make shoes and deals with leather works and so on. Till recent past, all the service castes together served the community in sustaining basic needs of the society.

3.3. Sikkim: A Brief Profile

Sikkim is the 22nd state of the union of India and is sandwiched between kingdom of Nepal on the West and Bhutan in the East, the famous hill station of Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of West Bengal in the South and autonomous region of Tibet in the northern borders of the state. Geographically, Sikkim is located in the westernmost part of the Eastern Himalayan and it has a total area of 7096 sq. kilometers, which extends about 113 kilometers in length and 64 kilometers in breadth (Gurung, 2011: 29).

According to Census 2011, the population of the state is 6,10,577 out of which 53 per cent are males and the rest are females. Out of them majority i.e. 74.84 per cent are residing in the rural areas and the remaining one-fourth lives in urban areas. The sex ratio of the state is 890 females per thousand males and literacy rate is 81.42 per cent, which is above the national average.

For administrative purposes, the state of Sikkim is divided into four districts and twelve subdivisions. This is further bifurcated into Gram Panchayat Units (GPUs), Municipals and Urban Blocks. There are 166 GPUs in the state, which are further subdivided into 905 Panchayat Wards (SSEC, 2006).

Politically Sikkim was ruled by the Namgyal⁷ Dynasty from 1642 to 1975, and became a part of the Indian union with effect from 26th April 1975. The meaning and the interpretation of word Sikkim is different in different languages. It was believed that the word Sikkim has been derived from the Limboo or Limbu word “Su-Khim” which means “New Home”, Bhutias refer it as “Denzong” or “Demazong” meaning “valley of rice”. The Lepchas called it “Mayel Lyang” meaning the land of hidden paradise (Subba, 2008).

3.3.1. Ethnic Composition

The population of Sikkim comprises three main ethnic groups viz., Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalis. The plainsmen who have migrated from different parts of the country also form a sizable portion of population who are basically the business class community. The Lepchas claim to be the original inhabitant of Sikkim (Mainwaring, 1971). Historically, the Bhutias came from Tibet and established the kingdom in 1642. The Nepalese were probably the last who brought into this land after the Lepchas and the Bhutias (Mullard, 2009). But, Michael Hutt (2005) counter argued stating that, there were few Nepali ethnic communities such as Limbus and Magars, who were already present before a large number of Nepalese were encouraged to settle in Sikkim.

⁷Sikkim was ruled by the Namgyal Monarchy (also called the Chogyal Monarchy), founded by the fifth-generation descendants of Guru Tashi, a prince of the Minyak House who came to Sikkim from the Kham district of Tibet Chogyal means 'righteous ruler,' and was the title conferred upon Sikkim's Buddhist kings (Rai, 2013).

A. C. Sinha (1973) classified the Nepalese community in Sikkim into three ethnic stocks including the Gorkhalis, the Kiratis, and the Newaris. All these ethnic groups settled in Sikkim during different periods of history. The Kiratis including the Magars, the Limbus and the Rais were the oldest inhabitants of the territory among all these ethnic stocks. The different social categories among the Nepalese brought two distinct religious recognitions viz., the Buddhist Nepalese consisting Limbus, Tamangs and section of Newars and the Hindu Nepalese consisting the Brahmins, Chhetris etc. The caste complexity emerged in Sikkim much later. The Newaris oftenly called as Pradhans moved to Sikkim after 1835 for trading and colonizing with their machines under the British patronage when they were defeated at the hands of the Gorkhas in Kathmandu valley (Sinha, 1973: 74).

According to SSEC (2006) there are eighteen Nepali sub-communities in total residing in present Sikkim viz., *Bahun, Chettri, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Rai, Gurung, Limboo, Magar* and so on. Among these communities, Rai comprises the highest number of population that accounts to 13.52 per cent of the total population. The combined figure of various communities within Nepali consists of 69.85 per cent of its total population, thus forming the largest ethnic group followed by Bhutia (13.08 per cent), Others (9.29 per cent) and Lepcha (7.78 per cent).

3.3.2. Religion and Language

Sikkim is a multilingual and multi-religious state with eleven official languages viz., Nepali, Lepcha, Bhutia, Gurung, Magar, Limboo, Rai, Newari, Sunwar, Sikkimese and English. Nepali is the lingua franca of Sikkim while other languages are also spoken in different parts of the state. The state comprises all the major religious groups that include Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Muslim along with tribal groups

that practice naturism and animism. Sikkim was a Buddhist kingdom before its merger with the Indian union, but after 1975 the religious diversity is much more visible in the state. Sikkim Religion census 2011 recoded that there are three major religious groups in Sikkim viz., Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. Hindu constitutes the highest percentage that is 57.76 per cent out of the state's total population followed by Buddhist 26.39 per cent and Christian 9.91 per cent. Besides, some other small religious groups like Muslims, Sikhs and Jains are also present.

3.3.3. Caste Hierarchy and Service Castes

In Nepali caste structure, the Bahun occupies the highest position in the caste hierarchy followed by the Chettri and Thakuri. There is no striking difference in terms of caste system and hierarchy among the Nepalese of Nepal and Nepalīs of Sikkim, although the caste rigidity in Sikkim is known to be more flexible and less rigid as compared to Nepal. This can be attributed partly because Sikkim was a former Buddhist kingdom, while Nepal was a Hindu kingdom, where caste system flourished rigidly. Hofer (2004) and Chettri (1999) argues similarities in Nepal in Sikkim where the Nepali are stratified into four social hierarchy caste wearing sacred thread, alcohol drinkers caste, impure but touchable caste and impure and untouchable caste, which has been discussed in earlier section.

There are many historical interpretations behind the settlement of service castes in the context of Sikkim. One such perspective states that the settlement of service castes in Sikkim may be traced back to the Shah Dynasty during the middle of the 18th century, when the Nepalese made several raids towards its eastern parts and had clashed with the local (Bhutias and Kiratas) chieftains. On the other hand,

historians claim that they came along with the *Newars* and servicing castes including *Kami, Damai, Sarki* etc. when they lost position in Kathmandu valley (Sinha, 1975).

The caste based occupation and social status of the Damai community in Sikkim is similar to Nepal, as has been discussed by Tingey (1995), Clayton (1995) and Horburger (1970), which has been mentioned in the section of Nepal.

As per SSEC 2006, the total population of service castes including Kami, Damai and Sarki is about 6.6 per cent of its total population. Population wise Kami accounts 4.26 per cent and represents the highest population followed by Damai (2.12 per cent) and Sarki (0.20 per cent). Social Category wise, all these castes have been identified as Scheduled Castes⁸ (SCs) in the state.

3.4. Damai Community and Traditional Music

Among the various servicing castes, Damai is associated with music making. They practice such traditional profession in different rituals and occasions and their occupation was traditionally the main source of their livelihood. They had a patron-client kind of relationship with other higher castes and they exchanged their services according to their need and requirement. In Nepal caste prohibition governs the playing of certain musical instruments, for example, the *Kulus* are responsible for making and testing particular kind of percussion instruments. Social convention does not allow this caste the privilege of actually playing the instruments they made. The coppersmith caste makes and trials the Narsingha, a copper trumpet, but they were not allowed to using this instrument due to social or religious constraints. Only Damai

⁸(Sikkim) Scheduled Castes Order 1978 specifies Nepali Kami, Damai, Majhi and Sharki as Scheduled Castes (Gazette of India, 1978). Scheduled Castes enjoys protective discrimination under the constitution of India.

caste is exclusively permitted for playing the narsingha during social occasions (Ballinger and Bajrachrya, 1960: 398).

Damai community is basically Hindu caste and the traditional occupation of the community is tailoring and the musician performers of the ensemble are known as Nepali Panchai baja and Naumati baja. The name Damai is taken from the large Kettledrum that characterizes the band, the Damaha (Tingey, 1995 and Clayton, 1995). However, Horburger (1970: 143) stated that it is not clear which profession they opted initially either music or tailoring. The status of the Damai clarifies an apparent ambiguity in the status of the Damai because despite being an untouchable caste, their presence on rituals occasions is indispensable due to their extreme auspiciousness. Clayton (1995) argues that generally, in Hindu culture, the qualities of purity and auspiciousness are quite distinct and one may be pure but inauspicious (like a Brahmin widow), or impure but auspicious (like Damais).

3.5. Origin of Damais

Bam (2005) narrated a myth about the origin of Damai caste, which narrates that long time back in a village, people wanted to play music in their auspicious occasions, but there was no one to take such responsibility. One day, a villager scheduled to celebrate occasion in his home and as usual he did not find the musician. He decided to end the search and he kept the copper *Damaha* and pair of wooden sticks on top of it and announced “*Look, whosoever is the first to hit this Damaha with a stick will be the musician of our society for forever*”. A huge crowd assembled to witness the occasion among which his nephew was also present with his mother. It turned out that it was this small boy who first hit the *damaha* with the stick and he became the Damai. When his mother lamented not to make her son Damai, he assured, “*Don't*

worry, he will always be given enough food to eat, new clothes to wear, and walk in front of the procession at weddings and religious ceremonies. He will not be made to plough or dig in the fields, he will be brought close to the thresholds of the god and always walk ahead of the king". After which his sister was said to be convinced and satisfied.

3.6. Naumati Baja/Panchai Baja/Damai Baja: A Brief History

The word Naumati baja, Pancaibaja, and Damai baja can be used interchangeably. The origin of this baja lies in the Middle Eastern military band (*tablkhana*), which was carried into India by Islamic promoters from the 11th century onwards, and possibly arrived in Nepal with Rajput refugees during 14th century (Tingey, 1990: 14). The first evidence that Kettledrum and natural trumpets combined in ensemble dates from the pre- Islamic Sasanian Empire, c. A. D. 600. (Farmer, 1929: 8).

Early sources depict that the ensemble is known by many names such as *nauba*, *naubat*, *tablkhana* and *naqqarakhana*. The first written source was the kitab al-aghani (Book of songs) of Al-isfahani (d. 967), which describes such an ensemble, dating from the early 10th century. Here, the term *nauba* is used to refer to a group of musicians. A little later, the term *nauba* was also adopted for the periodic performance of the Khalif's band (*tablkhana*), comprising of shawm, long straight natural trumpets, double-headed drum, large and small kettledrums and cymbals that is the exact composition of the Panchai baja (Farmer, 1929: 153-4).

The *tablkhana* and *nauba* were the prerogatives of the khalifas of the abbasid Empire (750-1258), prestigious symbols of their power and splendor, but from the second half of the tenth century, the band and the three- or five-fold *nauba* were honors which could be conferred on deserving generals, ministers and governors.

Over the next two centuries, the *tablkhana* increased in size and magnificence (Tingey, 1990).

Later on, the Turko-Afghan Muslim carried the ensemble to India from central Asia who had successfully invaded after two centuries and established the Delhi Sultanate in 1139. For the first time, an instrument appeared in a Maithili thesaurus, the *Varnaratnakara* (1325) in the section on military expeditions. Instruments listed for the *naobati or naobatika* are the *dhaka, dhola, tamaki, bheri* etc., interpreted by Dick (1984) as five types of drum, with the conch and shawm (*mahuari*). Predating the arrival of the *naqqarakhana*, much evidence suggests that an ensemble of conch and drums was prevalent in South Asia (Dick, 1984: 91).

Scholars were debating regarding the pre-Islamic existence of the shawm in India (Jairazbhoy, 1970, 1980; Dava, 1975; Flora, 1983a, 1983b; Dick, 1984). In none of its pre-Islamic usages, does the shawm manifest the characteristics shared by the *panchaibaja and naqqarakhana*. However, it is possible that the Islamic shawm took over some of the auspicious and martial functions of the conch, the latter being a very limited musical instrument. Still today the *sankha* (conch) and other four *ghanta* (bells), *dhola* (double headed drum) and a pair of shawm often featured in auspicious ensembles in many parts of South India and Orissa (*mohori*) (Deva, 1975: 178). But in Central Nepal, the conchs do not include into the temple music ensemble, but however is used as a ritual object exclusively by priests.

From the 14th century, the *naqqarakhana* became traditional across Northern India, not only as a symbol of the power of the Muslim aggressors, but the band was also adopted by their Hindu subjects, as attested by an early depiction of *naubat* on the 14th century Jain temple of *Vadiparcvanatha* at *Anahilapattana* (Marcel-Dubois,

1941: 162 cited in Tingey 1990). The function of the band was to announce the arrival of visiting dignitaries in the fortresses and city gates by blowing sound from the balconies of palaces (Flora, 1983: 208).

In India, the naqqarakhana had a prestigious status symbol reflecting the rank and power of an emperor. The ensemble of greatest pomp and magnitude symbolically graced the court of the emperor himself. The function of Akbar's *naqqarakhana* was sounding the hours of the day and bestowing the auspicious blessing on the emperor (Abu'l Fazl, 1875).

Regarding the arrival of Panchai/Naumati baja in Nepal there is no any relevant documentation. Hence, it is difficult to trace the correct date and history of this band. These instruments are believed to be carried into Nepal by the court musicians of wealthy Rajput families, who had to flee into the mid-hills of Western Nepal with their patrons due to Muslim aggression. But soon they had achieved the position of the feudal lord with the grace of their masters since 14th century onwards. The earliest evidence of the Rajput's settlement in Nepal is from Jumla- a copper-plate inscription dating from 1395 (Tingey, 1990: 20).

Although, there is no such evidence that the Rajputs brought their musicians with them, there are many material evidence which shows their artisans accompanied them. The introduction of metal working skills, the plough, wet-rice cultivation and the division of labor all date from this period (Seddon, 1979: 76).

The pair of huge kettledrums, the *dam nagara* of Gorkha Darbar provide the earliest evidence for this instrument in Nepal. This nagara was installed during political unrest and probably had a military function- possibly used to sound the call to an army, or to summon people to hear a royal edict (Tingey, 1990: 21).

Oral history says that temple music was introduced at the reign of Ram Saha, when huge numbers of temples were constructed. Musicians believe that the *Darbar Pancai baja* was initially used at the Mahadev temple, subsequently such trend was shifted to the Rajdarbar. The pancaibaja is still played in Pokharithok temple on several occasions (ibid: 22).

3.7. Socio- Cultural Significance of Naumati Baja: A Historical Overview

The customs and function of the community folk music are diverse during marriage and the sacred thread investiture ceremony. This music has been played for all the Nepali calendrical cycle of festivals including both the agricultural and sacred. Sometimes it was also incorporated to lead civil processions and all kind of festivities (Tingey, 1990). Historically, the community's folk music and instruments were being used to accompany the rituals of animal/blood sacrifice like goats, buffaloes and sheep at Devi temples provided by the Guthis. Every temple has their own festive calendar, but the involvement of community music is an indispensable part to accompaniment for numerous special rites observed on such occasion (Tingey, 1990; 1994). In Nepal, there are two main annual festivals viz., *chaitedasai*⁹ and *thulodasai*¹⁰ that has been held in honour of Kalika, the family deity (*kul- devata*) of Shah Dynasty at Gorkha, which was initiated since 1799. On such occasions the community folk music played a significant role to accompany many of the rites (Tingey, 1994).

Since time immemorial, the community folk music and instruments played a very significant role especially during weddings. The quality of wedding being judged through the quality of feast they served, clothes they wore and gifts they received.

⁹Chaitedasai is a one-day sacrificial festival i.e. celebrated on the astami of the bright half moon of Chaite (March- April).

¹⁰Thulodasai comes after the six months of chaitedasai in the month of Ashoj (September- October).

Besides these, the size of the Naumati baja also marked the prestige vale of wedding family. Historically, the community baja was required during the different stages of Nepali weddings. Starting from the day or day before, depending upon the distance they marched on the day of the marriage, the groom's band assembled at his home and play baja to entertain the guests as they arrive. After the reception, they set off in procession to bride's family for further wedding processes. The baja was often accompanied by shotgun, which is fired at significant time, while they approach to the bride's place. On the following day, the groom's party brought the bride to his family again accompanied by the baja. Each community has their own sets of rules and rituals to welcoming the new bride into their family for which the community folk music usually providing entertainment at the groom's place until the customary feasts are served (Tingey, 1994).

Besides good times, the community folk music and instruments was also played during political/military crisis and peace. The sound of the instruments was possibly used to summon people to hear a royal verdict and call to arms during the time of social unrest. Historically, during the unification of Nepal in 1769, the nagara was used to announce royal proclamations. Many of the musicians believed that the function of the jordamaha was used to announce the Gorkha population that all is well at the Darbar (Darnal, 1987: 107). The playing of Naumati baja also has a significant role during rice- transplanting season for bethi, when the band is played on the paddy terrace in order to appease the serpent-god that is believed to reside there to ensure a good rice harvest (Tingey, 1992).

Therefore, traditionally the Naumati baja played by the Damai community has huge socio cultural and economic significance among the Nepali community in both Nepal and Sikkim. However, the social transformation that has been witnessed by

both regions due to many socio- economic factors significantly impacted such traditional practices as well as the economic life of the community. With this backdrop, the two subsequent chapters contain a discussion on the status of Naumati baja, its continuity and changes that have taken place and its impact on socio- economic life of the Damai community across the borders in varied socio- cultural and political contexts of Nepal and Sikkim.

CHAPTER 4

The Status of Folk Music of Damai Community in Nepal

4.1. Introduction

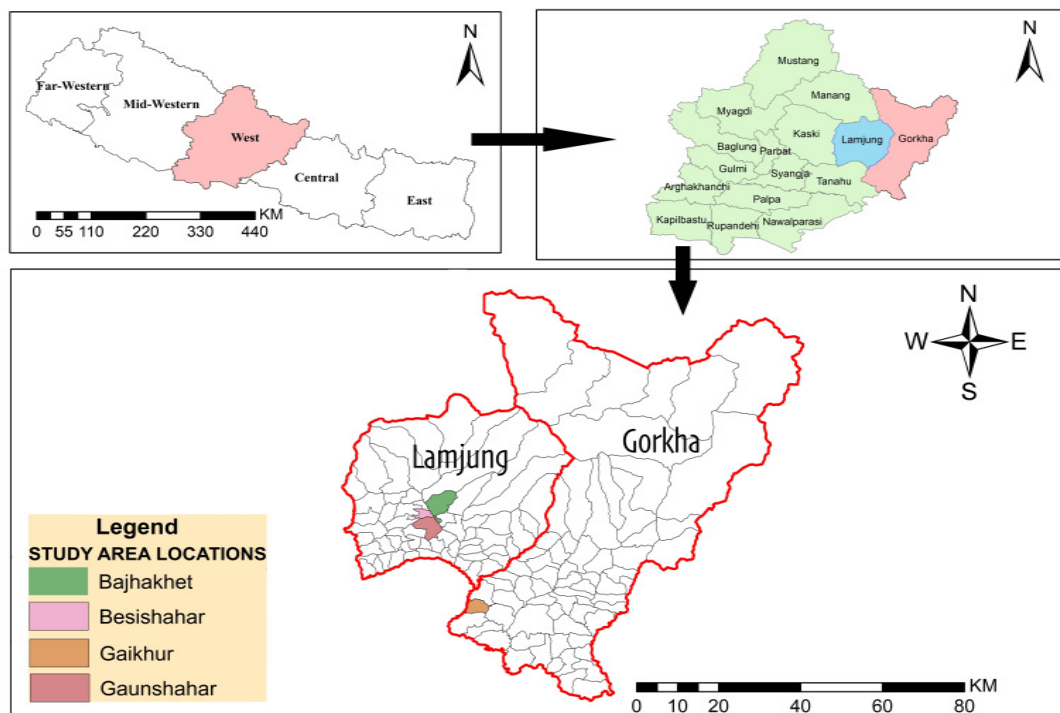
The tradition of folk music is one of the major components of the intangible heritage that forms part of the universal heritage of mankind. The folk music and instruments are not restricted to the production of sounds but it also conveys the deepest cultural, spiritual and aesthetic values of the society (Dournon, 2000). Folk music has close connections with the everyday social life of the masses and it tries to incorporate a variety of themes as the seasons, praise of nature, sowing reaping, childbirth, marriage etc. Usually, the lyricists and composers of folk music are anonymous and it is sung to simple melodies, accompanied by simple instruments, including large and small flutes, portable drums, stringed instruments, bells, little cymbals etc. (Joshi, 1982: 628). Music is often considered as medium to draw a line between the sacred and profane and the natural and supernatural (Morley, 2009). Bolhman (2002: 5) stated that music sometimes works as a medium to carry voice to deity. The important roles and significances of music within the rituals and religious practice has been featured in doctrine and mythology.

Contextually locating in Nepal, no rituals, festivals, and ceremonies are completely performed without the traditional musical instruments of Naumati baja being played, which has an immense significance in culture and society of Nepal. Historically, Nepal has more than two hundred musical instruments of its own, out of that only about hundred has been discovered till so far. Diverse traditional musical genres exist in Nepal with so many unique musical instruments. Every ethnic group has their own unique and distinct genre of music and instruments, which they play in

distinctive style in different occasions. Amongst them, Damai community of Nepal belongs to traditional musicians caste that basically plays musical ensemble in ceremonies, occasions, festivals and rituals. There is a popular notion that the origin of the term Damai itself seems to be originated from musical instrument, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

Therefore, the present chapter basically makes a comprehensive discussion on the whole issues of status, continuity and change related to traditional folk musical occupation of Damai community and the instrument Naumati baja. The chapter is the outcome of the fieldwork conducted in two different districts of Nepal.

4.1. Location Map of the Study Areas in Nepal



Source: Prepared by author.

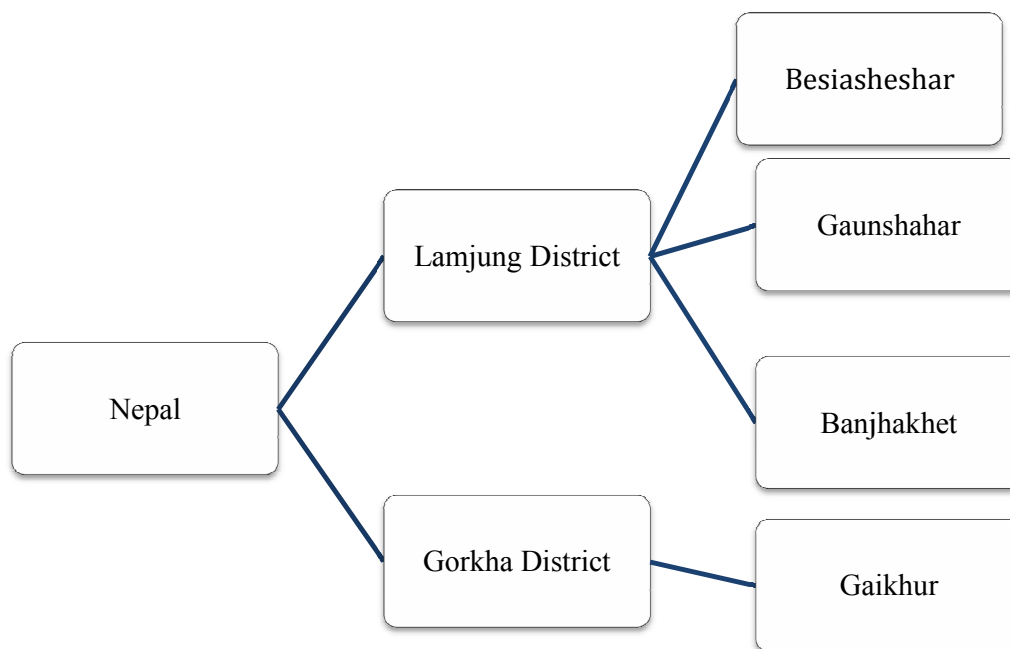
4.2. Field Setting

The section on field setting comprises two sections viz; the location of the study area and population composition.

4.2.1. The Study Area

The fieldwork for the present study has been conducted at Gorkha and Lamjung districts of Western Nepal, under the Gandaki Zone. Each of these districts is further divided into multiple Village development committees (VDCs) and Municipalities. Different VDCs and municipalities have been selected from the two districts of Nepal based on the National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) data 2011, released by Central Bureau of Statistic (CBS) Nepal. The Gaikhur VDC from the Gorkha district and Besishahar (municipality), Gaunshahar VDC and Banjhakhet VDC from Lamjung district have been selected for the study. The Gaikhur VDC is one of the most remote places in Gorkha district located in the southeast part of the district, where the connectivity and means of transportation is very poor. Recently a *kacha* road is being constructed to reach so far inaccessible village, which is situated at a distance of 156 kilometer west of the National capital, Kathmandu. The field areas selected from Lamjung district are located in the vicinity of Besiasheshar town. As compared to Gaikhur VDC, these areas are more developed in terms of road connectivity and infrastructure due to closeness with district headquarter. The detail of the villages selected for field study has been presented in following diagram.

4.1 Diagram of Field Areas in Nepal



Source: Prepared by author.

4.2.2. Population composition and Sample Size

Gaikhur VDC of Gorkha district has total households of 1,276 with a total population of 5003, out of which Damai population accounts to 4.7 percent. While Besishahar municipality of Lamjung district comprises 2.5 per cent of Damai population out of the total population of the district and has the mixed habitats of different castes and ethnicities. Most of Damai population in the area lives in relatively isolated area called Milantol, which is distinctly segregated from the settlement inhabited by other castes or communities. Gaunshahar VDC and Banjhakhet VDC under Lamjung district accounts to respective Damai population of 7.1 percent and 6.7 per cent to its total population (NPHC, 2011).

As mentioned the sample has been collected from the two different districts of Gorkha and Lamjung districts of Nepal, 40 per cent sample was drawn from Gaikhur VDC of Gorkha district, while 60 per cent were taken from the different villages of Lamjung district that comprises Milantol (25.7 per cent), Gaushahar (18.6 per cent) and Banjhakhet (15.7 per cent). Table number 4.1 contains details regarding the study areas and distribution of respondents. The study being based on purposive sampling, the variation in sample size is mainly due to the availability of the Damai households and musicians in a particular settlement.

Table 4.1 Study Areas and the Number of Respondents in Nepal

Name of VDC/ Municipalities	District	Distribution of Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gaikhur	Gorkha	28	40.00
Milantol	Lamjung	18	25.70
Gaunshahar		13	18.60
Banjhakhet		11	15.70
Total		70	100.0

Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

4.3. Socio- Economic Status of Respondents and the Folk Music

4.3.1. Social Status

In the caste based society, one's social status is determined by his/her birth within the family of certain caste, which is ascribed in nature. Members born in a higher caste family enjoys the certain rights and privileges in the society and those born as a lower

caste will face the social discrimination and unequal treatment. An organization called 'Save the Children' conducted study in Nepal in 1993 to understand the caste discrimination, where out of the total 751 respondents, 84 per cent reported that they were subjected to many kinds of caste based discrimination in their day-to-day life (Cox, 1994: 94). Contextually, on the question of their low caste status and discrimination in everyday life, the respondent revealed that discrimination do exist. Out of the total respondents, 95 percent had experienced some kind of social discrimination regarding their caste and occupation during social occasion and day-to-day interaction once in a while. They were not allowed to inter-dine and sit together with others, and as well as were not allowed to enter into the house of higher castes. If they were offered food, they had to wash their used dishes themselves, which were further purified by the fire and water by the higher castes in social functions.

In addition to discrimination faced in everyday life in the villages, the respondents also faced the discrimination in the market places during *hatt*¹¹, where they were abstained from entering shops and fast-food and in case they take anything in the *chyapasal*¹², they had to wash their used utensils. Almost all the respondents accepted that prevailing caste hierarchy as a source of discrimination for the community.

The elderly respondents narrated pitiable story about the discrimination they faced in the past, how they have been treated in the society during social occasion and even in their everyday life. However, they have also witnessed and experienced that the level of discrimination and domination has come down in recent times and has decreased to a considerable extent. And even if they face such discriminations, they

¹¹ Weekly market.

¹² Tea shops.

do not hesitate to oppose and raise their voice against such practices, as Nepal passed the ‘Caste Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act’ on 24 May, 2011 (Kisan, et. al., 2015) in order to eradicate the discriminatory practice especially among the low-castes member.

Few respondents also highlighted about the laws and are aware of the provision that protects the untouchables from such evil practices. In the words of 60 years old respondent *“There were several instances when I faced such discrimination in the past. However at present, if we face any kind of discrimination during the social function, we stop the concert and leave in between. Now we stop compromising our prestige in terms of money and do not tolerate such humiliation”*. In the similar tone, another respondent of around 40 years old explained very enthusiastically that *“as compared to the past, the level of discrimination has gone down, however the extent of discrimination varies from place to place. People are discriminated more often in the isolated region as compared to bazaar (town) areas”*. Around 85 per cent of the total respondents said that in recent time, their traditional occupation related to folk music and instruments has been provided relatively high status and income as compared to earlier time. The remaining respondents were against such perspective as they reported that they are still experiencing the discrimination in terms of status and income associated to their traditional folk music related occupation is not satisfactory.

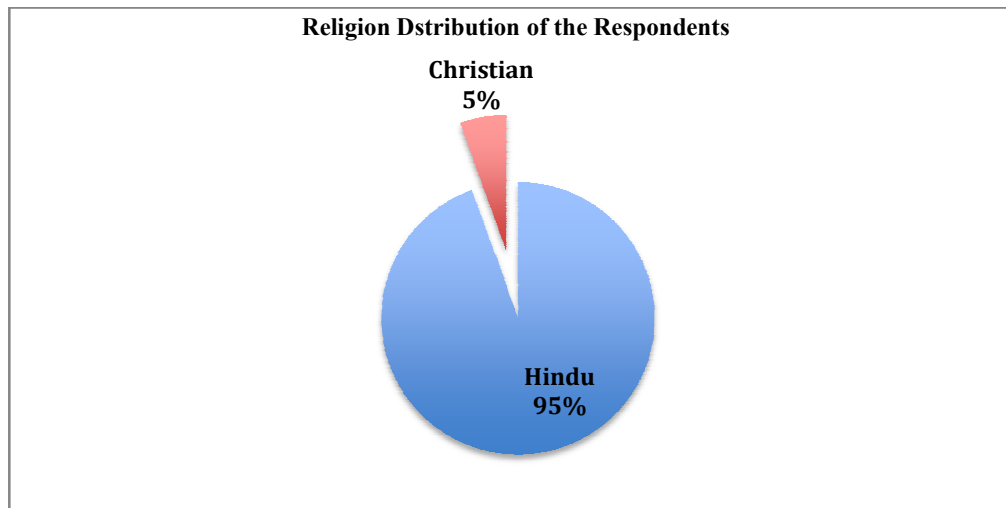
Answering the change in the societal perception with regard to their occupation, another 55 years old respondent of Milantol village, Lamjung district explains *“I had left the traditional folk music related occupation almost for the last twenty years because other communities did not treat us well in the social occasions where we were invited. However, now the things have changed and we musicians get relatively good treatment and feedback from the audience and client, when we are*

invited on social occasions. Hence, I have joint this professions again after a long break due to such positive changes”.

4.3.2. Religion and Traditional Music

As per the 2011 census of Nepal, 81.3 percent of its populations are Hindus followed by Buddhists (9 percent), Muslims (4.4 percent), Kirat/Yumaist (3 percent) and Christians (1.4 percent). Conversion to Christianity was not common in the past, and in case of conversion they were considered as the traitor and were imprisoned. Historically, Christian missionaries made some attempt to introduce the Christianity in Nepal during late Malla period (1200- 1769 AD), but without much success. However, over the last fifty years, the situation has changed and a number of followers of Christianity faith have increased, especially after the political change in 1990. In just a decade from 1991 to 2001, the Christian population in Nepal has increased by more than 226 per cent. A lower Hindu caste group converts their religion into Christianity because they find it more agreeable and attractive (Acharya, 2005) mainly because of egalitarian nature.

Chart 4.1



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

The study revealed that the Damai population residing in study areas is predominantly Hindus. Primary data shows only 5 per cent have been converted to religious faith of Christianity and the remaining 95 per cent of the respondents are still following old age Hindu religion. There is no any single case of religion conversion of Damai household in the Gaikhur VDC of Gorkha district, but in case of Lamjung district the religious conversion has been encountered.

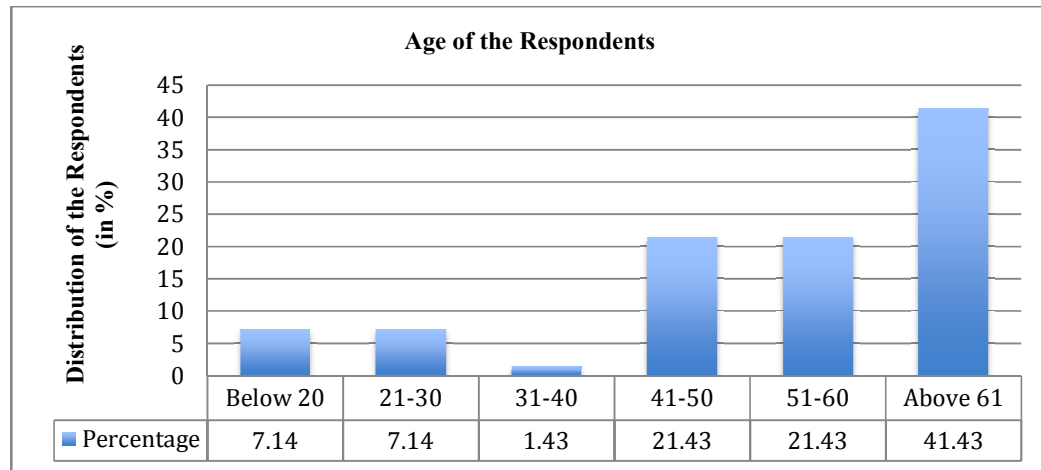
The study revealed that despite such religious conversion, they still are practicing their caste-based occupation and also want their children to continue the same occupational pattern. Such practices are not only found among the Damai Christian baja players or musicians in the village like Banjhakhet in Lamjung district but as reported by the respondents there are many Christian families, who still prefer the tune of Naumati baja during social occasions like marriage. The empirical findings therefore suggest that religious conversion into Christianity does not have much adverse impact on musical cultural practices as assumed and found in many studies, where conversion into Christianity have impact on indigenous cultural practices.

4.3.3. Age Group of Respondents and Traditional Occupation

In this study, an effort has been made to include respondents belonging to all the age groups to get a better understanding about how the culture of community traditional occupation has changed over the generations. Such involvement helps to provide a clear perception of past and trend of present generations. The study revealed that, less number of upcoming generations are involved in traditional folk music. Taking age as variable, it was found that those respondents in the age group of above sixty years old,

who were involved with folk music, were found to have a better understanding of traditional music.

Chart 4.2



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

Chart 4.2 shows the varied age structure of respondents. The youngest respondent is aged 17 years old and the oldest is of 83 years old. Comparatively, majority of the respondents are above 61 years of age, which consists of 41.43 per cent of the total respondents. It is evident from the Chart 4.2, that there is very less representation of young generation in traditional music at present context. An equal number of respondents 7.14 per cent belong to the age group of below twenty years and between twenty-one to thirty years of age. There are only 1.43 per cent of the respondents that belongs to the age group between thirty-one to forty years of age. Because once they acquired their educational qualification and are settled, they usually opt to go abroad in order to ensure better economic life for their family. The study also collaborates with the macro situation, which states that the migration from Nepal may be due to lack of employment opportunity among the youths in Nepal. Therefore, the existence and trend of foreign going culture among the youths with

high aspirations for better social and economic life in the foreign land drives many resulting in lack of interest in traditional musical occupation among the youth of Damai community also. Therefore, it would be safe to conclude that folk music of Damai exists so far because of involvement of old age people only. The narratives on outmigration of youths and its impact on traditional music has been presented later in this chapter.

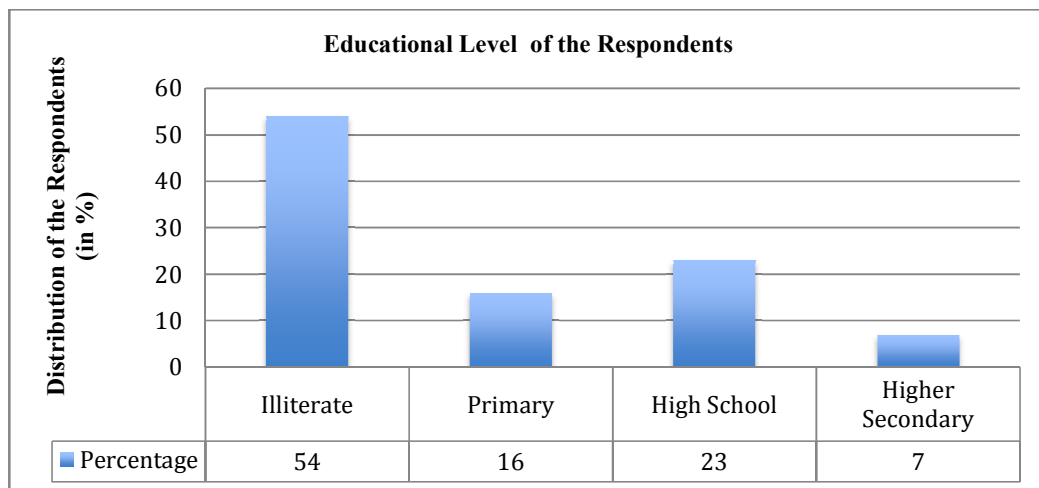
4.3.4. Educational Status of Respondents

The field situation shows that an increasing education level among the community members in Nepal has a great impact upon the traditional folk music of Damai community. The information collected from the field shows that the educational consciousness among the community has been on rise and it plays a significant role in their occupational mobility. Education has broadened their thoughts processes and has exposed them to the outer world. As a result, they gradually adopted other forms beyond the caste-based occupation. An increasing level of educational among the community has rising awareness and opened the doors for many job opportunities hence, gradually distanced themselves from their caste based traditional occupation. Consequently such the trend has somehow adversely impacted the culture of folk musical instruments of not only community but of entire nation, as the Naumati baja is considered as the *Rastriya baja* or national ensemble of Nepal.

The empirical situation reveals that among youths, it is only those illiterates or with low level of education among the community who are mostly associated with caste-based occupation because they do not have any other job option. Those who are educated are no more involved in traditional profession as they prefer other occupation and opportunities. The respondent revealed that new jobs and

opportunities provide them decent income and respectable social status in the society. The empirical situation revealed that now the community of these regions is more conscious of their social status, and they perceive that such caste-based occupation provides them low status and discrimination in the Hindu society. Similar findings was reported by Stirr (2007), who also argues that social status of Damai as a group and the popularity of the music they played is affected by many factors, which may vary according to location and individual situation. While, the musician residents of Central Nepal takes great pride in the music that they make and hope to continue their traditions, there are others who think in a reverse way.

Chart 4.3



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

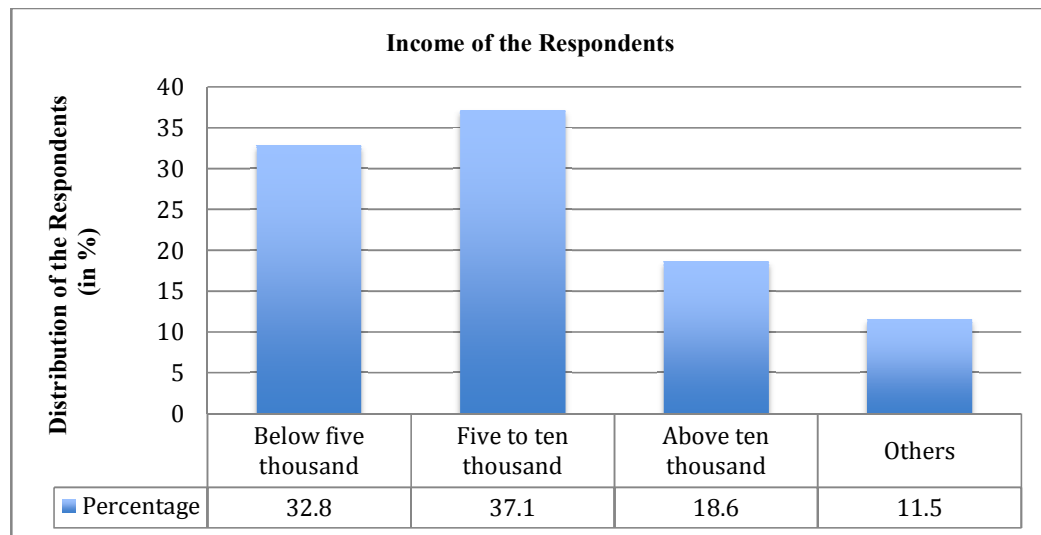
Chart 4.3 shows the level of education among the respondents. Out of the total respondents 53 per cent are illiterate, 9 per cent have studied up to Class five, 19 per cent acquired education up to class ten and 19 per cent had cleared their SLC (School Level Certificate), which is equivalent to Secondary level education. Data has shown that more than half of the total respondents are illiterate. Therefore, from the analysis, it can be clear that the profession related to the traditional music and instruments

among the community are opted by those who are either deprived of education or have low level of education and have a very limited choice of occupation. Nevertheless, there are few educated youths who studied up to secondary and higher secondary level are also involved in this traditional occupation to earn livelihood. Therefore, it can be concluded that those who achieved higher educational qualification and degrees have not opted the traditional occupation.

4.3.5. Economic Status

The empirical situation revealed that the income pattern among the Damai musicians varies from person to person. To have an understanding about the income pattern of the respondents, their income has been compartmentalized into three segments; those who have earned monthly income below five thousand, in between five thousand to ten thousand and above ten thousand respectively.

Chart 4.4



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

Chart 4.4 reveals the economic status of the respondents. The income level shows variation with 32.8 per cent of the respondents having less than five thousand

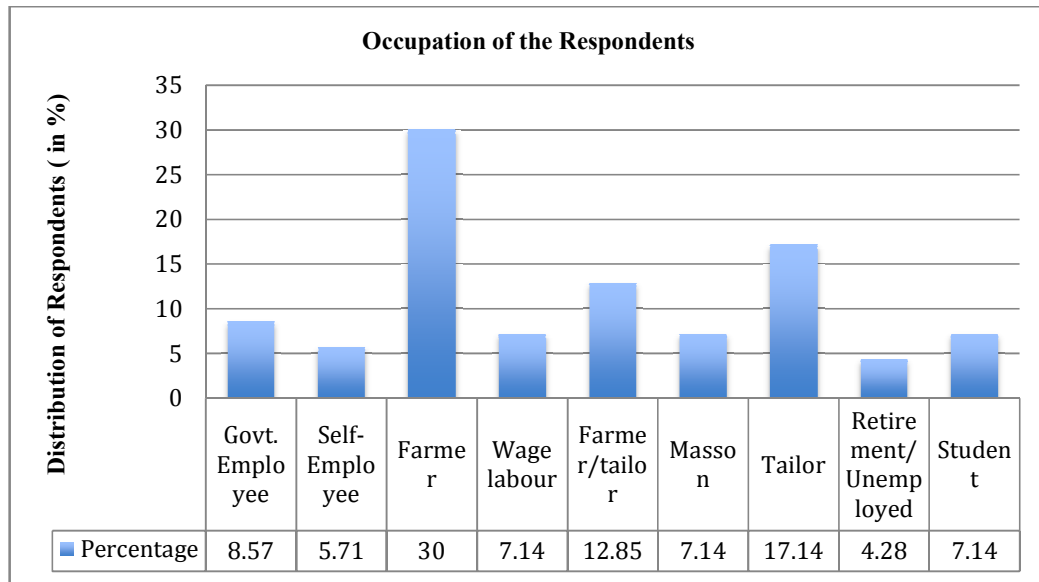
monthly income whereas 37.1 per cent earns in between five to ten thousand per month. The respondents who earn monthly income of above ten thousand are only 18.6 per cent. The respondents reported that although they rely on the same kind of traditional occupation, but their income variation is mostly determined by their subsidiary occupation they adopt. The variation is also partly due to other sources like remittances from abroad send by their relatives more than the traditional caste-based occupation. Remaining 11.5 per cent of the respondents did not disclose their income. Collecting information regarding the income of the respondents proved to be a challenging task and most of the time the respondents hesitated to share the information on their income.

In addition to traditional occupation, 30 per cent of respondents are also involved in agriculture work as a subsidiary source of income and around 17.14 per cent works as a professional tailor, which was also their traditional caste based occupation. Some of them own the sewing machine at home and some runs the tailoring shop in the market areas. Few respondents are involved in both the tailoring and agriculture-related work, especially those who have opened the home-based tailor shop in their own village to supplement their daily income. Chart number 4.5 shows that 12.85 per cent of the total respondents were simultaneously involved in both the work of tailoring and agriculture. Data pertaining to various occupations pursued by respondents is presented in Chart 4.5. Apart from traditional occupation of music and tailoring, considerably large number of respondents about 30 per cent are involved in agriculture. They are also engaged in the other occupations like government job, work as wage labour and masons, retired army band member, land-related business and are self-employed also. 7.14 per cent of the total respondents belong to the student category.

Land is an important indicator of economic status in an agrarian economy. The researcher encountered problem in accessing the exact size of land holding the respondents possessed. Therefore categorization has been done on the basis of land owned or landless. The information highlighted that 51 per cent of respondents have their own land, where they produce the agricultural products, 14 per cent have their own land as well as cultivate others land as tenant locally known as *Ghal or Aadhiya* (sharecropping) and the remaining are landless. Income and the occupational pattern therefore indicate that there has been many diversification of occupation in recent times instead of solely relying on music, tailoring and agriculture.

Since, individual's occupation and income sources determine their quality of life as well as their status, people tend to change their traditional occupation pattern due to many circumstances. The reasons for the shift in occupational pattern are mainly due to the low status and prestige attached to the musical tradition, seasonal character of traditional occupation as well as the low-income generation from the agriculture or small size of land. The emergence of cash based economy as well as socio-economic transformation providing many new occupational opportunities also contributed to the occupational shift among the community. Therefore, the community is no more relying on their caste-based occupation of music making, as they are not being able to sustain their livelihood due to its seasonal character and unsustainable nature too.

Chart 4.5



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

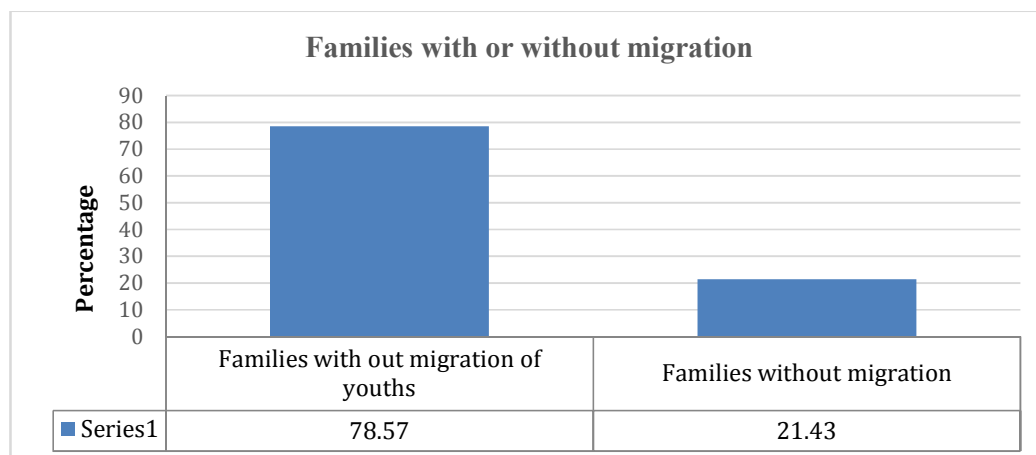
4.4. Out- Migration of Youth: Challenges and Opportunities

The census data 2010/11 states that about a fifth of the population of Nepal was found to be absent from their household (Department of Foreign Employment 1993/94-2012/13). The rate of absentees' population is high in Central Nepal, which is accounted as 31.8 percent. The number of youths going abroad has continued to rise in the past few decades. Out of the total absentees, the majority is found to have moved within Nepal (56.9 per cent) and the remaining abroad (43.1 per cent) as per the Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 2010/11. Khatiwada (2017) and Sapkota (2013) argues the arm conflict in Nepal (1996-2006), problem of unemployment and easy access of passport are some of the major reasons behind the huge out migration in Nepal. The study conducted in the Kandebash VDC located in southwestern part of Gangling district, Western Nepal also revealed some other factors such as food deficiencies, increased expenditure, interest of being economically prosperous, family and peer pressure which instigated the people for out migration (Gautam, 2019).

Despite having so many positive aspects of out migration, its also has manifold negative consequences upon the traditional culture and folk music which needs introspection. Migration abroad is due to many socio- economic reasons and is directly linked to improved educational level of an individual, better career prospects and other opportunities of economic prosperity and livelihood. The study revealed that increasing educational level leads to change in the occupation of internal migrants before and after. This is reflected in the fact that the internal migrants involved in agricultural related work has been decreased to 3 percent from 70 percent and on the other hand service sector increased by 32.8 percent from 2.6 percent over the past years (Nepal Migration survey, 2009).

Drawing the relationship between social status in caste hierarchy, remittances and the flow of migration, the study by Wagle's (2012) and Thieme (2006) has drawn a comparison between low caste Hindu and high caste Hindu which supports that low caste Hindu are more likely to receive less remittance as compared to high caste Hindu but the migration process attracts a high proportion among low caste Hindu within Nepal even though they have received less remittance. They always tend to be out-migrated no matter what kind of occupational work they do/obtained outside because of their low social status in the society.

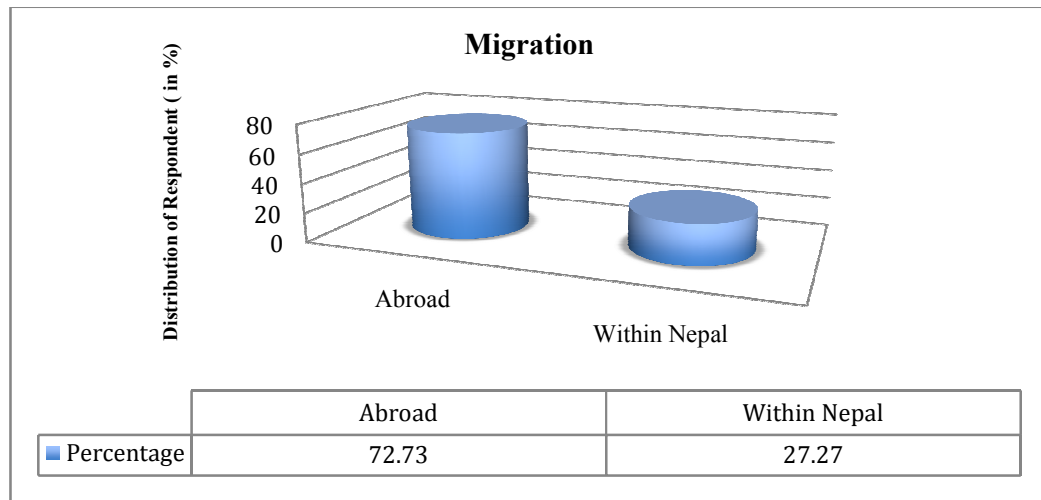
Chart 4.6



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

In order to comprehend the impact of migration process on the folk music, the migration pattern among respondent's family was identified. Chart 4.6 shows that out of total family surveyed, 78.57 per cent had reported that their young male members are out migrated from their native place. Out of them 72.73 per cent have gone to countries abroad including Saudi Arab, Qatar, Dubai, Malaysia, Korea, and Japan in search of better job opportunity. Some of the young male members are also waiting for their visa to fly abroad and sustain their family's livelihood through remittance. Apart from such huge abroad migration, the study also shows a considerable number of Damai youths consisting 27.27 per cent migrated within the various parts of Nepal including Kathmandu valley and nearby *bazaar* (town) areas, in search of employment and other basic facilities, which has been highlighted in Chart 4.7. Most of them work as tailor, brass band musician, security guard, driver and wage labour and a small section educated are employed in government sectors like police, army band, engineer etc.

Chart 4.7



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

The Nepal's economic condition is enormously dependent upon foreign remittance (Sapkota, 2013), which has innumerable socio-cultural consequences as revealed by the respondents. A sixteen years old boy of Gaikhur, Gorkha district narrates that his father went abroad long time back and he never returned home. They are living in a pathetic situation because they had lost their only guardian who went abroad and never came back. In addition to this, the devastating earthquake hit his house in 2015. And in the process along with his family, many families have lost their homes resulting in migration to nearby bazaar areas and try to reestablish their lives. During the field visit, many such broken empty houses were encountered, the respondents reported that those victim families have been shifted to nearby market areas for reestablishment, where they could get proper transportation, health, employment and education facilities for their children.

The study also found the cases where the sole bread winners have returned from *Bidesh* (abroad) due to their family problems and disputes. The respondent 45 years old Ganga Ram Pariyar, resident of Gaikhur VDC stated, "I was working

abroad for many years, previously. I was at Qatar for almost five years after that I went to Malaysia. But from Malaysia I had to return my village within a short span of time due to some family issues. As my daughter eloped with higher caste Dalit Kami¹³ boy, as a result his family did not accept her. To solve this entire dispute I had to rush back here leaving my job abroad". This particular case revealed the caste-based discrimination is not being confined between high and low castes but such discrimination also prevails among the Dalits themselves occupying different social position in caste hierarchy. The study exposed that in some rural parts of Nepal, the Damai community has been facing the kind of double exploitation both from high caste and high caste Dalits.

Bhattachan et. al. (2009: 13) states, the practice of caste-based discrimination at settlement and community sites is not a new issue on peoples' everyday life. Members of low castes live in both the mixed and segregated community in the rural and urban areas. The Nepalese high caste boys are often discriminated by their family and relatives, when they get married with low caste/untouchable/dalit. The boys faced the similar situation when the high caste Dalit boys get married with low caste Dalit, however the intensity of discrimination is comparatively low. They are being prohibited from entry at home and are deprived of rights over parental home and property in such situation.

The empirical situation in the present study revealed that most of the youths of Damai community are working outside. Migration abroad now has become one of the most common phenomena among the Damai community found in almost every part of the country. As states, that about a fifth of the Nepal's population was found to be

¹³There are two ways of caste-based discrimination i.e. practice of untouchability by non-Dalits against all Dalits and the practice of untouchability by high caste Dalits against low caste Dalits. The Kami occupy higher position in the Nepali Dalit caste hierarchy as compared to Damai (Bhattachan et.al., 2009).

absent from their household. Among the absentees, males outnumber females by ratio of nearly 3: 1. While the male migration was 73.1 percent, the female migration rate was lower with 26.9 percent (NLSS, 2010/11). The migration process has a huge impact upon the culture of the traditional folk music of Damai community because the young members who are supposed to shoulder the responsibility to continue folk music and instruments of the community are leaving and working abroad, thus showing the diminishing interest on the traditional occupation. Thus, the out migration trend in field area also corresponds to the migration trend at macro level.

An old respondent explained and contextualized the link between outmigration of youth and its impact on traditional music by putting his own family as an example about how the out-migrating abroad culture has been affected the established musical legacy of his family in particular and Damai traditional occupation in general. Tula Ram Pariyar (age 60), a resident of Banjhakhet, Lamjung district narrated, *“there were seven brothers in my family and all of them were professional baja players. Now some of them passed away and some are leaving such profession due to old age, even I stopped playing baja because of my old age. I have three sons but they all are working abroad, one is in Qatar and remaining two are working in Malaysia. They used to show some interest in baja when they were small but now due to the ongoing trend set by social change, they are completely doing away from it. I can sense that probably we are very last generation who are trying and struggling hard to maintain our traditional and cultural legacy, no matter what were the reasons behind, maybe because of lack of education and other job opportunities. Such growing trend of culture of going abroad is not only hampering our traditional folk music and instruments but also affecting the traditional culture of the entire community at present in Nepal”*.

4.5. Continuity and Changes

4.5.1. Traditional Naumati Baja and its Continuity: Talking about the importance of baja in religious occasions, Carol Tingey (1990) emphasize that besides many social occasions, Damai baja is also significantly used in Hindu temples basically in order to fulfill the rituals and please deities during daily offerings (*puja*), blood sacrifices and for other rituals processions and festivals. Wegner (1992) also validates about the use of such traditional music and instruments which can channel mental processes in a specific direction and such instrumental music help the individuals to link with divinity by focusing attention on the ritual. The importance of traditional music of Damai community still having significance and being retained in rituals and religious ceremonies in Nepal can be known from the case study of Lamjung Darbar.

Lamjung Darbar (Palace) is located at Gaunshahar VDC, situated in the hilltop of Bashishahar town in Lamjung district. The place is famous for the historical heritage called Lamjung Darbar and *Devi* temple, which exists side by side. This place has a historical significance and the *KauliPani Devi* is one of the most trusted religious destinations in this region. People have deep faith on *Kauli Pani Devi* and believes that *Devi* (Goddess) help to fulfill their wishes. Devotees mostly come from the surrounding areas with an objective of wish fulfillment and offer animal sacrifice to the goddess Kali. One of the most interesting finding is that unlike other temple, where usually priests are from high caste Brahmin, here unmarried young Gurung boy is the priest of this temple. The temple remains open during the special rituals and occasions accept that no one is allowed to open or enter into the temple to avoid the negative consequences to the village. Various communities live in this area; however the predominant communities like Gurung, Newar and Damai mutually look after this temple and Darbar. To accomplish any kind of rituals, the temple requires the priests

and ensemble, which are mutually provided by the Gurungs and Damais respectively residing in this region (Dulal, 2013).

Traditionally, the Damai community in the area plays their baja during rituals and other social occasions. Since time immemorial, the temple required Damai musician on a regular basis, and the practice exist even now and the musicians are hired in temple regularly on salary basis. One of the young respondent Navin Pariyar, a class nine student stated *“previously my grandfather used to play the baja called Kahal (a narsingha like instrument) in this temple, but now he cannot go there due to his old age and ailing physical condition. Now in place of my grandfather I go and play this instrument from which, I get around Rupees fifteen thousand cash in a year”*.

It was revealed and reported during fieldwork that there are few religious places still existing in Nepal, where such auspicious music still holds importance and this traditional practice continues even today. Although, the study brought to the limelight that meaning and venue for playing such baja has been changed in the modern context of Nepal to a large extent, the instances like Lamjung Darbar and Kalika temple of Gaunshahar, shows that traditional folk music still has retained its essence and such cultural practice still exists. Therefore, despite many challenges, the case study found the continuity of age-old tradition practice even today.

Plate 4.1 Left side of the structure is Lamjung Darbar and the taller portion of right side is Kalika Temple, Gaunshahar VDC, Lamjung district.



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 17.

Plate 4.2 A young Pariyar musician holding a traditional Damai ritual instrument called Kahal which is played in all the rituals in Gaunshahar Darbar and Kalika Temple at Gaunshahar,



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 17.

In addition, it was found that community folk music is still required during the ritual procession for *phulko doli*¹⁴ procession. Tingey (1990) stated that in Nepal, Vishnu is worshipped as Narayan and from *Thulo ekasdasi*¹⁵ over the months of *kartik (November- December)*, *Mansir (December- January)* and *Paus (January- February)* families may perform a *Satya Narayan Puja* in his honour. Where the families engaged the service of as many as five Brahmin priests over a period of three or five days. At the accomplishment day, the flower temple to which offerings are made must be ritually disposed of, usually by submersion in a river or sacred pond or may be taken with *Phulko doli* to a shrine. The *baja* is engaged here to lead the religious procession and this practice continues even today.

4.5.2. Balighar Bista Pratha: A Journey from Damai Baja to Brass Band

Exchange of goods and service among the different castes was prevailed almost all the caste-based Hindu societies in Nepal as in case of India, but known by different terminologies. In India such reciprocal exchange among various castes is known as *Jajmani system*. In Nepal the system is known as *balighar bista pratha*. Although, the terminologies are different but the essence, meaning and function of such system remains the same. The nature and pattern of exchange of goods and services and functional interdependence between the patron and client was completely based on caste system. The members of higher castes being always considered as patron and the service castes like *kami*, *Damai* etc., played the role of client to fulfill each other's basic societal need. The traditional relations between the musician castes and patron castes have been bound to long-term relation as *riti-bhagya* (patron- client) like the

¹⁴The Panchai *baja* is played to accompany a ritual offering of flowers (*phulko doli*) to a divinity, where the flowers are laid in the temple at the end of the procession (UNESCO, 1999).

¹⁵It has been observed on every 11th *tithi* (date) in Hindu calendar by the devotees of lord Vishnu to seek his blessing. *Ekadasi* fasting spans for three days where the devotees take only single meal in the afternoon, eating of all type of grains and cereals is prohibited during *Ekadashi* fasting.

Damais and their patrons (Tingey, 1990; Cameron, 1998) cited in (Stirr, 2018: 163). Their relation was not confined to one generation but the legacy of such system (*pratha*) was maintained and continued for generation. Tingey (1990) highlighted that within the *pratha*, particularly the Damai works in his capacities as tailor and musician, and he and his family may also supply labour for seasonal field work for his patron.

Dumont (1980: 98) and Subedi (2010) states, the center of such *pratha* involve an exchange of rituals services and a wide range of everyday activities. Brahman priest provides purely ritual services and various sectarian castes and servicing castes have ceremonial and rituals duties at their Jajman's birth, funeral, marriages and some other religious festivals. In exchange of such service, the land owing jajmans pay the servicing caste in kind with grain and clothing.

Carol Tingey (1990: 110) did an extensive work on the community in Gorkha region to study the system and its changing facet, where she highlighted such established tradition has been abolishing from the society along with a pertinent reasons behind it in context of Nepal. The reasons being, the dissatisfaction of young generation with the traditional system of patronage because it is insufficient and antiquated to improve their existing socio-economic condition, and she further pointed out that it is high time to take care of their socio- economic condition as many young members of Damai community are leaving the patronage system in order to fulfill their desires.

Similar finding has been found in present study where the *balighar bista pratha* is no more visible in the present field area of Nepali. The relation between the patron and client are becoming more flexible and cash based. With the onset of cash

economy, the occupational castes are available to the wider section of the society and their occupation is no more compartmentalized within the patronage system but becoming commercialized. Their existence today is mainly due to its need basically to fulfill the rituals, customs and to please the god/goddess. They are no more abided by such traditional pratha but employed by the Guthi (community) or the state on a salary basis.

As the society changed from traditional to the industrial mode of production, the relation between service caste and occupation castes also gets changed and diluted. Such changes makes society technologically advanced but at the same time it also do affect cultural value system of the society. The traditional occupation of Damai is also not free from this vicious cycle of structural transformation ignited by globalization, liberalization, westernization, mass media and the process of commercialization and its impact can be seen in traditional folk musical occupation of Damai Community.

Initially, the occupational caste Damai used to provide auspicious music during the social occasions and rituals to their patrons. As the relation was confined to the particular caste or patron having a hereditary in character, but when the mode of production changed, their relation also changed. The scope of baja has become wider and commercialized and they play baja for the larger section of the society. Now the relation is based on cash instead of exchange of food grains or other basic needs. Consequently, they are more visible in the social occasions like the marriage where they could earn good income, and at the same time discarding the occasions where they have to maintain the relation of *balighar bista pratha*.

The journey of Damai traditional baja from the *balighar bista pratha* to modern cash-based exchange is very much visible in the rural Nepal. It has been found that most of the youths are migrating outside their native land in search of better job opportunities and are involved in the non-traditional occupation. Although few are still associated with music related occupation, the terms of employment is different from its true traditional character, no matter where they are living. In place like Kathmandu city, having the cosmopolitan character, the Damai musicians are involved in the music related occupation but the form of music has adopted some modern element. The brass band is becoming popular in urban settlement instead of traditional ensemble and is gaining popularity among the contemporary audience. This trend indicates adoption of different coping mechanism by the community in order to make it economically sustainable and sustain their musical occupation in changing social environment.

Similar finding was also highlighted by Karanth (1984) who stated that in the later phase of the 20th century, many servicing caste in India like barber and washerman families have discontinued their traditional occupation by establishing barbershop and laundry in the village by taking loan from banks. As a result their relations have changed from Jajmani to contractual relations. The coping mechanism of Damai musicians in context of Nepal's remote villages is alike as in India's rural villages, where they modified their traditional baja into brass band. They also changed their location from rural to urban setting to have better opportunity, make it marketable and economically viable, so that they can sustain their livelihood by redefining and redesigning their traditional folk music and instruments.

4.6. Observations on Traditional Musical Occupation: A Field Account

The section basically deals with the other observations and various issues related to continuity and changes and initiatives taken for the preservation of the traditional occupation of the Damai community.

4.6.1. Music Beyond Community

The traditional occupation related to Naumati baja was confined to the Damai community. However, the present study found an interesting revelation of folk musical occupation going beyond the community. In most of caste-based society, occupational demarcation takes places according to castes hierarchy. The Nepalese society has assigned the music related occupation to the caste who are considered as impure/pollutant caste. Booth (1997) argues that in case of Hindu culture, low or outcaste groups are often associated with the wind and percussion instruments of professional music. Theoretically, the pollution resulting from such instruments will not affect individuals, whose status is already extremely low in the social hierarchy.

Contextually locating, the folk musical instruments of Damai community are mostly made up of the dead animal's parts and skin, which are considered impure as per the Hindu religion. But in the context of Nepal, such perception is witnessing the change. Other communities like Magar occupying higher position in caste hierarchy have been adopting the culture of Naumati baja, despite having their own traditional folk instrument called '*Khajari*' which has been shown in plate 1.3. Similar case has been found at Argal in Tarakhola Rural Municipality- 2 in Baglung district, Nepal where the Magar community has been opting the culture of playing traditional Naumati baja (The Himalayan, May 03, 2018) in various social occasions.

Plate 4.3 The traditional folk instrument of Mangar community, Khaijari.



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

As discussed in earlier chapter, Nepali society is broadly divided into three strata. Among which *Tagadhari* is considered as the purest caste followed by *Matwali*. Magar is categorized as *Matwali* who have now began to play Naumati baja, which earlier was exclusively done by the Damai musicians only. Regarding the factors contributing to spread of music beyond community, the field investigation revealed two things. Firstly, difficulty in getting Damai musician in the surrounding areas in social occasion and secondly cultural significance of traditional baja and its indispensability in all rituals without which any social occasion remains incomplete. Hence, within the cultural context of Nepal, where the music is crucial part of any social ceremonies coupled with the difficulty in getting the musicians, and the youngsters within the musician communities are not keen on opting the occupation are the basic factors that are widely contributing to such shift of music beyond community. The new trend indicates that by adopting such profession by the caste and community having higher caste status, the process is bridging the caste differences. Such trend proves to be functional having both manifest and latent functions in

Durkhemian sense, manifestly for fulfilling the shortage of musician in the society in rituals and social functions on the one hand, and providing them a very lucrative source of income thereby addressing the problem of livelihood as well in the latent form.

Plate 4.4 Group of young Magars playing Naumati baja in their traditional festival, Makar Sankranti¹⁶ in Damauli, Tanhau District, Nepal.



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

¹⁶It is a Hindu festival observed every year in the month of January dedicated to the deity sun (Surya). This festival is also popularly known by *Magha Sankranti*.

Plate 4.5 Group of Magar musicians in their traditional attires and Damai folk musical instruments in Damauli, Tanhau District, Nepal.



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

4.6.2. Music Across Religion

In addition to music beyond community, the usage of traditional baja has also transcended religious barriers and even people belonging to other religious background started inviting the Naumati baja players, to grace their social occasions especially the wedding. The musician respondents reported that recently they are being invited by the Christian and the Muslim families to play baja in the families' weddings ceremony. Therefore, the empirical situation noticed that unlike earlier times, when baja playing was exclusively restricted to Hindu rituals and ceremonies, the tradition of Naumati baja has began to gain popularity across religion and in the process both the musician and audience are accepting or adopting it beyond their castes and religions. Now days, it is not uncommon to see the wedding occasion of Christian or Muslim communities accompanied by the Naumati baja which may be played by the Magar community, hence indicating the acceptance of traditional

occupation beyond religion and caste. Such instance therefore to some extent reveals that tradition of Naumati baja still holds great social significance and is binding and continuing in the Nepalese society.

Tingey's (1990: 3) argument that the unique bands of Gorkha played a significantly important role among the wide range of people in Nepal especially during weddings despite they have been fragmented into different geographical regions and community like *Thakali, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Rai*, and so on, seems relevant even in the field setting. The culture of Naumati baja therefore became an inevitable part of everyone's social life in Nepal, as all other religious communities also started inviting the musicians in social occasions. A 67 years old respondent Kabi Ram Pariyar, a resident of Gaikhur states "*we have been invited by almost all the communities in the surrounding areas and even sometimes by Christian family to grace their social function like marriage*". Similarly, another respondent of Milantol also highlighted that "*recently one of the Muslim family had invited us to a nearby area called Sundar bazaar to perform our baja in wedding function*". These cases studies indicates that the culture of Damai baja is no more confined to the particular caste/community and religion, but has transcended beyond the caste and religious boundaries in the context of Nepal.

Similar findings of one musicians community being replaced by another community, as found in Nepal is also found in the study Malyon (1993: 33) among the Mon, a village musician in the southern slope of Himachal Pradesh and many Ladakhi villages in the Indus valley around Leh, where the musicians families have recently sought to escape their lower- caste status by abandoning music related occupation. As similar to Magars communities who are opting Naumati baja, Bhed group has filled the gap by taking the role traditionally associated with Mon.

4.6.3. Musical Legacy Across Generations

The term traditional occupation refers to those occupations that have been followed by successive generations of indigenous peoples and their communities and are rooted in customs and practices. This also includes traditional occupational practices, which were largely subsistence-oriented before, but now are wholly or partly market-oriented (ILO, 2000).

Data on genealogical occupation collected from the field reflects that since time immemorial, Damai musicians have carried forward their music-related occupation. The study revealed majority i.e. 91 per cent of the respondent's grandfathers were involved in the traditional occupation and the rest could not recollect it. Out of the total respondents, 93 per cent said that their father was involved in music related occupation, and the remaining worked in army (band) and some went abroad in search of better employment opportunity. As traditional occupations is restricted to some occasions and few months in a year, so they have to be engaged in some other additional or alternative occupation for maintaining their livelihood.

Out of the total respondents, around 81 per cent choose folk music as a profession by their own interest. However, remaining opted it due to some sorts of imposition by their family and community members, due to lack of other opportunities constrained by low educational level and skills. Majority of the respondents learned to play their traditional musical instruments from their father and grandfather orally and practically without any formal training.

For acquiring any knowledge and skill, usually, there is formal system like campus to learn or some kind of systems like *guru and shishya* (Nyachhyon, 1993:

19). But in case of Damai community, there is no any such system of school or campus to pass on their culture of traditional music and instruments to the new generation. Empirical findings suggest that they learn from their own male family members including father and grandfather and sometimes from their community members informally without any training.

4.6.4. Community Perspective on Traditional Occupation

Out of the total respondents, only 10 per cent respondents stated that there are young members in the community, who are continuing their music-related occupation. One of the young respondents of Gaikhur, aged 22 states, *“along with me there are many others young peer groups in the village showing interest and playing baja fluently, however, some of them recently had gone abroad”*. An old person who is 71 years old, a resident of Gaunshahar, has also supported the statement.

Around 10 percent respondents believes that the chances of continuity and discontinuity is equally proportionate because the upcoming generation is more interested in going abroad and aspiring in other sustainable occupation and means of livelihood according to their degrees and qualification. But whenever they get back to their home, they love to join the baja party (group) and attend few occasions in the surrounding. Interestingly, those who are engaged in government jobs as teaching, police etc. also sometimes join their relatives/community and play baja in nearby localities especially during their vacation and free time.

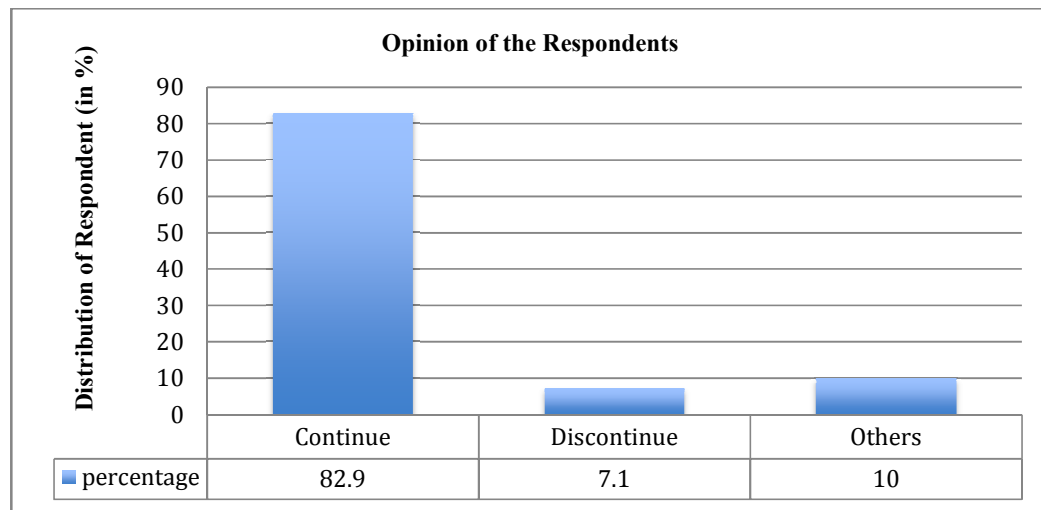
Remaining 90 per cent Percent strongly believe that the coming generations are not going to continue this profession because there have their own aspirations beyond traditional and customary occupation. There are various factors the respondents pointed out that led to depleting trend of traditional occupation which

includes availability of other lucrative employment opportunities within country and abroad, low social status and consciousness, higher aspirations, western culture and the education etc. The youngsters expressed their aspiration to go abroad as well as town area like Kathmandu valley, where they could achieve their goals of getting employed in other lucrative job opportunities. Explaining the reason for his lack of interest in traditional music, Sudeep Pariyar (age 16) a student of class eleven opined that *“most of the young boys from our community feel shy to involve in music related work because they thought that if we get into it, our peer group will come to know that we belong to particular caste or community”*. Another respondent (aged 56), Tul Bhadur Pariyar a resident of Bandhkheth woefully explained that *“now the youth are no more interested in playing baja, we have the entire sets of Naumati baja provided by the Nagarpalika (municipal council), which is dumped in the storeroom, since long back due to lack of players. Old musicians are gradually passing away and the old traditions are also being discontinued along with their death. Even I left this profession after the death of our team members who was a Narsingha player”*.

Responding to the query on their satisfaction and liking of musical occupation, 95 per cent of respondents replied that they are happy and satisfied about their profession related to folk music and instruments and the remaining are not. Those who are not contented feels that this profession is linked with very low status and are often humiliating. They also considered that this profession is seasonal and economically not lucrative to maintain the livelihood of families. Chart 4.8 highlighted that 82.9 percent of the total population comprising mostly respondents above fifty years expressed their view that they wanted to see their upcoming generation to involve in traditional occupation for the sake of continuing and keeping their culture and tradition alive. However, 7 per cent of the respondents perceive it in

a different way as they do not want their children to pursue music making occupation due to its low status and seasonal in character and the rest 10 per cent did not say anything about it.

Chart 4.8



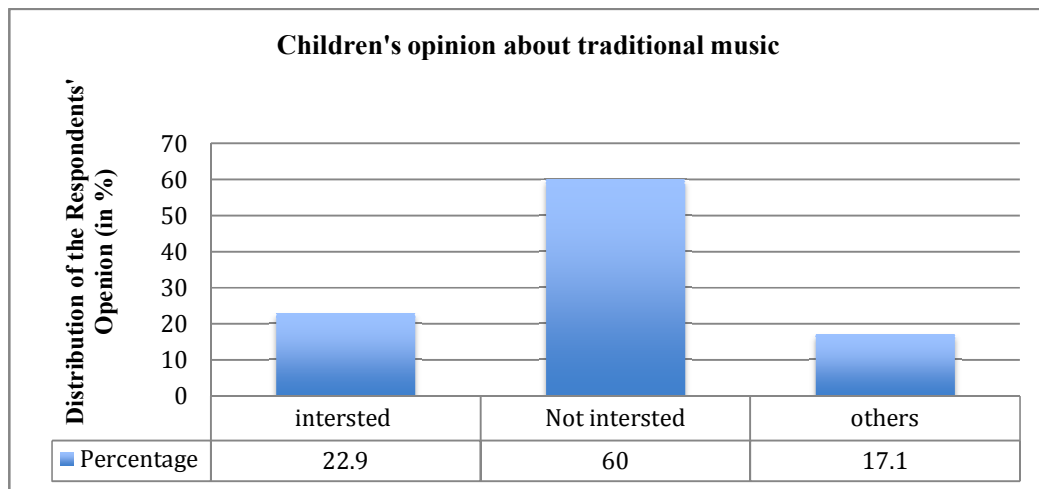
Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

Interestingly, while many wanted their children to continue, 60 per cent of the respondents said that their children are not interested in traditional occupation related to folk music and instruments while 22.9 per cent had informed that their children are willing to involve and continuing it. This question was irrelevant to those respondents who are unmarried and do not have male child because such traditional occupation follows male side only, in such case they have been categorized as "others" which consists 17.1 per cent, details has been mentioned in Chart 4.9.

While explaining the lack of interest of children, the respondents reported that many of their children want something new in their life that gives equal status along with socio-economic security and have decided to opt other job opportunities as per their educational level and skill, so that they do not have to rely on traditional one. The children often complained that if they are involved in this kind of profession, they

will be humiliated, oppressed and discriminated, hence do not want to continue and even suggest their parents to discontinue the occupation. Those who lacks interest also feel shy to reveal their caste identity among the peer group etc. One of the respondents, Ram Bhadur Pariyar (aged 55) said that *“There is no doubt that our children are interested in some other occupations and do not want to involve in traditional occupation of music making. We are often invited to play baja in the surrounding areas and when our children see us while playing baja, they pretend as if we are unknown to each other”*. Many of them revealed that they are more interested either in going abroad or employed in government sector. Few respondents also stated that they prefer daily wage labour rather than opting the traditional occupation. More details on occupational distribution of respondents are presented in the Chart 4.5.

Chart 4.9



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

4.6.5. Changing Audience Preferences and Musical Tastes

The musical choice among the audiences has not been changed drastically especially in the parts of Gorkha and Lamjung districts. Out of the total musician respondents, 67 per cent said that people still enjoy and prefer the traditional folk music during

their social occasions. 23 per cent of respondents said that changes are quite visible not in case of ensemble but in terms of *raagas*. Now the audiences are more interested in listening *jhaure, chutke and the adhunik* (tunes of latest modern Nepali songs), broadcasted in Radio Nepal, television and internet instead of original *raagas*. Similar findings was revealed in the study conducted by Weisethanunet (1997: 137), where author states the repertory might be divided into three main stylistic categories viz., *jhaure*, lyrical songs or folk songs, *stuti and mangal* (religious songs) and *karkha* (songs of great historical events and heroism) *lahuregit-* particularly rendered the narratives and emotional experiences of the Nepali Gorkha soldiers going abroad. Basically they preferred *Chutke and Jhaure* kind of music that helps to portray the experience of local village life.

The genre of *Chutkegeet and jhauregeet* are often associated with the *Gaine* (Gandharva), who travel intensively, reaching as far as Assam in India, Darjeeling, Bhutan and Sikkim. In the rural areas which are cut off by lack of modern communication technology, they worked as living newspaper. A *jhaure* can include political satires or crime attempts. A major difference between a *chutkegeet* and *jhauregeet* seems to be in the expression of happiness in the former and sadness in the later (Gurung, 1993: 10).

Regarding audience preference, out of the total respondents, 8 per cent felt that a section of population has been using modern sound system such as tape recorder, amplifiers, sound box etc. People are adopting such modern medium basically to save the extra expenses of traditional *baja* during social occasions like marriage. So, they could divert their money to manage their valuable ornaments and some other basic requirement for the marriage. In current situation, the poor family cannot afford *Naumati baja* due to its increasing charges and consequently

substituting the traditional baja with less expensive medium of music. Respondent also opined that the audience of both the generation present and old prefers the Naumati/ Panchai baja, but they have their own musical taste. Present generation is more interested in Jhaure/chutke and the old generation still prefers the original ragas that are hardly been found in any occasions in present time.

The respondents opined that people do appreciate and encourage musicians to continue traditional culture, which has been becoming a rare phenomenon. Though the moment people see them holding instruments like *damaha*, *narsingha*, *shantai* etc. they treat and see them not encouragingly. Sometimes the insistence to discontinue comes from own house too. A fifty years old respondent of Milantol area narrated that *“I am actively doing this work for many years, we have our own association called Panchi Baja Sanrakshan Samithi, with twelve members in total. This samithi is famous in the entire Bashishahar, Lamjung district that works for cultural preservation, Previously we were invited from the near and long distances during various social occasions. But now my son is insisting me to leave this profession because he is an engineer and is earning well and have a good social status. While I am getting old, my son is also is apprehensive about my security as sometimes people in drunken stage humiliates baja players verbally and physically during social occasions. Such consequences did occur in the past quite often and the musician had to run away to save himself. I tried to persuade my son to continue my work of baja playing by stating that now the things have changed. But he is not convinced and I don't think he will allow me to continue anymore”*.

4.7. Perspectives on Changing Occupation and its Impact on Naumati Baja

The study revealed that changing occupational pattern among the Damais in Nepal is quite visible in the present scenario. Out of the total respondent, 75 percent said that such changes have a huge impact on Naumati/Panchai baja culture. They highlighted that baja culture is diminishing gradually and if it continues in the same pace such culture will be vanished. But on the other side, one-fourth of the total respondents did not believe in such assumption, they perceive that such changes are hampering culture of Naumati/Panchai baja to some extent but it would not do away completely the culture of baja from the society, as some effort of preservation is going on as socio-cultural context of Nepal demands it.

To substantiate their views, the respondents put some valid reasons, despite the community is changing their caste-based occupation but at the same time other community like Magar community of Tanhau and Baglung districts, and Magar and Gurung communities of Chitwan district are adopting it as profession and substituting the Damai musicians. This also indicates that this profession remains no more caste based. Respondent Bal Bhadur Pariyar (aged 71), a resident of Milantol enlightens “*apart from traditional musician caste, there are some other matwali castes like Magars and Gurungs of Chitwan district who has started playing Naumati baja, hence now people do not bother much about the caste and status*”.

One of the important factors regarding the changing occupation among the Damai youths is culture of going abroad but there are instances when they are involved in music related profession after returning from abroad. Titra Pariyar (aged 61) a resident of Gaushahar (Lamjung district) advocates, “*from this area maximum young Damai boys went abroad to earn but whenever they came back to home, they*

join their *baja* group. Usually in their absence other community member substitutes his role and keeps on continuing”.

Kazi Ram Pariyar (aged 42), President of *Naumati Baja Sangrakshan Samithi* states that “there are lots of youngsters who have been recruited in the army as a band party, even though they are employed in government job but they can still play their traditional Instruments. And even today, people prefer *Damai baja* in *lok dohori*¹⁷ which has become very popular in nightclubs in Nepal”.

4.8. Additions and Subtraction of Damai Musical Instruments

As already stated, the *Panchai baja* is a generic term for the Nepalese mixed ensemble comprising five instruments viz., *damaha* (large kettledrum), *tyamko* (small kettledrum), *shantai* (shawm), *dholaki* (double-headed drum) and *jhayali* (cymbals). Sometimes *Panchai baja* is substituted for a larger ensemble *Naumati baja* (nine instruments) in which further instruments being added one *shantai*, one *damaha*, and two *narshinga* (natural horns) (Tingey, 1990: 24).

Regarding changes in the musical ensemble, in the present study, 79 percent reported that there are no any changes or the addition and subtraction of any kind of musical instruments in the ensemble. But the remaining 13 percent has argued that there are new instruments being used and added in an ensemble, which was not originally a part of traditional *baja*. The later addition has been made by musicians to add an extra and modern flavor. Approximately, 14 per cent of the old respondents of Gaikhur (Gorkha) explained that as per the popular notion, *tamko*, a small kettledrum is an example of such extra instruments, which has been included in an ensemble of *Damai* community lately. Originally, this instrument being used to be played to

¹⁷*Lok Dohori* is a folk duet song which expresses the emotional worlds and day-to-day life experience of the rural populace and migrant working class (Stirr, 2018)

accompany the Thakuri's¹⁸ wedding ceremony but later on, it became so popular as Damai musician had incorporated in their ensemble, and was no more confined to the Thakuris anymore. However there is no any literary evidence and secondary data related to this issue and this has been entirely based on the field view. The respondents also claimed that earlier musician used instrument called *karnal* instead of narsingha in their ensemble. The karnal is a conical-bore natural trumpet played in pairs, an instrument which has a long history of use for military purposes (Tingey, 1990). Now, Damai musician sometime even use both karnal and narsingha instruments on social occasions.

4.9. Socio- Cultural Significance of Naumati Baja

The significance of baja is varied according to place and occasions. Generally, in the context of Nepal, the baja is especially found in the Devi (goddess) temples and places where the social occasions are conducted including sacred thread ceremony, wedding, rice feeding ceremony (*pasna*) etc. During rituals, this type of music is for divine rather than human consumption. The function of baja is complex in all contexts that appear to have an auspicious role and status symbol. The economic background of the family determined the numbers of the musician playing baja wedding (Tingey, 1990).

In the present scenario, the music is being played in *devithan* (goddess temples) having same symbolic meaning as before. Other social occasions where baja is still relevant includes occasions like *bethi*, *pasna*, *barthaman*, *chaurasi*¹⁹, *beha* (wedding) etc. however the mandatories have been relaxed to a great extent. Concurrently, one new trend noticed is that society is also adopting the culture of folk

¹⁸The *Thakuri* is one of the Nepali sub-castes who are descendent from *Khas* people traditionally ruling and warrior classes.

¹⁹ Eighty-four birth anniversary.

music in many other non-traditional occasions like the tourism festivals, *mela*²⁰ and other public gathering. The traditional of Naumati baja is significantly use to symbolize the social status and prestige of wedding family, and to bless the wedding couple. People also have a firm belief such music will bring good luck and fortune to wedding couple and their family too. In addition, the sole objective of music for entertainment purpose in the wedding cannot be ignored.

One of the major changes noticed that have been observed is the role and the significance of playing *ulto baja*²¹ during funeral procession is completely irrelevant in the present context of Nepal. However, Tingey (1990) states that the existence of Damai ulto baja during funeral processions was much visible when she had conducted the study. The recent development of not hiring the baja processions for funeral may be attributed to taking community baja as a symbol of joy and happiness instead of sorrow.

4.10. Costumes of Baja Players

The band of Naumati baja basically comprises ten members that involve nine musicians and one extra member, who usually look after their food and other logistics. Today, the band has their own dress code involving Nepali traditional dress i.e. *daura-suruwal*²², *sta coat*²³ and *dhaka topi*²⁴. Initially, such dress code was not prevalent among the musicians. Today, as per the demand of the day, the band members are conscious about their presentation and uniformity among the musician. Some of the members even interpret their dress code and attire as a mark of their

²⁰ Public event that is organized to celebrate a special cultural or religious fair or festival

²¹ *Uto baja* is a form or the combination of music played by the Damai musicians especially on funeral processions.

²² *Daura- Suruwal* is the traditional attire of Nepali community; it is a combination of kurta and trouser basically worn by Nepali men.

²³ Nepali traditional half coat that usually used to wear outer part of Dhaura.

²⁴ Nepali traditional brimless cap that is popular among Nepalis men.

musician identity in any social function. The dress code of Damai musician thus has become a new trend in Nepal, which the band members gets sometimes from the state or ruling political parties along with their instruments.

Plate 4.6 Members of Panchai Baja Sansakshan Samathi in their traditional uniform; Daura Suruwal and black blazer, in Milanton area, Bashishahar, Lamjung District.



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

4.11. Guthi: Community Welfare Social Organization

Singh (1994: 17) states that the level and mechanism of social control of the various communities are regulated by their traditional caste council, which is referred by different terminologies as *samaj* among the tribals, *panch* among the Rajput, *Jamat* among the Makrana and *Anjuman* among the Parsi. They are headed by a patil or pramukh who are elected by voice vote. The traditional council regulates the daily happenings within the village on the regional and inter-regional level. The main function of such councils is to bring solidarity among the members of the community, to punish the miscreants, to prevent the breach of customary law and to adjudicate in civil and other matters that may troubled the equilibrium of the communities (Singh, 1994: 17).

Similarly, in Gaikhur (Gorkha district) there are 185 Damai population²⁵ in thirty-eight Damai households along with some other communities in the vicinity has their own social organization. Most of the elderly people are dependent upon traditional occupation related to the music and tailor, and the youngsters are engaged in a non-traditional occupation as government service, army, daily wage labour and many of them have out-migrated abroad. The community's caste organization is called *Guthi*, which basically aims to maintain their solidarity within caste/community. The organization has around total forty-five members comprising all the Damai households of Gaikhur and additionally from the adjoining places like Pipla and Palungtar VDCs, which are located little far from the main Damai hub of Gaikhur village.

Members of this *Guthi* (organization) usually have an annual grand meeting cum feast as get-to-gather to understand the everyday life of the community members. On that particular day, all the members of the community come together, discuss and share about their problems in recent past and future prospects. *Guthi* has its own sets of rules and norms and every member have to support each other during the time of sorrow and happiness like death and marriage etc. Those who abstain themselves during such situation will face the consequences and are ostracized by the entire community. The community members usually organize a meeting annually in order to understand the kind of disagreement, inconvenience and grievances if any, which they have faced in the past year. Therefore, *Guthi* acts as a mechanism of social control as well as a medium to maintain social solidarity of community in the area.

²⁵According to NPHS, 2011 the average household sized of Nepal is 4.88. The total Damai population of Gaikhur VDC has been extracted through multiplying total Damai households (38) by average household size (4.88).

4.12. Initiatives for Preservation

In the present study, around one half of the total respondents states, that the government is taking initiatives in order to protect and continue the culture of Damai baja. Few respondents along with the president of an organization called *Panchai Baja Sanrakshan Samiti* of Milantol area, responded that the government had provided the entire sets of baja along with the costumes. It also made arrangement sometimes to impart training to their younger generation about their music and instruments.

However, in Gaikhur, Gorkha district although the government is trying to provide such initiatives, the band members did not accept it. Explaining the reasons for refusal, Daya Ram Pariyar (age 60), resident of Gaikhur advocates *“last time government had sanctioned seventy-five thousand rupees to Damai samudai (community) but we refused to take it because once we take such amount, we have to perform all the government programs in the surrounding areas free of cost, so we refused to accept it”*.

The initiatives availed by the musicians are varied from region to region. Those who are situated in the nearby bazaar areas are getting more benefits as they have more information flow and awareness about the initiatives, when compared to musicians of remote areas. People of Milantol area are comparatively getting more facilities than other areas like Gaikhur and Gaushahar because it is located around the vicinity of Bashishahar municipality, the district headquarter of Lamjung district. And the areas, which are deprived from such initiatives, are located in the remote areas where people have to put extra effort to reach its main offices. Some band members

expressed their grievances to the government officers and *Nagarpalika*²⁶ requesting for the distribution of baja as their instruments are getting old and outdated, but reported that they did not get any response from them yet.

The study highlighted that there are few respondents, who are genuinely concerned about their folk baja culture. However, during the field survey, none of the respondents was reported to be involved in any kind of awareness campaign in relation to their traditional baja voluntarily at individual level. However, an organization called *Panchai Baja Sansakshan Samiti* in the Damai settlement areas has been imparting training and making upcoming generation aware about their musical traditional culture and heritage. They play baja within their community (Damai) free of cost during social occasion such as marriages. Sometimes they also charge less, if the hiring family is economically unstable and known to them personally.

Plate 4.7 Interviews with Kazi Ram Pariyar, President of Panchai Baja Sansakshan Samithi. The person next to him is repairing musical instrument, Damaha.



Source: Fieldwork Nepal, December 2016- February 2017.

²⁶ Municipal council.

The study made it amply clear that despite the challenges thrown by social change, there are also certain mechanisms in the society, which try to resist such changes and revive the age-old culture of Naumati baja. In both the Gorkha and Lamjung districts of Western Nepal, both the government and community members are trying hard to revive the culture. The government is helping the community by providing entire sets of musical instruments, dress and some other form of incentives. In the history of democratic Nepal, the Maoists government for the first time took such initiative after they came into the political power in 2006. Besides, some organizations have been working to protect and promote the culture of Naumati baja, so that it is continued and sustain for the future generation.

The continuation and flourishing of such traditional culture of Naumati baja need supports from all aspects of society i.e. from individuals, family, society and state. Ram Saran Darnel (1993: 31) aptly pointed out, how could I complain about the status of Nepali music when even my own legacy is questionable. When my own children are unknown to family's traditional music. *“When I see one an engineer, another an archaeologist and my college going son, daughter and daughter-in-law, sometime I think perhaps I have done right. But when they complained that I have kept them away from music, I feel bad. Perhaps everyone is in a dilemma”*.

4.13. Tourism and Naumati Baja

The musician respondents has pointed out there is a strong connection between the tourism and thriving of baja culture in area like Gaunshahr (Lamjung district), which is famous for village tourism and home stays. These places are the gateway of Annapurna circuit, which attracts many tourists annually- both the domestic and foreigners. Due to its scenic beauty and historical heritage, this place also provides an

opportunity to be familiar with the local life style and culture while staying in home stay.

Out of the total respondents 69 percent said, people often invites the musical team during tourist arrival basically to showcase their tradition folk music in order to welcome and entertain their visitors/tourists. Thus, thriving tourism is becoming good source of income among the wide range of population, who are directly or indirectly involved on it and also as medium and platform for promoting Damai baja in the region. In Gaikhur, musicians are often invited to perform baja to welcome the Japanese tourist. Explaining the importance of baja in tourism, one of the musician enthusiastically stated that *“tourists always wanted to see something genuine/original culture and artifacts of land, which they have never seen before and they think that Damai baja is the best thing to represent their land. Some also feel that the popularity of baja increases is mainly because it is considered to be the Rastraya baja (National musical instrument) of Nepal”*.

Therefore, using Merton’s concept, tourism serves both the manifest and latent functions in this context. By generating a good source of income through various avenues, it serves the manifest function of good earning generation that provides livelihood for many, while it also keep the culture of community baja alive by motivating musicians, thus contributing to cultural promotion in latent form.

4.14. Conclusion.

The present chapter basically made an attempt to comprehend the status as well as continuity and changes in the traditional folk music of Damai community in Nepal. Based on primary data and field accounts, the chapter revealed various dimensions of folk music challenges as well as the changing dynamics. As elsewhere, the

community as well as tradition of Naumati baja in the study area has not remained unaffected by the wider socio- economic and cultural changes that has affected social structure of Nepal. The increasing level of education, changing occupational pattern, the cultural trend of out-migration, various employment opportunities and the awareness and consciousness of social status among the community members are some of the biggest challenges that posed threat to the culture of Naumati baja.

In addition to challenges, the chapter also touched upon many interesting observations, which indicates the positive aspects in terms of continuity of traditional music. The initiatives and mechanisms adopted at community and state level to promote culture by imparting training to youngsters and also by providing various incentives and platform to showcase the traditional music is contributing as motivating factors for preservation. Amongst other fascinating field observations, the shift of musical occupation beyond community and acceptance across religion, as well as the trend of cultural revivalism presents a ray of hope for better future for this endangered culture for its continuity, despite challenges posed by the changing socio-economic realities of Nepal.

With a comprehensive discussion on status of Naumati baja in Nepal in the present chapter, the next chapter based on field view will focus on extensive discussion on issues of continuity and change of traditional occupation in Sikkim, which will provide the base for comparative assessment of the status of folk music beyond the borders.

CHAPTER 5

Status of Damai Traditional Folk Music in Sikkim

5.1. Introduction

Damai community in Sikkim need to be understood with reference to the larger Nepali community, which is regarded as one of the predominant ethnic group in Sikkim and constitutes approximately 70 per cent of its total population. The Nepali community in the state is a generic term and encompasses eighteen communities viz., *Bahun, Chettri, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Rai, Gurung, Limboo, Magar, Tamang* etc. (SSEC, 2006), each community having their distinct socio-cultural identity. With the history of Nepali settlement in Sikkim which has been exhaustively discussed in the second chapter, it can be reiterated here that the entry of Nepali communities have got momentum when British encouraged their settlement on this part of the land (Dutta, 1981; Sinha, 2009: 280; Dewan, 2012). Later the local feudal elites played a vital role in promoting Nepalese settlement in Sikkim by providing land rights (Sinha, 1975: 283). Consequently, their population reached about 60 per cent at the middle of twentieth century (Dutt, 1981). However, whether the whole of the Nepali diaspora community has been descended from Nepal is controversial because as Hutt, (2005: 103) claimed that there were probably villages inhabited by Limbus and Magars (People now often classified as Nepali) before huge Nepali migration in Sikkim in 18th century.

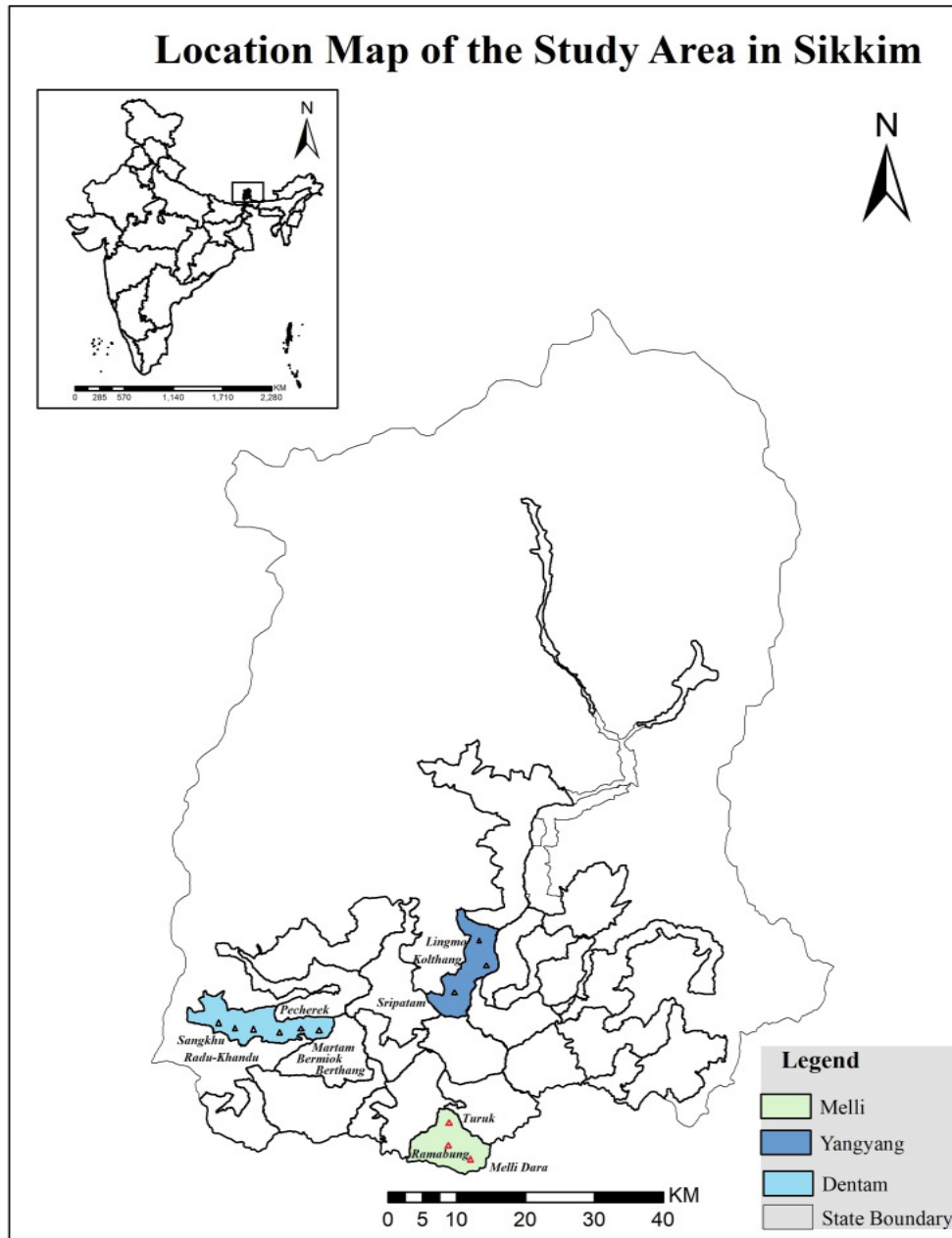
The historical evidence highlights that Newars came to this land with the inception of copper mining and minting activities during 1769 soon after the Gorkha conquest of Nepal (Shrestha, 2005). Such activities among the Lamaist Kazis in Sikkim were regarded as taboo (Dutta, 1965). These newly arrived Nepal

communities could take lease of land from the Sikkimese administration thus in course of time they acquired the title of *Thikadar*²⁷ (Sinha, 1975: 21). Gradually they have been able to occupy a good position in the society due to their hard work, loyalty and dedication. They have contributed enough for the development and shaping the image of Sikkim.

Along with them many other service castes like *Kami*, *Damai*, and *Sarki* also came to this part in order to provide their services to the higher castes like the *Bahun*s and the *Chettris*. Therefore, the origin and settlement of Damai Community in Sikkim may be traced back to this period of the migration and settlement of various service castes. As in Nepal, Damai community in Sikkim also occupies low position in the caste hierarchy as discussed in the previous chapter. The community has been categorized as Scheduled Caste (SC) in 1978, by virtue of which, the SC category enjoys reservation and other incentives in employment in public sector, education and as well as legislative assemblies. Like Nepal, Damai community in Sikkim also has the traditional occupation of playing and performing the folk musical ensemble Naumati baja during social occasions. The state has 4.63 per cent of SCs population out of which 30.8 per cent comprises Damais (2011) population living in 2345 total households (SSEC, 2006). With a total Population of 10,580 the Damai community accounts to 1.73 percent of state's population.

²⁷ They were the rent collectors and dispute mediators.

Map 5.1



Source: Prepared by author

5.2. Field Setting

Geographically, Damai community has been scattered almost all the districts of Sikkim. The highest population of the community is concentrated in East district with 55 percent followed by South (22.4 per cent) and West (18 per cent). The North

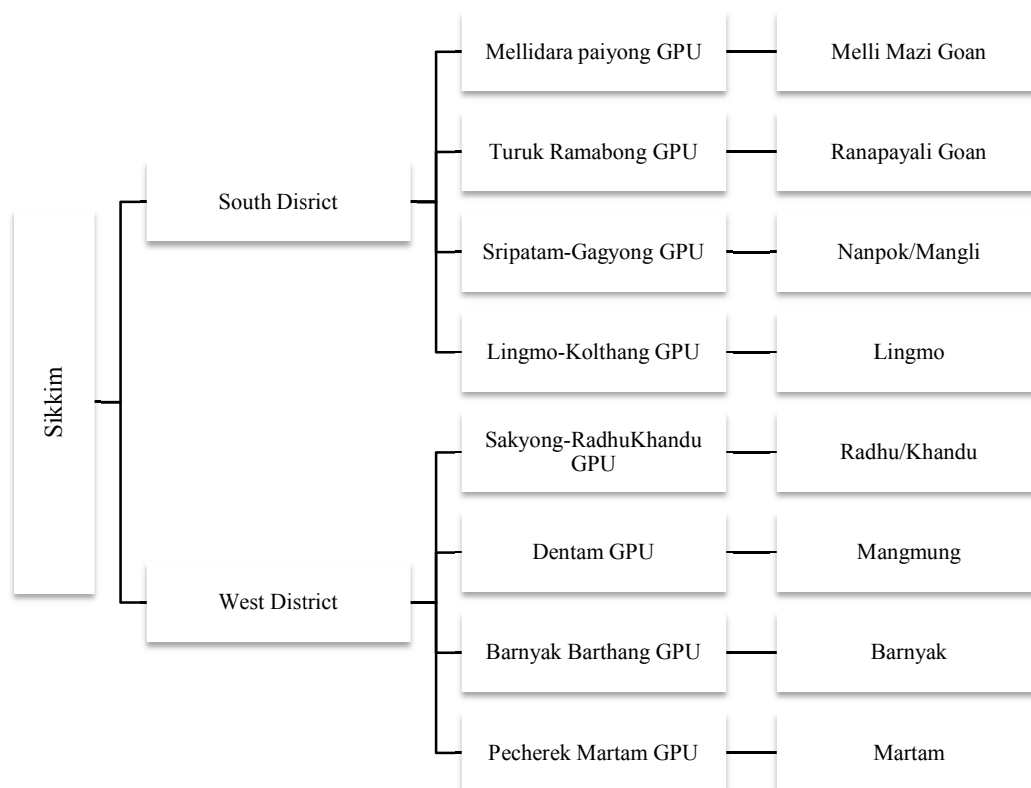
district has least Damai population (4 per cent), because the major portion of the North district falls under the protected land inhabited by the communities, Lepcha and Bhutia. The sample population has been collected from the pockets with community concentration from two districts of South and West Sikkim, in order to understand the nature of continuity and change in the traditional folk music in the context of Sikkim. As pilot study showed that few Damai populations of these areas are still following their traditional occupation. The study does not include East district despite having largest Damai population because 48 percent of its Damai population are concentrated in urban centers, as chances of existence of traditional occupation is relatively less than other districts. The concentration of Damai populations in villages of West and South districts of Sikkim are comparatively higher. As per the census 2011, 93 per cent Damai population of West district and 84 per cent of South district lives in the rural areas.

5.2.1. Location and Population of Study Area

The primary data for the present study has been obtained from the various villages under the different Gram Panchayat Units (GPU). From the South district, the sample has been collected from Melli Mazi Goan, Ranapayali Goan (Upper Ramabong), Lingmo, and Nampok and Mangli under Sripatam- Gagyong GPU, whereas in the West Sikkim, the sample respondents have been collected from, Lower Mangmung, Barnyak, Martam, and Radhu/Khandu under Sankhu Radhu Khandu GPU.

Diagram 5.1

Flow Chart of Study Areas in Sikkim



Source: Prepared by author.

The SSEC 2006 recorded the total population of respective sampled GPUs as follows: Mellidara Paiyong (6,333), Turuk Ramabong (3,000), Sripatam- Gagyong (4,135) and Lingmo- Kolthang (1,906). A comparative figure of all GPUs of South Sikkim shows that the highest percentage of Damai population is in Mellidara Paiyon GPU with 4.6 per cent of total population followed by Sripatam- Gagyong GPU (4.1 per cent), Turuk Ramabong GPU (3.8 per cent) and Lingmo- Kolthang GPU (2.4 per cent).

Similarly in the West Sikkim the highest percentage of Damai population concentration is found in Dentam GPU (4.8 per cent). The remaining three GPUs viz; Sankhu Radhu Khandu, Barnyak Barthang and Pecherek Martam have population concentration of equal 2 per cent to the respective total population of GPUs.

Table 5.1 Percentage of Damai Population under Different GPUs in South and West Sikkim

	GPUs	Total population	Percentage of Damai population to Total population of GPU
SOUTH SIKKIM	Mellidara Paiyong	6333	4.6%
	Sripatam- Gagyong	4135	4.1%
	Turuk Ramabong	3000	3.8%
	Lingmo-Kolthang	1906	2.4%
WEST SIKKIM	Barnyak Barthang	2961	2%
	Pecherek Martam	2834	2%
	Sankhu- RadhuKhandu	3610	2%
	Dentam	3375	4.8%
	State	12322	2.1%

Source: SSEC 2006.

5.2.2. Sample Size

The sample has been collected from eight different villages, which falls under the different GPUs of South and West districts. There are two basic reasons for incorporating large number of Damai settlements. Firstly, it was difficult to collect required information especially those involved in traditional occupation of Naumati baja from the limited Damai settlements, which is scattered and thinly populated. Secondly, such incorporation also provides much wider perspectives to understand the situation of continuity and change regarding their traditional occupation.

The sample size varies from village to village as it is based on the availability of member who has been involved and had a lived experiences about their traditional music and instruments. The different settlement selected for the study comprises at least 2 per cent of Damai population to the total population of the settlement. As compared to other GPUs, Dentam with 4.8 per cent consists the highest number of Damai population, which is double than the state average Damai population. The highest number of respondents consisting of 14.3 per cent of total respondents was taken from three villages of West Sikkim and two villages of South district whereas the lowest percentage of 7.1 per cent was taken from Martam (West) followed by Lingmo (11.4 per cent) and Ranapayali Goan (10 per cent) from South district of Sikkim. The village wise sample population and percentage is mentioned in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Study Areas and Sample Size

Name of the villages	GPU	District	Distribution of Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
Radhu/Khandu	Sankhu- Radhu Khandu	West District	10	14.30
Mangmung	Dentam		10	14.30
Barnyak	Barnyak Barthang		10	14.30
Martam	Pecherek Martam		5	7.10
	Total		35	50.00
Melli Mazi Goan	Mellidara Paiyong GPU	South District	10	14.30
Ranapayali Goan	Turuk Ramabong GPU		8	11.40
Nampok/Mangli	Sripatam- Gagyong GPU		10	14.30
Lingmo	Lingmo-Kolthang		7	10.00
	Total		35	50 .00
Grand Total			70	100.00

Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

5.3. Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

5.3.1. Social Status of Respondents

Damai community traditionally occupies low social status in the Nepali caste hierarchy. Therefore, the issue of caste discrimination remains almost same as Nepal however being a Buddhist kingdom earlier the degree of social discrimination might vary in Sikkimese context. Out of the total respondents 82.86 per cent, those who have crossed the age of thirty-one had experienced the caste-based discrimination during social occasions as well as in day-to-day life. However, the remaining those who are younger and belong to new generation reported that they did not experience such discrimination, as they feel that society has changed and the law protect them from such discrimination and injustice. Some of the old respondents expressed their situation was pathetic in the past, where they had to face several discrimination both in everyday and professional life which was indeed intolerable and inhuman. They were not allowed to inter-dine, assemble and interact with other communities during social occasions, when they were invited as folk musician. The respondents also stated that they were not allowed to fetch the drinking water from the same *dhara* (spring, pond). Narrating his experience of humiliation in the past, an old respondent, aged 61 shared how in case of a person of higher caste coming from the other direction in the same route, they had to leave or take alternative route or wait until the higher castes people passed through. They were also not allowed to enter the house of a person who had higher position in the caste hierarchy. The respondent also reported that even today such discriminatory culture and practices prevails in some of the remotest place, especially by the older generations of higher caste.

The study revealed that, as compared to past, society has become much more liberal and flexible in terms of caste-based discrimination. The respondents reported that now they do not face harsh discrimination and are treated at par. Many factors are accountable for such change. The policies of protective discrimination, right to equality as guaranteed in the Indian Constitution, introduction of various empowerment and welfare schemes for the upliftment of SCs, modern education etc. have been contributory factors for diminishing such discrimination and their upliftment, that has a positive impact in inter community social interaction. An old respondent aged 71, resident of Mazi Goan, Melli states *“As compared to earlier time, we musicians get better treatment both in social occasions and day to day life. In the past, the society was very harsh towards our community”* He quoted a Nepali saying *“hirney bela ma aagari, khaney balama ma sungur ko khor munii”*.... meaning we lead marriage procession in front but at the time of dining we were excluded and treated worse than swine.

The respondents stated that if they face any kind of discrimination in social occasion or in day-to-day life today, they have legal protection and can raise their voice. They even stop playing baja in the middle of functions and leave, if such discriminatory practice comes from the client or audience. One young respondent baja player said, now they are concerned about their social prestige which cannot be compromised at any cost. *Naikey*²⁸ of Melli Mazi Goan advocates, *“Before accepting any kind of invitation from client, we ensure that such social discrimination does not take place. When the client come to invite us for any social occasion and offer baina*²⁹, *we tell them all the terms and condition related to our accommodation, food*

²⁸*Naikey* denote the head of Damai musical band.

²⁹*Baina* is a Nepali term which signifies the advance booking payment for baja player.

and travels and also strictly warn them not try to create any issue of social discrimination”.

More than 90 per cent of the total respondents who are still actively involved with traditional folk music as a part-time profession claimed that at present they enjoy comparatively better social status and treatment.

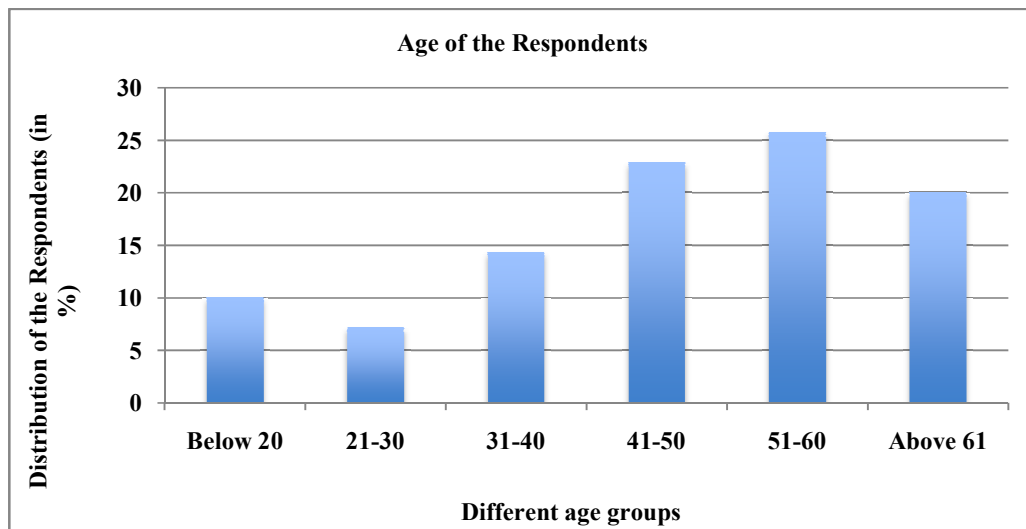
5.3.2. Age of the Respondents

As in the case of Nepal, this study took age as variable to incorporated respondents having different age groups basically to bring various perspectives and see intergenerational trend of their engagement in traditional music. Out of the total respondents, majority i.e. 25.71 per cent belongs to the age group of fifty-one to sixty followed by age group between forty- one to fifty (22.86 per cent). The age of above sixty-one years comprises 20 per cent. The empirical situation shows that the respondents who are above the age of forty-one are still continuing and are engaged in their old age legacy of folk music and instruments, as earlier the society was relatively rigid in terms of free choice of occupation. Also having lacked cultural capital like educational degree and required skill, they had very limited opportunity for other employment opportunities. Poverty was also one of the factors. 14.29 per cent of the respondents' were in the age group between thirty-one to forty year. The least number of the respondents belongs to the age group between twenty-one to thirty years and consists only 7.14 per cent of the total respondents. Further age distribution is provided in chart 5.1.

An impressive number of the respondents also belonged to the young age and are below twenty years which consists around 10 per cent of the total respondents; out of which 7.14 per cent of them are students, who actively participate in traditional

music during their school vacation. This part time work gives them opportunity to earn extra bucks as pocket money. Few senior respondents shared that at their early age, children enthusiastically participates in social occasions but once they are matured, they start losing their interest and feel ashamed of involving on it. Narrating his experience, one respondent reported *“When our children, see us playing Baja in some occasions, sometimes our children pretend as if they do not know us and ignore us”*. Similarly, one of the young student respondent shared that *“I feel ashamed of playing or associating with our traditional folk music and instruments during social occasions in and around village because whenever my friends encounters me along with traditional baja, they perceive differently and obviously not in positive way. I often feel worried about how do they perceive and treat me”*.

Chart 5.1



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

5.3.3. Religious Composition of Respondents

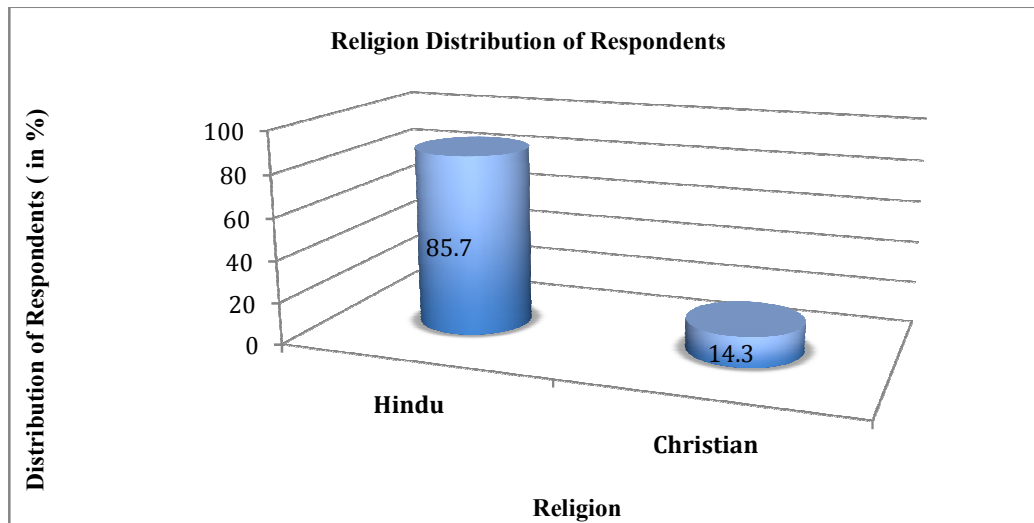
Sikkim was a Buddhist kingdom before it became a part of Indian union. The religious composition of Sikkim after its merger with India reflects the true secular

character. The state population comprises all the major religious groups including Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian. According to 2011 Census, Hinduism is the most dominant religious group accounting to more than half of the state's population i.e. 58 per cent followed by 27 per cent of Buddhist and 10 per cent of Christian population. Over the last five years, the Christian population in the state has been raised by 2.53 per cent, whereas Buddhist population decreased by 2.21 per cent, however the Hindu population remains stagnant as recorded in SSEC 2006. District wise, with 14.6 per cent South Sikkim consists of more than the state average percentage of Christian population. West Sikkim consists 55.18 per cent of Hindu population, which is almost equal to state average Hindu population.

In Sikkim more than half its total population follows Hinduism because the major ethnic group, Nepali are traditionally Hindu which comprises one- third of its total state population. The Scheduled Tribes communities including Bhutia, Lepcha etc. are predominantly Buddhist. A section of populations from almost all ethnic groups are Christians. Further SSEC 2006 revealed that out of the total Christian population 15.53 per cent are Scheduled caste communities that include Kami, Damai and Sarki.

The study found that the 85.7 per cent of Damai respondents located in different parts of the Sikkim are still following their age-old religion, Hinduism and the remaining 14.3 per cent are Christians as shown in chart 5.2. The influence of Christianity is much more visible in some places of South Sikkim especially in Ramapayali Goan and Melli Mazi Goan. In case of Ranapayali Goan, except a single Damai family, the entire Damai community is converted into Christianity, which is discussed in detail in the later section. Few families in Melli Mazi Goan have been also recently converted to Christianity.

Chart 5.2



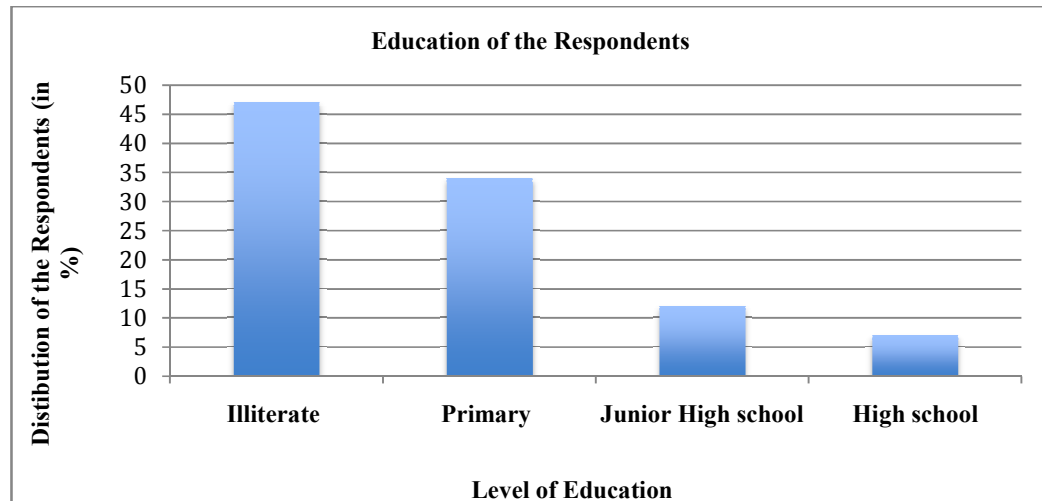
Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

5.3.4. Educational Status of Respondents

The study revealed that out of the total respondents, 47 per cent are illiterate, 34 per cent had attended primary level of education, 12 per cent studied up to the Junior High School or middle school and the remaining 7 per cent reached up to the class ten level. From this it can be correlated that the population who are associated with traditional occupational folk music and instruments are mostly illiterate or having attend low level of education. Mostly, those respondents are above the age group of 50 years who have never experienced schooling due the lack of educational facilities, before Sikkim became part of India, when educational opportunities to common masses was restricted. Historically till the first half of the 20th century educational facilities for the common masses was negligible and limited to certain section (Dewan, 2012: 32). The major educational initiatives taken by the democratic government after Sikkim became a part of Indian union, has been widely contributing to the increased literacy rate and educational level of all sections in Sikkim and Damai community is also no exception. Further details regarding the educational

status of the respondents and its impact on traditional music has been discussed in the later section.

Chart 5.3



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

5.3.5. Occupational Pattern of Respondents

The study found that there are many changes taking in terms of occupational pattern of the community in the present scenario of Sikkim. Previously they were confined to traditional occupation but now the occupational scope has been broadened. Despite few engaged in traditional occupation of music, they have also found to be engaged in other sectors that require specific skills, specialization and qualification.

The study shows that now the Damai respondents are involved in diverse occupations extending from government service, tailoring, farmer, self-employed, wage labour, dairy farming, taxi driver etc. Chart 5.4 shows the highest number of respondents that comprises 37.14 engaged in agriculture related work because 67 per cent (Census, 2011) of them are settled in the rural villages where agriculture is dominant. 61.43 per cent of the respondents have their own agricultural land and the

remaining 38.57 per cent cultivate other's land in contractual basis. The local land contractual agreement is known by different Nepali terms like *Kutia*³⁰, *Aadhaya*³¹ and *Tanam*³². The respondents settled in the Lingmo, Nampok and Mangli have been cultivating land as *Kutia and Aadhaya*. And in the case of Melli Mazi Goan where around eighteen Damai households stay, they cultivate land in *Tanam* basis where they pay cash yearly according to the landholding size.

Besides this, considerable number of the respondents consisting of 22.86 per cent of the total respondents are also involved in tailoring. Some of them have opted this occupation and are doing in commercial way as they hired a room in nearby market area and started tailoring shop, while some are operating from their home only. Especially in case of rural area where the numbers of customers are less, these tailors are preferred by customers only for small works as altering, repairing and stitching items like cushion cover, curtains, etc. Tailoring in the commercial and bigger scale mostly monopolized by Muslim tailors from other states of India especially in town areas. Among others, an equal number of respondents consisting 10 per cent each have been involved in wage labour and self-employment.

A section of the respondents i.e. 7.14 percent also belong to students who usually join the musical group during their school vacation. That way, they can earn some extra pocket money and enjoy their relatives' company too. An equal percentage of respondents are involved in work like animal rearing and dairy farming. Other 2.86 per cent are drivers. The study shows that upcoming generation are attracted to the driving profession as it is easily accessible, required limited educational qualification and easy source of earning which do not required much effort. An equal number of

³⁰*Kutia* is a form of tenancy, where the cultivator pays a stipulated fixed amount to the owner.

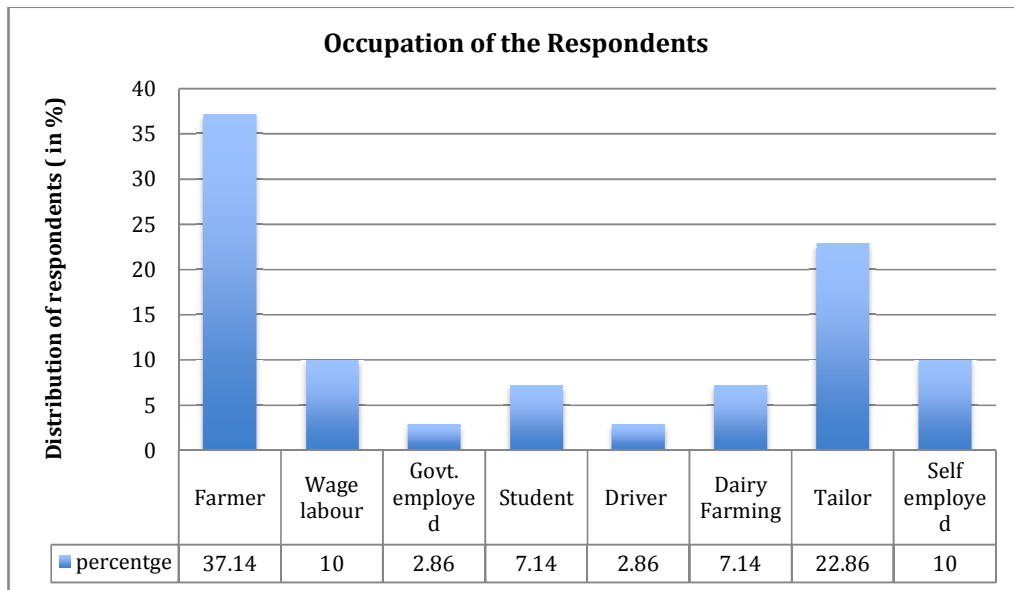
³¹While *Aadhaya* is the form of contractual sharecropper.

³²*Tanam* is also a form of tenancy in which the fixed rate of yearly lease for the acquired land should be paid.

respondents 2.86 per cent are also engaged in government sector. The community involvement in organized sector is still comparatively less despite having certain reserved quotas in the state and central government. It may be due to their lack of cultural capital and awareness level.

The changing profile of education and emerging employment opportunities are the basic reasons behind such occupational shift among the community. The youngsters are not found interested in their traditional occupation associated to music and instruments as they consider the occupation lacking both the social and economic security. Respondents also stated that once they are involved in such occupation, society perceive and treat them in a demeaning way which compels them to think twice before holding their musical ensemble. One of the respondent of Melli Mazi Goan, South Sikkim interestingly highlighted that *“our traditional occupation related to folk music and instrument is not accepted by the budding and young community members at present, as they feel it lacks the social security because of attachment of low social status and is also subjected to caste based discrimination. It also does not have economic security because it has seasonal demand in nature, therefore is economically not sustainable”*.

Chart 5. 4



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

5.3.6. Income of the Respondents

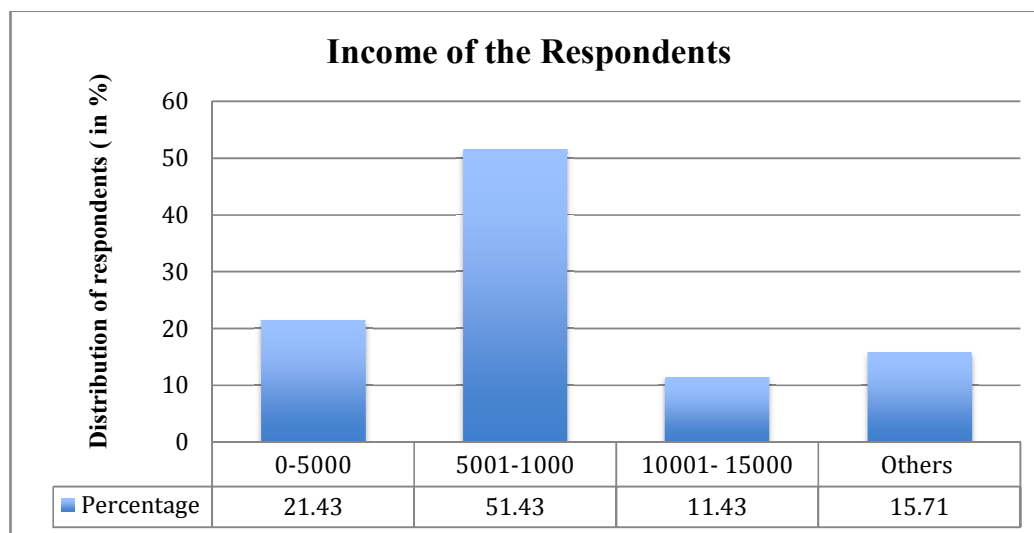
The economic status of the population varies from respondent to respondent despite having their involvement in the same kind of traditional occupation, which is seasonal in nature. It was found that beside the main occupation they opt agriculture as an alternative or part-time work as a source of supplementary income. The study found that economic status of the respondents is more determined by other form of occupations, which provides them steady and constant source of income, then by their traditional occupation of playing baja. Therefore, the income varies among the respondents, which has been highlighted in Chart 5.5. Out of the total respondents, majority consisting of 51.43 per cent of the total respondents earn monthly income in between Rs. 5001- 10000. They are mostly agricultural farmers who hold a good amount of productive land, taxi drivers and self-employed. 21.43 per of the total respondents earn the lowest monthly income below five thousand per month; this

group consists of daily wage labour, farmers having small agricultural land, those involved in home-based tailoring. Further, it also includes the respondents availing old age pension/allowance³³ from the state government. As compared to other income category, the number of respondents who have been earning between Rs. 10001-15000 is lowest consisting only 11.43 per cent of the total respondents. They are mostly involved in government jobs and tailoring business who established their profession in commercial way by opening tailoring shop in nearby market areas, where they have good number of customers. Besides that around 16 per cent of the respondents categorized as others includes young students, who are involved in playing Naumati baja during their school vacation and old age people who do not have any stable source of income.

Traditionally, apart from the cultural aspect, Naumati baja also had the economic importance for the Damai community, as it was main occupation and source of livelihood. However, the field study revealed that in the present scenario, an economic aspect of the Naumati baja, as an important source of livelihood has been challenged due to many factors such as adoption of electronic media and the growing cultural assimilation in Sikkimese society. As opined one of the respondent of West Sikkim “*comparatively the income of Naumati baja has gone down basically due to the adoption of electronic musical devices during social occasion as people take it as more reliable and cost effective as compared to Naumati baja. Moreover electronic devices are easier to manage*”.

³³In 2014 Social justice, Empowerment & Welfare Department, govt. of Sikkim started the scheme Indira Gandhi National old age pension to provide certain monthly financial support to the local resident (Lepcha, Bhutia & Nepali) who have been at the age group of sixty and above.

Chart 5.5



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

5.4. Factors Affecting Folk Music of Damai Community

There are many factors encountered in the field that affected the culture of community folk music and instruments in the present context of Sikkim. Some factors are universal in nature and some are context specific as differs from village to village. A detailed discussion on contributory factors affecting Naumati baja in Sikkimese context has been dealt in following section:

5.4.1. Changing Religion and its Impact on Traditional Occupation

The community has been following the Hindu religion since time immemorial. Nepal being the Hindu nation, earlier there was no religious freedom and religious conversion was strictly prohibited. Molk (2012) revealed that in case of religious conversion people were imprisoned for a year and in case anybody attempt to convert others, then the imprisonment would be more around six years. The state considered such act of conversion as against the law and treated them as traitors because it was considered as rejection of all the Hindu customs, rituals and believes. In the past,

many attempts have been made by the Christian missionaries to proselytize the local population, however without much success. The interim constitution was drafted in March 2007 that declared Nepal as a secular country and such rigid restriction of religious conversion was lifted (Dahal, 2016).

But on the other hand, Sikkim the former Buddhist Kingdom adopted the democratic set up in 1975. Although the proselytization of Christian missionaries in Sikkim started by J. C White in 1892 (Foning, 1987), however, being a Buddhist Kingdom, Christian population constituted a very small section. The evident of the fact is that Christian population comprised 0.79 % of total population in 1971, few years before Sikkim became part of Indian union. Since 1975, perception regarding religious conversion has become more open and conversion to Christianity has steadily increased in recent years which is reflected in the increased Christians population from 6.67 percent in 2001 (Census, 2001 and also extracted from <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/DigitalLib...>) to 7.63 in 2006 (SSEC, 2006) and to 9.91 per cent in 2011 (Census, 2011), the growth rate being 3.27 percent within a decade from 2001 to 2011.

Table 5.3 Decadal growth of Christian population in Sikkim

Year	1971	1981	1991	2001	2006	2011
Christian population	0.79%	2.21%	3.3%	6.67%	7.63%	9.91%

Source: census of India, the first Religion report Data, P.XXXiii, state socio-economic census 2006 and census 2011.

Over the last few decades, the religious conversion among the Damai community has been noticed despite traditionally being Hindus. In order to

understand the impact of religious conversion in the traditional Naumati baja of the community, a case study of a village predominantly inhabited by the Damai community has been presented in the following section.

5.4.1.1. Ranapayali Village: A Case study of Religious Proselytization

The Damai population living in sampled settlements are predominantly Hindus by religion but majority of the Damai community along with other communities living in Ranapayali³⁴ Goan at Upper Ramabong area, of Turuk Ramabiong (GPU), South Sikkim, are converted to Christianity.

When compared to other sampled GPUs, Turuk Ramabong consists the highest number of Christian population i.e. 23.26 per cent of its total population. An interview with the respondents revealed that there are sixteen Damai households in total, out of which 87.5 per cent are Christians and the remaining are Hindus. Besides that, 10 per cent of Christian Damai households are also found in Melli Mazi Goan under Mellidara Paiyong GPU in South Sikkim.

5.4.1.2. Reasons Behind Religious Conversion

In order to understand the reasons behind the religious proselytization among the Damai community of this particular village, we need to comprehend the issue from the wider perspective and through the lens of the caste system and changing socio-economic reality. Pattisson (2017) said Nepal is one of the fastest growing Christian populations in the world, where more than a million people are identified as Christians. The Federation of National Christian Nepal (NFNC) recorded 65 per cent of Christians are untouchables, who continue to suffer discrimination and abuse. Such

³⁴There are many sub-castes present within a caste; Ranapayali is one such sub-caste of Damai community.

conversion appears to have more to do with discrimination, health and poverty than pure religious belief.

Trofimov (2007) also made a similar argument in the context of India, where a huge number of untouchables (Dalits) are turning to Christianity, attracted by benefits like education and health care that are sometimes offered by western funded congregations. This allows them to seek opportunities beyond the government sector in the booming information- technology and service industries that put a premium on the westernized outlook and English language skills. Religious conversion provided them with the best way to escape from the vicious circle of the caste system that provides very low status.

Contextually locating in the Ranapayali Village, there are similar reasons behind such religious conversion that includes the issue of social status, alcoholism, poverty and social exclusions. The empirical study suggests that except very few young members, majority of respondents have experienced the issue of social discrimination during social occasions and everyday life. They perceive that the main reasons behind the social discrimination and low social status is the caste system rooted in Hinduism, therefore justified their conversion to Christianity that could provide equality and better social status in the society.

5.4.1.2.1. Poverty

Poverty is one of the major challenges for the community. Traditionally, being Hindu, it was socially obligatory to perform many religious ceremonies and rituals during rite of passage, which was a major source of economic burden, although it served the purpose of social support and community bonding. The macro level data shows that income level of the community in the state is comparatively low. The SSEC data 2006

recorded 2345 total Damai households in Sikkim and out of which 66.2 per cent Damai households earn below Rs. 5000/ per month and only 2 percent of Damai households having a higher source of income i.e. above Rs. 25000 per month. Few respondents in the field also reported the economic burden of social obligations and low income level for conversion, thus provides another justification for conversion to Christianity as they do not have to worry about such expenses and also get good social and moral support from the *Mandali*³⁵ during the crisis and other social occasions. The empirical findings thus projects almost similar situation as studied by Pattison (2017) in Nepal.

5.4.1.2. 2. Alcoholism

Alcoholism is also a major reason behind such religious conversion. Use of *raksi*³⁶ is socially and culturally sanctioned among various communities of Nepali, who have been residing in different geographical landscape including Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling. Use of *raksi* has been closely connected to socio-cultural practices and religious belief systems and is needed during rituals and at social event like marriages, birth etc. The use of *raksi* has always been culturally legitimized among the Nepali low castes, *Matawalis* and the indigenous tribes, hence also common among the Damai community, who are known for their liquor drinking habit. Similar finding was reported by the respondents regarding the problem of alcoholism in the area. This is also substantiated by SSEC data of 2006 which revealed 38.81 per cent of Damai population of the state consumed alcohol in the state, which projects a serious social issues among the community.

³⁵Christian religious congregation in the hills of Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalampong is often term as Mandali.

³⁶Nepali locally brewed alcohol.

Historically, drinking habits among the Nepalese society was popularized after the world wars, when mass Nepalese soldiers were recruited and got excess alcohol in camps. Likewise, the process of home production of such alcohol for sale and establishments of *bhatti*³⁷ and *raksi* in rural and urban settlements probably rooted after 1918, when the soldiers returned with cash, new desires and consumerist culture (Subedi, 1999; Shah, 2000). Gradually, such habit of excessive drinking and rapid socialization in society began to succumb to their traditional values and norms (Dhital, et. al., 2001).

Consequently, an alcohol consumption habit among the community has begun to hamper their family and social life. The respondents opined that traditional occupation related to music is mostly confined to the rituals and religious events, from where they could easily access to drinking as they are being served and later became addicted. So, they found the religious conversion as the best possible way to encounter the issue of alcoholism.

A 55 years old lady who is a wife of *naika*³⁸, a resident Ranapayali Goan states, *“What was happening was most of the male member used to drink raksi and that was spoiling the family and social life. Whenever they were invited to grace the social occasion with their traditional baja, usually they used to get drunk and get beaten up by local public and were ridiculed. Hence, the family member often does not allow our elder member to participate on such occasion because, if the situation turns chaos, they cannot protect themselves. Now most of Damai family along with some other communities in this village are turning into Christianity, so that our coming generation will take the right path by abstaining from such habits. We are*

³⁷ Traditional pubs.

³⁸ *Naika* is a Nepali word, which signifies the leader of Naumati Baja team.

optimistic about religious conversion and we believe, it will led our community towards positive direction as once converted, we have to stay under the surveillance of religious community. If we do something against the doctrine of Christianity, we need to confess in front of god and mandali. Such strict regulation helps our members to come back in track”.

Many respondents highlighted the frequent use of alcohol by the musicians. There are few wind instruments like the *shantai* and *narsingha*, which cannot be played without consuming alcohol because instruments like these required extra energy and pressure to produce a quality sound. Some of them use alcohol for increasing the efficiency, so that they can perform well in the social occasions. However they also perceive that, sometimes such habit of alcohol consumption spoils the name and image of the whole team/band and community too. Therefore, in the present scenario, attempt is being made by community not to entertain such culture of alcohol consumption anymore among the musicians. In case anybody deviates and are found involved in excessive alcohol consumption, the group may boycott the member or take action by ousting them.

In the words of naika of Nampok/Mangli baja group “recently we have ousted two members from our group because they have been spoiling our group’s reputation by consuming excessive alcohol and misbehaving with the public/customer. Since we baja players are more concerned and demanding status and social prestige on social occasion, what I think we have to maintain our discipline first”.

5.4.2. Religion and Traditional Folk Music

Various literatures have shown that there are communities living in the Eastern Himalaya, who have been changing their religion to Christianity and its direct impact

on their tradition, rituals, customs etc. was quite visible. The studies also show the similar findings among many communities of in Nepal and Darjeeling.

Lepcha (2010) worked on religious conversion among the Lepcha in Darjeeling. Where he discussed with such changing notion of the religious faith, their earlier social customs and religion remained no more valid and their mode of worships, festivals, adopted norms and institutional practices get changed. Diana Riboli (2000) spent years on researching Chepang (one of Nepal's most disadvantaged indigenous group) about shamanism in the area around Manahari, where the findings stated that missionaries emphasized the healing aspect of Christianity, trying to put an end to the traditional rituals and charismatic power of the local shamans.

In the similar track, the religious conversion among Damai community is happening in search of new hope and aspirations. However, such conversion also has a reverse consequence on their rich traditional folk music and instruments. Along with Damai community, a considerable number of population of other communities in adjoining villages under the jurisdiction of Turuk- Ramabong GPU are also converted to Christianity which has further affected the remaining musicians. In the past, all Nepali Hindus invited musicians, however conversion of other communities in the surrounding areas greatly affected the demand of Naumati baja in immediate surrounding. Now the musicians have go far away to attend social occasion and earn money, which is quite strenuous as it requires both extra time and arrangement like travel cost, which causes inconvenience to the baja players. The older musician cannot attend and cater such long distanced demand due to their physical ailment. However, one interesting finding noticed was that despite being converted, a handful of Damai youth, who are the first generation Christian converts are indulged in baja

related work sometimes and are able to perform their music in the social occasion, no matter they have changed their religious faith. However, they opined that probably they are the last generation from their family to be associated with such occupation despite being restricted.

Nonetheless, a pertinent question arises here, will they be able to continue their traditional occupation related to folk music and instruments in future? Will their newly accepted religion create the hurdles between their religious faith and traditional profession, which is deeply rooted in Hindu faith and mythology? The baja player, who has been converted recently are the first generation Christian, who has the past experience of their traditional occupation and are socialized according to their traditional and cultural values system. But what will be the socialization pattern and process of upcoming Christian Damai generation? These are questions unanswered, which the future researchers need to explore.

5.4.3. Changing Educational Status and its Impact on Traditional Music

There is a correlation between the education level and the occupational pattern of an individual. An industrial society is the dominant form of society today where the level of education and skill determines the occupational choices. As an instrument or tool, education, knowledge and professional skill enables an individual to achieve better employment opportunity. Consequently, it also affects their traditional occupational system in some way.

Sikkim has prioritized educational sector and has initiated many inclusive educational policies like the SSA (*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2001*), MMSA (*Mukhya Mantri Saksharta Abhiyan, 2010*) and many more to enhance the literacy rate. SSEC, 2006 revealed that the literacy rate of Scheduled castes in Sikkim comprises to 77.46

per cent, which stood comparatively lower as compared to state. According to 2011 census Sikkim has an improved literacy rate of 82.2 % as compared to 68.81 % in 2001. The urban and rural literacy rates of Sikkim are 89.26 per cent and 79.82 per cent respectively, which are higher than the national urban and rural literacy rate of 74.04 per cent and 68.91 per cent (Census, 2011). The literacy rate of SCs stands at 85.4 per cent in urban Sikkim and 74.4 per cent in rural Sikkim as per 2011 Census. This shows that the state has been heading towards achieving its objective of 100 % literacy in the state.

The prioritization of the social sector, the universalization of elementary education have paved the way for higher education, and the Damai community too is responding positively to the state government efforts and initiatives. Since the community is availing educational opportunities in the state, it resulted in a shift in their traditional occupation leading to diversification of occupational pattern. In the present scenario, only a handful of people are continuing occupation related to Naumati baja. Basically, those members who are still pursuing the traditional occupation represents the illiterate section or those who studied upto elementary level of education, which is not enough to qualify for a job in the service sector.

The study revealed that 81 per cent of the Damai respondents who have been holding their traditional occupation is either illiterate or only attending elementary level of education. And the remaining handful had gone up to the higher secondary level. It shows that higher the education qualification, higher the chances to opt their occupation from traditional to non-traditional in secondary and tertiary sector.

5.4.4. Occupational Diversification and its Impact on Folk Music

As in case of Nepal, various communities in Sikkim have been losing their traditional occupation along with Damai community, due to availability of various newly emerging occupations. It has been visible that they have started preferring and opting other forms of occupation that required educational degree and other skills. As a result an intergenerational mobility in terms of occupation is quite visible among the Damai community in the field area. Few elderly respondents emphasized, *“Traditional music has been losing its importance gradually because the new generation is hesitant to involve in traditional music because they are getting other job opportunities due to their educational qualification and other skills”*. The upcoming generations are more careers oriented than their predecessors.

One’s occupation is always related to status. So, it is very important to understand that people have changed and aspired for other occupation not only due to economic reasons but also due to its low social status in the society. In Indian caste system, occupations are also hierarchically placed. The study revealed that the young generation of Damai community perceives that their traditional occupation is correlated with low status and also it is unsustainable because of its seasonal nature, which justifies the reasons for shifting occupation are both economic as well social causes. Consequently, they have been choosing others occupations that could provide better social status, respect and privilege in the society.

Neupane (2013) enlightened that an open economic and political system provides opportunities to the musical caste to come out from their traditional occupation. With the changing trend, it is very hard for them in a traditional way of patronage to survive, so they are changing their profession to sustain themselves.

Therefore, along with the social transformation, which is seen as a reflection of development is also accompanied by declining traditional occupational population in the village and other areas.

In India, the policy of protective discrimination to historically disadvantaged minority groups has been guaranteed by the constitution of India. Articles 15 (4) and 16 (4) of Indian constitution has provided fifteen percent of the reserved seats to the Scheduled castes in case of the institution of higher education to public employment sectors. This is basically to enable the community to be more adequately representative in government sectors (Thorat and Senapati, 2006). Reservation thus helps such communities for intergenerational vertical or horizontal mobility. Therefore, the preferential treatment for upliftment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the form of reservation in educational institutions and employment sector has impacted the traditional occupation of Damai community also, who has been historically oppressed in Nepali caste hierarchy.

The study found that the vertical intergenerational occupational mobility among the community is limited to 2.86 per cent only out of the total respondents, who has been employed as government employees. However, the trend of intergenerational horizontal mobility is commonly visible among the upcoming generation of the community, as they are interested to opt other kind of occupation which does not need any higher educational qualification and degrees and many of them works like the wage labour, driver, dairy farming, etc., which are not related to caste stigmatization. The majority (60 per cent) of the respondents are involved in agricultural and tailoring sectors.

5.4.5. The Peripheral Communities and Naumati Baja

Sikkim is ethnically diverse with three main ethnic groups consisting Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali, which further encompasses many communities as discussed earlier. Therefore, there are many mixed villages, where many of these communities are settled next to one another. The proximity and amalgamation within the certain communities varies from region to region and that determines the continuity and change in the traditional occupation of Damai community. When there is close proximity in the settlement between the Damai and other communities like the *Chettri and Bahun*, then the chances of survival of their traditional occupation would be more because of their common Hindu religious faith and cultural practices, which demands the service of their traditional occupation.

The study shows that the geographical boundary of the Damai settlement also determines their occupational pattern as in the case of the Damai settlement of Melli Mazi Goan and Nampok located in and around Melli and Mangli bazaar (town), more people are engaged in other professions like driving, daily wage labour and tailor besides traditional musical occupation. And in case of the isolated settlements of Radhu-Khandu and Lingmoo, where the community is mostly involved in agriculture along with their traditional occupations.

5.4.6. Changing Agriculture Pattern and Naumati Baja

Agriculture is not merely a means of livelihood but is also a way of life. The study done by the various researchers like Ramero, (1990), Mishra and Mishra, (2006) in agro-based cultures in different parts of the world have argued that technological change in agriculture brings about concomitant changes in the traditional agro-based cultures.

Misra and Mishra (2006) argued the technological revolution in agriculture has largely influenced the rural social institution and their culture related to traditional folk music and instruments. The advent of green revolution in India brought a noticeable change in agricultural practices in the states by introducing technological innovations in farming practices, cropping pattern and crop rotation etc. that resulted changes in the agro-based culture and its related tradition culture of folk music.

The tradition of Naumati baja is directly or indirectly based on an agro-based culture of the rural society because of its auspicious nature. As per narratives of elderly respondents in West Sikkim (Radhu/Khandu), earlier, such traditional music used to be heard during rice plantation season in paddy field. Such cultural practice is no more relevant today due to changing land holding and agriculture pattern. In the past, productive agricultural land was divided among the handful of elites that required large numbers of agriculture labourers during plantation and harvest season. Landlords customarily invited the Damai folk musicians to attract the *Khetalas*³⁹ on that particular day, so they could enjoy while working in the field. Such playing of baja locally known as *Bethi*, also had entertainment values for workers, apart from religious and rituals purpose. Besides that, it was also practiced to please the gods and goddesses as it addresses the five elements and five gods. Ramero (1990) argues that the mechanical means such as tractor guided by the single driver can harvest an average sized field of two hours, while all the work-capable villagers would have to dedicate a whole day of physically demanding efforts. Such technological transformation widely affected socio-cultural aspects related to agriculture.

Therefore, an innovation and modern agricultural practices overlooked the importance of community folk musical culture, which had its own relevance in the

³⁹ *Khetala* is a Nepal term that signifies the agricultural labors.

past during rice planting season in the paddy field. Further, the proportion of land got decreased due to many reasons such as urbanization and increasing number of population. The farming pattern among the people has also undergone change; instead of crops like rice or paddy, people often are interested in cash crops like cardamom and zinger. In case of West Sikkim (including Dentam, Radhu-khandu and Hee-Barnyak) cardamom has been replacing the cultivation of other staple crops due to its high demand, commercial and market value. Similarly in case of South district of Sikkim, farmer are more interested in zinger cultivation because of geographical reason, as most parts of south falls under rain shadow area. The changing crop pattern, decreasing amount of productive land and lesser demand of *Khetala* are some of the major factors that have affected the relevance of traditional folk music during agricultural season in Sikkim.

A 73 years old respondent of Khandu village, West Sikkim laments “*now a days, people hardly prefer Naumati baja on social occasions such as marriage and religious rituals. In the past when I was young, except such occasion, we were also invited on Bethi. Now such culture has vanished from the society. However, in recent times, people of this area are trying to revive the lost culture of baja by inviting musicians on occasions like marriage and Bartaman (sacred thread ceremony among Chettri and Bahuns)*”.

One of the senior respondent of 71 years, resident of Melli Mazi Goan added an important aspect in relation to agriculture with Naumati baja. He claimed that apart from *heelay bethi*⁴⁰ people also used to invite baja players on *paakeha bethi* (dry land bethi) during the cultivation and harvest seasons of *Dal* (pulses), *vatmas* (soyabean),

⁴⁰*Heeley Bethi* is a social occasion which is celebrated and organized by village community during the rice transplantation season usually graced with Naumati Baja. Nepali community of Sikkim has recently started such festival to revamp the lost traditional culture.

etc. Sadly, the culture of *bethi* no more exists in Sikkimese Nepali society now. The respondents have also highlighted that now village communities have been trying to revive the culture of *heelay bethi* in some of the rural villages by organizing the festival on the 15th day of Nepali month *Ashad* which usually falls in the month of June in English calendar. During the occasion, the *baja* players are invited to grace the occasion due to its ritual significance. This particular day is also observed as the traditional festival of rice called *Dhan Diwas* (Paddy Day) in Nepal. However, despite the attempt to revive this cultural aspect in some parts of Sikkim, it has lost the cultural essence and space due to changed socio economic life of the people.

5.4.7. Increased Cost of Baja Performance and its Impact on Traditional Culture

The study shows that there is a connection between an increasing cost of Naumati *baja* with its decreasing trend and popularity. The *baja* players charging high rate to perform their folk music on social gathering makes it difficult for a common people to invite them in rituals and social occasions, especially for the economically marginalized section of the society despite having cultural significance. In substitute, the modern Nepali, Bollywood and Western numbers in electronic sound system has become the best alternative that could minimize their expenses. This is becoming very popular, trendy and cost effective instead of folk musicians due to the economic reasons. The decreasing trend of such rich cultural heritage therefore is also due to audience choices whose preference is changing due to socio-economic factors.

A 61 years old Chettri respondent belonging to high caste status who is a resident of Khandu, West Sikkim categorically highlighted the issues related to the trend of deviating from use of folk musical instruments is mainly due to the increasing cost of Naumati/Panchai *baja* which is becoming exorbitantly high. He

stated, “*The fee of Damai baja has been increasing day by day. Today, the team of Naumati baja that consists of around nine to ten musician charge between fifteen to twenty thousand rupees per performance. Such huge expense is not affordable by the section of society, who are economically not well off. They always look for the better alternative on their social occasion, so that they divert their budget to other basic needs and requirement. Instead of Naumati baja, the use of other modern music system including cassette player, sound systems etc. are the best way to escape from such huge financial burden and expenses*”.

Such changes of using alternative option is not only threatening the traditional folk music and instruments and rich culture of the entire Nepali community but it is also threatening the source of livelihood especially of the senior members of Damai community, whose economic sources somehow relied on it.

5.5. Inclusion and Exclusion of Damai Folk Musical Instruments

With the passage of time, many changes have been brought in the community traditional folk music in Sikkim. There are few musical instruments like the *turai* and *narsingha* have been excluded from the Naumati bajain Sikkim. These are the wind instruments, which look similar but produce different sounds. Traditionally, the use of two *narsingha* has been reduced to single *narsingha* due to shortage of musician. These two instruments viz., *narsingha* and *shanai* related to wind instruments requires more vigorous training and effort when compared to other instruments, which are relatively less strenuous to learn and play. The study also found only very few existing musicians among the community could handle such wind instruments. And the diminishing interest among youngsters has been hampering this established culture of Nepali society in general and Damai traditional occupation in particular.

In the words of *naika* of Melli Mazi Goan “*at present, we do not have any Shanai player in our group because most of them had passed away. All musicians cannot play the wind instruments in general because it requires lot of practice, dedication, experience and skill and such qualities of perseverance to learn could be hardly found in the present generation. We managed to bring Shanai player from Kalampong, whenever we required. Now, he is getting older and may be very soon, he would not be able to join our team. Such things makes me worried and to overcome this kind of situation we are imparting training to young children who are just 12 years old, as this is very right age to learn the instrument like shanai. Once a child is matured and young, learning becomes difficult. I tried to learn it at the age of twenty-five but I could not learn it. If I could have learn at an early age, the situation would have been different today*”.

Attempt has been made by some Damai musicians to include new kind of instruments in their traditional ensemble. One, such interesting initiative has been found in the Begha village (Dentam), West Sikkim, where an old Damai musician tried to add new flavour in traditional folk instruments by incorporating the instruments like bagpiper and bugle. The addition of these instruments has been done mainly to grab the attention of the audience during social occasion as marriage ceremonies and also to substitute the shanai.

Plate: 5.1 Recently added Instruments Bagpiper and Bugle by the Damai musician at Begha (Dentam), West Sikkim.



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

Similarly, Gusain (2016) argues in the context of Uttarakhand, the wind instrument has been incorporated with traditional folk instruments basically to add the melody to folk music. The instrument was brought into this land by the local youth who had recruited in the army band and was allowed to take it after their retirement. That is how the bagpiper moved from army cantonment to the hills of Garhwal and Kumaon. Usually, bagpiper is played with other traditional instruments during the social occasion like marriage ceremonies, child's first haircut (Chudakarm) and other occasions like in Sikkim to enhance the flavour of the local folk music. Now the traditional folk music of Uttarakhand seems to be incomplete without the bagpiper.

Neupane (2013) advocates that even in the context of Nepal, there are many Damai musicians who have been playing modern instruments like Saxophone, Trumpet, French horn, Trombone, Tuba and Drums along with their traditional instruments.

Plate: 5.2 Damai musicians playing their instruments along with newly included Bugle at Jorethang, South Sikkim.



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

In Sikkim, there is a new trend of involving Damai musicians in almost all the programs organized by the state and political parties basically to welcome the chief guest and guest of honour who are invited to grace the occasions. An inclusion of new musical instrument, bugle among the Damai musicians has been found in one such occasion at Jorethang, South Sikkim (Plate 5.2). Despite having their busy schedule and engagement in band presentation, they somehow managed to clarify some of the queries regarding the use of this particular instrument, which was not part of their traditional ensemble. A person who is holding a Bugle in the picture stated *“we have added bugle in our ensemble recently because we found this instrument producing similar sound like narsingha. Moreover, this instrument is smaller and portable as it is easy to carry and handle in the far uphill places and vehicles. To handle and carry safely such huge instrument in hilly terrain and long distance is not an easy task, so bugle is the best alternative way to handle. Traditionally our ensemble consists of*

many instruments along with a pair of narsingha, but now we use only one Narsingha and incorporate bugle instead”.

The inclusion of new musical instruments is an attempt to readjust the traditional baja in modern changed circumstances by making it more compatible to traditional ensemble. By doing so the musicians are somehow trying to rejuvenate and retain the cultural heritage of traditional baja which is in the verge of extinction.

5.6. Changing Ragas

In addition to instrumental modification, the changes are also occurred in terms of ragas. Based on the response of respondents and also available literature (Gurung and Lama, 2004; Singh, 2005), it was revealed that there are thirty-six ragas in Naumati baja and each of these ragas has its own significance. Different ragas are played in different time and situation especially on occasion like marriage ceremony. The main musical instrument is shanai, which could lead all the remaining instruments by producing different ragas. Gurung (2004) has shown that this instrument is also found in other communities in different forms and shapes. Comparatively, Gurung (2004) identified that the shape of the Nepali shanai differs and is also smaller in shape and size. The shanai is a made of round copper plate which is attached to a hollow wood with holes as a pipe. Nepali shanai has its own ragas and raginis which traditionally depicts a particular season, times of the day, ritual activities etc.

While researching the musical instruments, Gurung and Lama (2004) identified some of the ragas which are played in different timing during weddings viz; *Sanjay Kali or Sanjay Batti* (evening to 9 p. m), *Birani, Birahni or Bilani* (about 10 P. M. onwards), *Chitu* (midnight to 2 a.m morning), *Basanta* (day and night anytime), *Bivas Chari* (early dawn), *Bihani Chari* (morning), *Mangal* (day and night any time),

Bela (9 a. m. to 10 a.m.), *Ramkali* (up to midday), *Madhay* (midday), *Karkha* (midday to 3 p. m), *Daray Ramkali* (3 p. m. to 4 p.m.), *Bairani* (4 p.m. onwards), and *Khiyali* (any time), signifying various meaning.

Tingey (1994) also revealed the existence of some of the tunes of Naumati baja along with its significance during the different stage of marriages. The *beulo unmaune bakya*⁴¹ is played during wedding especially in groom's processions; it is played continuously throughout the journey to the bride's place. Once they reached, their presences are being announced by the narsingas. The *beuli unmaune bakya*⁴² takes over the groom's music from the point of when the *sindur* (vermilion) is placed in the bride's hair. The bride's music is played exclusively following day during her departure and throughout the return journey to the groom's place. The *mangal dhun* has been played during the exchange of rings and garlands when the *swayamber* (betrothal) been conducted. The *beuli mangne dhun* is played at the bride's home after wedding while the married couples are departing with the groom's party. The raga *beuliko khyali* is played while the bride is taken from her home, her baja accompanies to the edge of her village.

The study also found that there are other ragas that include *bivas*, *karkha*, *dharmakali*, *daray ramkalin*, *manghal* etc. and each of these ragas are played at its own particular time, space and social significance. *Bivas* is played at night to pray God for the wellbeing of the family who has invited them, *Manghal* is basically played before they start the ceremony and at midnight. Traditionally, every social occasion required auspicious Naumati baja, which customarily begins with the sound of narsinga or *ghor* called *Saadha baja*.

⁴¹It is a tune of Naumati baja, which is played when the *janti* (member of a wedding procession) proceed out of groom's home for marriage.

⁴²It is a kind of Naumati raga, which basically is played at the time of bride departure from her native home to groom's home.

The empirical evidence in Sikkim indicates, out of the total thirty-six ragas, only few exist today and the remaining are in the threshold of disappearance because the value and symbolic meaning of such ragas are known and understood by a handful of old age people of the community. As a result, the majority of the audience who belong to the younger generation find such ragas dull, monotonous and unentertaining and they prefer the tune of the latest popular Nepali music and songs instead of ragas. Such changing attitudes among the upcoming audience restrict the creativity and interest of musicians to present ragas, which has been affecting the traditional music and musical community. That way, the younger musicians are missing an opportunity to witness and learn the traditional ragas, which was traditionally passed on from generations.

A Damai respondent of 51 years old, a resident of Barnyak, West Sikkim states, *“the beauty and significance of Naumati baja lies in its ragas. But unfortunately most of the ragas lost its value and importance not only due to lack of players but also due to lack of audience’s interest and perception. The younger generation does not like to listen such original ragas as they do not know about its meaning and significance. As a result, they do not find it interesting and are inclined to tune of latest hits. As ragas do not match or fit to dancing numbers, the audience, dislike and demand dancing tunes like Jhauray, Churkay, and tune of latest Nepali songs. Consequently, musicians also do not get enough opportunity to display original ragas due to lack of audience and demand.*

Tingey (1994) has substantiated that the young member of the community are unable to play and recognize the sound of such repertoires in the present context, as they have been playing and prefer the popular repertoires of *jhaure and khayali* instrumental music.

5.7. Orthogenetic and Heterogenetic Change in Damai Folk Music

Singh (1986) has discussed two basic forms of changes that lay in the process of cultural change i.e. orthogenetic and heterogenetic changes. All civilizations starts from a primary or orthogenetic level of cultural organization and in course of time are diversified not only through internal growth but also more importantly through contact with other civilizations, a heterogenetic process. The direction of this change presumable is from folk to urban cultural structure and social organization. And, finally it results in a global, universalized pattern of culture, due to increasing cross contacts among civilization.

Similarly, the folk music of the community has primarily changed in two ways i.e. change in structure and change of structure. Roger Elbourne (1975) has termed such form of changes in traditional music as endogenous and exogenous.

It has been observed that there are two kinds of changes that have been faced by the traditional folk music of Damai community, which are both the internal and external forces. The model of changes that has been explained by the Singh (1986) orthogenetic and heterogenic changes is very much valid in case of changes taking place in the traditional folk music of community in Sikkim. In the first phase, the structure of the Naumati baja has remained the same but its internal essence (ragas) has witnessed changes. However, such changes could not be visualized or identified by the masses but could be only observed by a handful of people, who had the experiences about these instruments and music and was familiar to it. Though the community is somehow able to manage and retain the use of such folk musical instruments, the original ragas no more exist and have been replaced by the popular tune of Nepali songs.

Secondly, the external forces triggered by the process of social change and globalization also facilitates the changes. This is what Singh (1986) called a heterogenetic change that is manifested in the changes in the established cultural materials or artifacts including folk instruments, due to the adoption of modern or western form of music/instruments. Such forces result in shift the paradigm of musical genre i.e. from tradition to modern genre. This kind of external changes is visible in Sikkim. As discussed above, some of the musicians in case of rural West Sikkim included other kind of musical instruments in their ensemble, which traditionally are not part of their ensemble. Similar case was also found in Nepal, where the community adopted brass band instead of the traditional baja.

5.8. Shortage of Damai Musicians and Coping Mechanism

The decreasing number of Damai musicians in Sikkim is due to various factors. The field data is evident of diminishing trend of Naumati baja in a particular settlement where the study has been conducted. It was found that very few Damai youth aspire to opt for traditional musician in today's scenario. Unlike earlier when there was no occupational choice, the changing occupational pattern among the community makes it very hard to form a musical group within a single village as people migrate out and opt for other jobs. While conducting this study, many *naika* states about the shortage of musicians and mentioned about how they have been coping with such crisis and manage to form their musical group in the present context. They usually borrowed the required musicians from the nearby location and sometimes from close family ties and even from long distance.

In the words of *naika* of Melli Mazi Goan "*in our village, there are many Damai families with potential youth member but they do not have interest in*

traditional music-related occupation. We have only seven musicians in our group instead of nine and whenever we get invited, we have to borrow extra two musicians from other places. We often borrow musician from Kalimpong and nearby area, Melli Chalesa for playing Shanai. Very soon, our fellow member from Kalimpong will not be able to join us because he is pretty old. We have been managing the other instruments players like the Tamko, Damaha, Jhayali etc. but it is very hard to get musicians who are experts in shanai, which needs extra effort and intense training to play it. Till now we are somehow able to form a team of nine to represent in the social occasions, but when I think about the future, it seems bleak as up coming generations are reluctant to come to this profession”.

The naika, Narayan Das, resident of Ranapayali Goan has made similar statement, *“Till few years back, we used to join the other baja group of nearby area, Bhangyang (place in South Sikkim) to perform on social occasions because we did not have our own musical instruments which is quite expensive. However, in recent times, we have our own musical group having proper sets of required instruments provided by the area political leader, hence we do not have any kind of inconvenience as we have our own complete sets of instruments but we face the shortage of musicians”.*

Few old respondents of Ranapayali and Mazi Goan stated that there were many Damai musical groups existing in Damai settlement areas like Bhangyang and Melli Chalesa. However, such groups no more exist due to shortage of sufficient numbers of players. Few interested musicians joined other groups in nearby areas. Therefore, in changed circumstances, Damai musicians adopted the coping mechanism and kept alive their musical legacy by borrowing musicians from nearby areas and the left out musicians whose group no more exist is making their musical interest alive and earning some income by joining other groups.

The study also revealed that the Damai population settled in different villages of South and West districts provides the similar trend of diminishing community members involved in traditional baja as in Nepal. The reasons identified behind such trend is that the youngsters are not motivated to involve in occupation and are more inclined to take other non traditional occupations. One interesting observations found was the musicians of West district are more creative and to make it more marketable and sustainable, they incorporated many other musical instruments viz., bugle and bagpiper in their traditional ensemble to ensure its continuity and survival which has been discussed earlier. They also established an association at the community level to impart training of folk music and instruments among the young members of the community. However, in South district villages, no such initiatives have been observed.

5.9. Changing Musical Arena

As per the narration of his experience by one respondent, the culture of the Naumati baja was almost vanished at one point of time when people started using the modern electronic sound system. They feared that the sound of traditional ensemble would not be resonating again in the mountain region. However, he is happy as it is being revived and the mesmerizing sound of baja is being heard again. However, despite the revival, its cultural space has been changed completely. Earlier the sound of baja was heard in paddy field during cultivation seasons, religious rituals, festivals etc. and had different social and cultural significance. In the present context mostly the sound of baja echoes more in occasions like weddings, political gathering, and tourist festivals for the reception of political figures. Therefore, over the years, despite the attempt of revival, Naumati baja lost its existing socio- cultural significance.

Plate: 5.3 Damai musicians performing their traditional Baja in *Sova Yatra*⁴³ at Jorethang, South Sikkim before starting Nepali festival Dipawali



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

Plate: 5.4 Members of Kanchandzonga Naumati Sanstha of Barnyak, West Sikkim performing their Baja to welcome the political elite at Jorethang, south Sikkim



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

⁴³ *Sovayatra* is a kind of procession, which is basically conducted on any occasion and festival and now a days the culture of such *yatra* has been becoming popular in Sikkim.

Plate: 5.5 Group of Damai musicians welcoming the chief guest with melodious sound of traditional baja in the occasion 203rd Bhanu Jayanti⁴⁴, Soreng, West Sikkim.



Source: Fieldwork, December 2017- March 2018.

5.10. Initiatives for Preservation

Despite many positive aspects of modernization, urbanization and information technology in the modern society, it also has some negative implications to the communities' traditional folk culture, customs and rituals etc. Hollanda (1964) emphasizes the old traditions of folk music was connected with rituals, beliefs and ways of life. However, the development process has been doing away their traditional value system in which their identity was rooted. However, the later phase of the 20th-century witnessed the process of cultural revivalism, which created the space to realize and reproduce their lost tradition and culture. In the last few decades, Sikkim is also experiencing the trend of cultural revivalism. There are various such revival initiatives that have been taken by the community and the state to proliferate and safeguard the endangered tradition culture, customs and rituals.

⁴⁴Nepalese of Sikkim and Darjeeling hills celebrates the birth anniversary of Nepali poet Adikavi Bhanu Bhakta Archarya as *Bhanu Jayanti* annually on July, 13th.

Currently, the tradition of folk music is fostering through various public programs in the community, state and national level. Baumann (1996) also states that today the traditional folk music shows tendencies, the ideas of preservation, protection and cultivation because of the shift from the agrarian to the industrial society and now to the media-dominated society. Such a trend of revivalism also manifested in Sikkim.

5.10.1. Initiatives at Community and Individual Level

In Sikkim along with many other communities, Damai community is also trying to revive their endangered traditional folk music and instruments, through various initiatives and programs. Initiatives have been taken both in the individual and community level. At the community level, there is an independent organization called *Kanchandzonga Naumati Sanstha* at Barnyak, West Sikkim, which is run by the local Damai community of this area. It has been established in 2007 in order to revive and promote their traditional folk music and instruments. Presently, there are around ten members in this *Sanstha*, who belongs to different families of community. It has higher membership in the past, but gone down today due to some internal conflict and misunderstanding. As a part of community initiatives they frequently organizes workshop to impart training among the younger generation regarding their folk music and instruments especially during school vacation.

Besides that, some community member even took such initiative at an individual level. In Nampok, South Sikkim, the naika, Kedhar Bardewa recently started providing training to the young Damai minds during school vacation. He started this novel task since last year only, when he realized the decreasing number of Damai musicians in the locality. The respondent narrates “*I provided such training*

free of cost, last year I trained four students in my own house. This time I am expecting more candidates to join”.

Similarly, the naika of Melli Mazi Goan, South Sikkim highlighted that “*now they have been facing the shortage of shainai players in his team. Till now they managed somehow to bring shanai player from outside state i.e. from Kalimpong. Due to his ageing process, he feared he won’t be able to come and join due to old age. Hence, to fill up the gap, the local community of this area is providing training of Shanai to a one young boy of around twelve years. He further states, that they are also planning to send him to Nepal for further training if the boy and family is willing to do”.*

The study found that only 20 per cent of the total respondents have been taking such initiatives in Sikkim and are active both at the community and individual level and the remaining do not know about such initiative and never been a part of it.

5.10.2. State Government’s Initiatives on Preservation of Naumati Baja

The state government has also initiated various programs for promotion and cultural preservation of various communities along with Naumati Baja culture. The Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, Government of Sikkim has three sections that include songs and Drama unit, Archives and Archaeology and the State Library. Songs and Drama unit exclusively looks for the preservation of folk music and instruments and the promotion of performing art, particularly the folk songs and dance, music, drama etc. The state has been inspiring the Damai folk musicians in various ways, by sending them to cultural tour outside the state for the promotion of Sikkimese folk music and instruments. They have also been given opportunity to showcase their folk music during various food festivals and tourism festivals along

with some consolation cash prize. The department has been giving financial grants to construct the community center and extending financial assistance to different NGOs and association for organizing culturally significant fairs and festivals related to different local communities.

When interacted with the musician respondents, more than one-third of the total respondents said that they are getting benefits from the government both in cash or kind in order to safeguard and promote their traditional culture of Naumati baja. The respondents of Melli Mazi Goan and Ranapayali Goan informed that they recently got the entire sets of Naumati baja from the government/ political leaders and some got the financial aid to purchase their required instruments. A small section of the respondents also highlighted that they have not got much help from the government till so far, hence they have applied for assistance.

5.11. Conclusion

Unlike in Nepal, there are many factors that have been prompting change as well as continuing the culture of Naumati baja in the state of Sikkim. Obviously, the socio-cultural significance of community folk music changed to a considerable degree at the present context of Sikkim due to socio- economic transformations, that is taking place at a rapid rate. However, despite many challenges, there are still some mechanisms existing in Sikkimese society that helped to motivate the community to keep such traditional culture continue. Many initiatives and strategies have been taken in the state both in the community and government levels in order to protect and preserve such rich traditional heritage of Damais. The musicians have also made an effort and developed coping mechanism by incorporating some other musical instruments in

their traditional ensemble. However, the culture space of baja has been changed as society progressed.

CHAPTER 6

Naumati Baja Across Borders: A Comparative Assessment Through Sociological Lens

6.1. Introduction

With an exhaustive discussion on Naumati baja in Nepal and Sikkim in the previous two chapters, the chapter basically deals with the comparative analysis of status of Naumati baja followed by theoretical interpretation, hence the chapter is divided into two segments. The first segment essentially tries to bring out the comparative analysis of various existing issues of Damai baja pertaining to both the regions, Nepal and Sikkim. Since the study has been conducted on the traditional occupation of Damai community residing in two distinct geographical locations and political boundaries with the same historical root, there are many similarities and differences as well in terms of the continuity and changes. The section therefore attempts to make a relative assessment of various dimensions of community folk music.

The second section attempts to understand the entire issues with the sociological lens within the theoretical and conceptual framework of sociology using the theories and concepts of many sociologists Karl Marx, Max weber, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel and Pitirim Sorokin. The concept of caste propounded by M. N Srinivas and Louis Dumont with the theory of social stratification has been used for analytical purpose.

6.2. Resemblance of Naumati Baja in Nepal in Sikkim

The empirical study on traditional music of Damai community located at two different geographical locations and political boundaries highlighted many facts and issues that are distinct to each other in many ways. However, despite the different

geopolitical boundaries, Sikkim and Nepal have common roots and shared similar tradition, culture, language, and religion. Such similarities are also reflected in the tradition of folk music and instruments of Damai community in many ways. Therefore the following section makes an assessment of similarities followed by the section on points of variation as well as with special focus on changing socio-economic status of Damai community. The areas of similarities are as under.

6.2.1. Flexibility in Occupational Choices and Music as a Subsidiary Occupation

In both Nepal and Sikkim, in the present context, the traditional occupation of folk music has become a subsidiary occupation due to its inconsistency and seasonal in nature and the basic survival of the community cannot be solely dependent on it. The occupation is limited to certain period of time and many respondents categorized it as a seasonal and supplementary occupation. The study revealed that most of the members of community are opting other means of occupation like daily wage labour, agriculture related work, mason etc. which provides them steady source of income. Similar finding has also been found in the study by Hracs, et al. (2016), who argues that sometime uncertain income and intense competition for music employment makes it necessary for many musicians to supplement artistic income with other secondary jobs.

The societies both in Nepal and Sikkim are becoming more open and flexible in terms of their occupational choices as the rigidity in caste based occupation has been relaxed in the process of modernization. There has been considerable degree of occupational diversification, hence now youngsters have been mostly engaged in other kind of occupation such as agricultural farmer, wage labourers, mason, driver

and so on. However, despite such diverse occupational choices, chunk of Damai population is still engaged in traditional occupation as part time occupation.

In case of Nepal, the community's traditional occupation of tailoring has been now shifted to other community who started this occupation in commercial way with more scope of marketability. A certain section of Damai community members who are engaged in tailoring profession is home based or started the business in small scale in the nearby market area, where the scope of business is profitable. However, such commercialization in terms of folk music-related profession is lacking. Few of them who migrated to the town like Kathmandu in case of Nepal tried to commercialize their music profession, however failed to earn as per their expectation because the intermediaries takes half of their income as commission for arranging the customers in the new place. Similarly, changes in occupational choices have been noticed in Sikkim. The community has been given the status of Scheduled Caste thereby enjoys the policy of protective discrimination. This factor along with the other socio- economic changes like spread of modern education and employment opportunities resulted in great deal of occupational diversification.

6.2.2. Changing Socio-Economic Status of Damai Community

The study revealed that socio- economic status of the Damai community has been changing in both the cases of Sikkim and Nepal. The discriminatory treatment was widely practiced in the past due to their low caste status. However, the perception of the society towards the community has become more positive and open. The social change witnessed by both regions, state protective policies and inclusive measures like education and affirmative action contributed a lot in changing perception towards the occupational choices.

Due to market economy, the means of exchange has also been changed. The traditional system of exchange i.e. *balighar bista pratha* when the service caste like Damai used to exchange their service with higher castes in terms of seasonal food grains and other basic amenities is no more valid at present in Nepal and has been transformed now into cash based. They receive cash instead of kind for providing services of Naumati baja during social occasions. The study has found similar transformation in the context of Sikkim also.

In the traditional caste based society, the social status of Damai community was low. However, an increasing trend of modern educational system and occupational choices made a serious impact on occupational pattern among the communities. In both contexts, the younger generation of folk musicians households are opting other professions, traditionally beyond their caste purview. As respondents reported that such changing occupational trend provided them comparatively better socio-economic status in society today.

6.2.3. Additions and Deletion of Instruments and Changing Ragas

The study shows that the tradition of community folk music witnessed addition and deletion of some of its instruments. The instrument like *narsingha*, which was considered core of the ensemble, has been replaced by bugle, a brass instrument in case of villages of West Sikkim. It was also found that, to add extra flavor to the music, sometime musician also adds other instruments like bagpiper in traditional ensemble. The study revealed that in case of Nepal, the Damai musicians preferred completely new form of ensemble like brass band instead of adding extra instruments mostly in urban settings like Kathmandu because of its popularity, better economic

gain and marketability. However, in rural villages of Gorkha and Lamjung districts, the community musician still prefer the same sets of instruments.

With the decreasing numbers of musicians and popularity of instruments, the ragas of Naumati baja is also affected adversely. The original ragas no more exists in the context of both Sikkim and Nepal. Although, musicians are still visible during social rituals and occasion but what generally people missed is the presence of its original ragas, which has its own significance that basically depicts different human feelings and situation according to time and specific to context. The respondents opined that original ragas usually sound dull and boring and contemporary audience, who cannot understand and appreciate its essence and significance, hence finds ragas monotonous. In recent times, there are limited numbers of audience, who does understand the meaning of such ragas. An interesting observation made was an increasing demand of latest popular songs with modern tunes, film songs and also tunes of *Jhyaure*⁴⁵ being played in Naumati baja as a substitute of ragas, which is an emerging trend and is gaining popularity, making the culture of old ragas as a distance entity from both the musicians and audience. This is true in both regions of Sikkim and Nepal.

6.2.4. Impact of Electronic Musical Instruments on Folk Music

Regarding ongoing trend of electronic music, Etzkorn (1982: 562-66) discussed about the process of electronic composition replacing traditional modes of musical activity. However, compared to the live sound of traditional instruments, electronic music may lack musical qualities. He further mentioned that group differentiated by age might

⁴⁵Jhyaure is a Nepali term which refer to wide variety of song genres, a variety of poetic meters and the six beat musical *tal*.

have varying relationship to the use of music. The young generation as both audience and performers are accustomed to electronically modified sound.

Contextually locating, the demand and use of Naumati/ Panchai baja has considerably declined after the commencement of modern sound system including tape recorder, amplifier, mike (trumpet horn), CDs and DVDs etc. The emergence of such modern electronic amenities makes the life of the masses easier and more economic. People adopted modern electronic amenities during social occasions instead of live traditional Damai folk music because it is cost effective, easily available and entertaining. Although, the use of modern electronic devices has its own benefits and advantages, it has its disadvantages as well. The respondents highlighted that in the process, gradually people started losing their age-old traditional culture in which their culture and identity were rooted. The empirical situation revealed that popularity of electronic media cannot be ignored. The Damai musicians of both Sikkim and Nepal are aware and feel the emerging trend of modern sound system having adverse impact on the culture of live performance of Naumati/ Panchai baja, the hallmark of Nepali culture, which has its own cultural significance. Few respondents viewed that although modern sound systems produce similar sounds but it fails to create the similar ambiance that is being produced through live performances. Despite all challenges, one positive indication is the recent trend of revival of Naumati baja which is again gaining popularity during social occasions in both Nepal and Sikkim thus showing concern for cultural preservation.

6.2.5. New Dress Code

In recent years, Damai musicians of both the regions have developed their dress code. Initially, such dress code did not exist and was not mandatory, however in recent

time, they are conscious about their way of presentation and have developed the dress code as they feel that it brings uniformity among the musician and makes them presentable and attractive. The dress code includes *daura suruwal* along with the *ista* coat and *dhaka topi* to be worn by all band members during social occasions. Some of the respondents even interpreted their dress code and attires as a mark of identity as a musician during the marriage and any other social function, so they are easily recognized distinctively as musician. Such trend has been found common in both the context of Sikkim and Nepal. It was also found that sometime along with musical ensembles, the musicians also received such attires from the government and political party.

6.2.6. Revival Strategies and Initiatives

In the present scenario, the rapid process of globalization has impacted the traditional culture and occupation of every community and this profound socio- economic implication also impacted the music. Holton (2000) also argues that globalization impacted the indigenous culture in several ways despite having its positive aspects, the cultural homogenization is a product of globalization that has been emerged in the history of human culture since 1950s, further it has been intense and effective with the emancipation of modern information technology and global communication. Consequently, the cultures of individual groups are no more confined as it was before, as it has been governed by common sets of cultural practices and traits. In the similar vain, the culture of folk music has been widely impacted by rapid growth of information technology and multi- media. However, there has also been a counter trend of cultural revival. Many organizations and associations have come forward to extend their support for the revival of cultural identity of various communities. Vis-a-

vis, the state or government has also been taking initiatives for cultural preservation which is in response to recent trend of cultural revival.

In respect of cultural revival strategies in both Sikkim and Nepal, there are many associations initiated by the communities and the state government also came forward to extend their support to revive Damai's traditional culture of Naumati/Panchai baja. The *Panchai Baja Sanrakshan Samathi* is one such community association initiated by the Damai community of Lamjung, Nepal basically to revive the culture of their traditional Baja. Similarly, *Kanchandzonga Naumati Sanstha* is an association initiated by the Damais of Barnyak, West Sikkim (Manger, 2015: 64) as a counterpart to initiate the process of cultural revival and preservation of Naumati baja.

Both the associations have their own sets of guidelines and vision to protect and revive their traditional culture. Members of these associations have been imparting the training to the young generation, so the legacy of community folk music remains continued. Besides the community association, state government is equally responding their effort in order to revive and preserve such rich cultural heritage. Such programs and initiatives include the distribution of folk musical instruments among the various musical groups. State organizes various cultural programs in different occasions and provides space for such community to showcase their folk music. The study has found that such trend exists both in Sikkim and Nepal. In the context of Sikkim, the Department of Cultural Heritage, Government of Sikkim sends such musicians to other parts of the country in cultural exchange programs to represent state's cultural heritage. Such provision acts as a motivation for the community to retain traditional music making occupation.

Traditionally, the young members of community were socialized in social environment of music making and learnt music naturally. Budding members who loved to attend the social occasions with their elders in the nearby areas whenever they get leisure time provided an ample opportunity for learning the skill of playing baja in an informal manner without any formal training. In the process, the musical skill was not only transmitted automatically, in return the senior members also used to get support from them to carry bunch of instruments in the uphill distances. This is how the new male member of the community learnt music making in both the places. In the words of 61 years old resident of Begha (Dentam), West Sikkim *“in the past, our new members learnt the ragas and the technique to handle all types of instruments from the close kinsmen or family members without any sorts of formal training. The technique of handling, playing instruments and ragas practically were learnt in a natural setting while involving with our elder relatives during social occasions. Therefore, more than any training of formal kind, the male child used to learn the skills and technique through observation and imitating the elders folk musical instruments”*.

However, in the changed circumstances resulted by social transformation that is taking place in both Nepal and Sikkim mainly due to spread of education, new occupational choices, breaking of caste based occupation, the process of socialization of children is completely changed which has an adverse impact at their aged-old culture and tradition. However, the study revealed that there are instances in both regions where still there are people who are concerned about their traditional folk musical occupation. Consequently, various associations and organizations, which came into existence in order to protect and promote such tradition, initiated numerous

programs and workshops to impart training to their youngster. The state has also supported these initiatives of cultural revival through various initiatives.

6.3. Domain of Dissimilarities

Despite having lots of commonness, there are striking differences of the status of Naumati baja between Sikkim and Nepal. The different socio-cultural and political context is reflected in the following sphere of differences.

6.3.1. Music Beyond Community

Music beyond community is the most interesting finding that has been found in the present context of Nepal. Traditionally, the occupation related to music and instruments was especially assigned to the Damai community, occupying low position in Nepali caste hierarchy. But in the present context of Nepal, such caste barriers in opting Naumati baja is relatively less visible because such profession has also been opted by the other community like Magars who belongs to the higher position in the caste hierarchy. Whereas, in Sikkim, such profession is still completely under the domain of Damais and has not been opted by any other communities. Thus, unlike Nepal the trend of adopting this profession by other communities is virtually absent in the context of Sikkim. The culture of musical adoption by Magar community is visible in Tanhau district of Nepal especially during the social occasions like marriage and *Magar Sankranti*, which is the community festival. The indispensability of such musical ensemble in rituals and social occasions on the one hand and the increasing cost and expensive hiring charges due to shortage of traditional Damai musicians on the other, made Magars adopt the new musical profession, so that they can cater the demand of Naumati baja in all social occasions and ritual practices.

6.3.2. Out- Migration and its Impact on Damai Folk Music

The trend of out migration to foreign-countries in Nepal for employment is significantly noticed at present. It can be taken as one of the major factor that has been affecting the culture of Damai traditional culture in Nepal. The field study shows that many young members of Damai community are living abroad and sending remittances to help their families who are left behind in the villages. The basic reason for such a huge out-migration from Nepal to abroad countries is due to lack of employment opportunities and other economic avenues within Nepal. In contrast, the outmigration to abroad is not much the trend in case of Sikkim, as they are able manage their life in their own place. By virtue of being the Scheduled Castes category, the community enjoys the benefits of protective discrimination in the form of reservation and other amenities under the Central and state policy of affirmative action. Such affirmative policy facilitates their participation in the field of education, employment, politics, and other avenues. Therefore, the recent trend is occupational diversification of community is common in both the places rather than sticking to traditional folk music. These factors widely impacted the traditional musical occupation of the community. Closely interlinked with this is the trend of out migration to urban and other areas within the state in search of job opportunities and education is commonly found in both Nepal and Sikkim

6.3.3. Commercialization and Modification in Musical Instruments

To cope up the situation of dwindling demand of traditional folk music in the rural villages in Nepal, Damai musicians are adopting the new strategy by opting such traditional instruments into a new form called Band baja by adding few other brass instruments and drums. Since, the marketability and demand of brass band is more in

the urban setting, as they have to commercialize their traditional band in a more profitable and professional way, they are bound to change their location too from rural village to urban towns like Kathmandu, Pokhara etc. So rural to urban migration also is the new phenomena to make the music more sustainable. The Damai musicians who migrated to nearby urban setting does not only rely in their income from band baja, but they are also involved in other occupations to augment their income. Whereas in Sikkim, Damai musicians are still continuing their age old instruments except a minor supplement or addition of few instruments as bugle and bagpiper in few places, hence still retaining the traditional essence of baja and ensemble. The trend of band formation with a purpose of commercialization is not found in Sikkim.

6.3.4. Music Exist

The origin of Naumati/Panchai baja was rooted in the Hindu temples and *Rajdarbar* (*palace*) where the musician played such music basically to please the deities- god and goddesses during rituals and festivals. It was also played to declare an important announcement and to entertain the royal members of *Rajdarbar* in Nepal. The function and physical space of Damai folk music and instruments remained no longer the same when society changed from simple to complex form. After the installation of democracy in Nepal in 1990, the *Rajdarbars* have been converted into heritage site and as a tourist spot. Despite that, there are still some temples existing, where we can still hear the mesmerizing sound of Damai traditional baja, especially during rituals and festivals. Similarly, *Darbar* in Nepal like Lamjung Darbar, where Damai musicians are still engaged to continue the old age legacy of playing baja in every ritual. They have been deployed and paid by either village community or the state. The study found that in such places, musician plays a specific kind of instrument called *Kahal* instead of Naumati/Panchai baja. In the context of Sikkim, the state

being the former Buddhist kingdom, such heritage of folk music and instruments of Damai community was not the practice. Even, there was no practice of use of such traditional instruments in the Hindu temples in Sikkim and the practice was widely witnessed during the wedding. The different kingdoms, with two different world-view, Nepal being Hindu and Sikkim being Buddhist kingdoms in the past has lot to do with such differences in the use of traditional baja.

6.3.5. Religious Proselytization

The traditional occupation of Damai community related to folk music and instruments is closely associated with the Hindu religion and it cannot be understood in isolation without understanding Hindu caste social structure of Nepal and Sikkim. The changing religious trend among the community creates serious hindrances in the continuation of the music-related occupation. As compared to Nepal, the issue of religious proselytization among the Damai community has been found more visible in Sikkim. The field location of Ranapayali Goan located in the South Sikkim where the 87.5 per cent of Damai families have been converted into Christianity is evident of the fact that such conversion has massive impact on their traditional culture of folk music and instruments.

It was found that after such religious proselytization, most of the Damai members stopped involving on their traditional occupation related to folk music and instruments. Consequently, now Nepali Hindu community members of other castes of that locality have to hire the musicians from peripheral area during social occasion like marriage. The study also highlighted the alcoholism and social discrimination attached to low caste and social status of the community are some of the major reasons behind such religious proselytization. In Sikkim, religious proselytization can

be categorized as the third biggest factor along with modern education and newly emerging employment opportunities behind the diminishing trend of their traditional folk music culture. Whereas in the context of field areas in Nepal, religious proselytization among Damai community is very rare as they are mostly Hindus. However, in Sikkim, it was also found that despite conversion to Christianity, few first generation converted community members have somehow managed to follow their traditional occupation related to folk music and instruments. One young Christian respondent narrated, *“We are the first generation Christian, born in Hindu family. We had past experiences about our traditional folk music and instruments. Therefore, we can still play baja sometimes, if people insist us in occasions. However, the ethics of newly religion and in-group members do not permit us to indulge on it. Therefore, only few members are able to continue such culture in the locality. He also opined that somehow, we at present generation know about the traditional culture of folk music, but what will happen to next generation, as they will be socialized according to the ethics of newly adopted religion. Therefore, the culture of Naumati baja will definitely be in crisis in coming days”*.

6.3.6. Changing Inter-Relationship Between Naumati Baja and Agriculture

The culture of Naumati baja is closely interlinked with the agricultural life of the village, where such baja has a significant role during rice- transplanting season, when the band plays various ragas during *bethi* rice plantation in order to soothe the serpent-god who resides there and to ensure good rice harvest (Tingey 1992). Apart from the manifest functions of appeasing the deity, *bethi* also has a latent function. Pragmatically, such musical arrangement is done and Damai musicians are invited for the entertainment purposes to enhance the working spirit in the field. However, such tradition has become almost a thing of the past in the present society in both Nepal

and Sikkim. However, in recent time, through community initiatives, Sikkim is attempting to restore such aspects of culture by organizing festivals in the village level like *heeley bethi* during rice transplantation, which was found in Nampok/Mangli villages of South Sikkim. However, the restoration of such cultural practice has not been reported in the fields setting of Nepal

A comparative assessment shows that occupational shift from agriculture to secondary and tertiary sectors have negatively affected the importance of Naumati baja in agriculture. Currently, the major cultural space to showcase the culture of Damai traditional folk music and instruments in Nepal is comparatively limited to marriage, *bartaman*⁴⁶, and to some extent tourism and political gathering where the socio- cultural significance of traditional music is still retained. Whereas in case of Sikkim such musical tradition has more extensive scope beyond socio cultural arena and in recent time, the musicians are also invited to grace the various political functions, tourism festivals, communities' festivals/occasions etc. The celebration of *Bhanujayanti*⁴⁷, Independence Day Celebration etc. also witness the playing of traditional Naumati baja. The state is even sending the musicians to other states of India to showcase their folk music and instrument in a cultural exchange programs organized by the Department of culture, Government of Sikkim.

6.3.7. Inclusion and Exclusion of Folk Instruments

Despite having wide range of similarities, the differences is also visible in terms of inclusion and exclusion of new kinds of musical instruments and the material quality of instruments. In Sikkim the inclusion of extra musical instruments like the bagpiper

⁴⁶*Bartamai* is a ritual of initiation among Nepalese Hindus where the *tagadhari* (higher castes) men wear the sacred thread to symbolizes the purity.

⁴⁷ Nepalese of Sikkim and its adjoining Nepalese populated areas celebrates birth anniversary of Nepali poet Adikavi Bhanu Bhakta Archaryaas *Bhanu Jayanti* annually on July, 13th.

and bugle has become popular especially in West Sikkim. But in case of Nepal there is no any such addition. The addition of such instruments like bagpiper is basically to attract the audience during social gathering. Some of the musicians perceived that at present, the audience lost their interest in Damai's ensemble, so when new instruments are added in the traditional ensemble, the scope of attraction and curiosity among the audience would be more. Apart from bagpiper, Damai musician in Sikkim also added bugle in their traditional ensemble Naumati baja. The addition of bigul in their ensemble has been done as a replacement of one *narsingha*, which traditionally consisted of a pair. The bugle⁴⁸ is a wind instruments and as one respondent highlighted that it can produce sound like *narsingha* and musicians often substitutes this instrument like *narsingha* with bugle because, this instrument is more compatible to sound of *narsingha* and is portable which makes it easier to carry in long distances.

There was no such report of addition of new musical instruments in case of the rural villages of Nepal where the study has been conducted. The Damai musicians have been using the same sets of instruments without any such modification unlike Sikkim. Nevertheless, the scenario in urban Nepal is different, where the community musicians are taking entirely new musical genre keeping their traditional ensemble aside. The study accounted lot of out migration among the community musicians in Nepal in search of better livelihood in urban areas especially in the capital city of Kathmandu, where they are mostly engaged in small-scale industries like bags making, leather product, tailoring etc., and they are also involved in works like wage labours and drivers. Some of them are also involved in music related occupation as a secondary work. In urban centers the community musicians prefers to play the brass band instead of Naumati baja due to its increasing demand and market value. That

⁴⁸ Bugle is a small copper wind instrument with no valve.

way, the intensity of change in urban Nepal is higher than the rural settlement of Nepal and Sikkim, where they entirely adopted the new genre of music instead of adding few new instruments within the ensemble. Mathema (2017) highlighted the brass band was initially introduced by the British Empire during the Rana regime in Nepal, however Nepal was never colonized. Under the influence of brass band, many instruments viz the drums, bugles, trombones etc. were included in the Nepal army band and became mandatory for office ceremonies. Gradually it also replaced the indigenous folk musical ensemble Naumati/Panchai baja especially in city like Kathmandu during social occasions where the elites prefer more sophisticated brass band as a status symbol. Consequently the visibility of traditional folk music of Damais has declined under the shadow of brass band. In addition, the high cost and corresponding low demand are also the major reasons for such diminishing trend of Naumati baja.

6.3.8. Changing Material Qualities of Instruments

Traditionally the Damai musical ensemble, Naumati baja is made up with the combination of various materials like copper, wood, clay and leather (Ballinger & Bajracharya, 1960). In this regard, a noticeable difference is also found in case of materials of the instruments. Mostly in case of Nepal Damai musicians are still using their instruments made up of original materials because it is easily accessible. But in case of Sikkim, the study found that there has been the substitution of materials of instruments and a section of Damai musicians also use instruments made up of different materials such as fiber, plastic etc. instead of original one. The respondents pointed out that the musicians from Sikkim sometimes goes to Nepal, if they require good quality instruments.

The study revealed that the traditional and original instruments inherited has been retained in both the cases and majority musicians are still using instruments made up of original materials which they have inherited from their predecessors. Those who opt to buy new one by their own, goes for new materials because of lack of affordability to purchase the instruments made of original copper leather and wood, which is pretty expensive. In context of Sikkim majority of Damai musicians got their sets of instruments from the state government, however the materials and quality of such instruments varies.

6.4. Traditional Music of Damai Community: Discussion Through Sociological Lens

The theoretical analysis is based on Max Weber's theory of rationalization and Pitirim A. Sorokin theory of social mobility. Max Weber had done a commendable contribution for the introduction of music in the discipline of sociology. Weber analysed music in two ways: music as an artifact of the historical rationalization process that brought on the development of capitalism in the west and music as a meaningful part of the society's culture. The most prominent assumption of Weber in his work states that the process of rationalization exists in music. Rationalization theory of music states that the move from ancient to modern music gradually eliminated the mystical and irrational qualities of art and replaced them with rational qualities. Tones in the music that musician might make or a singer might sing was replaced by the organized rational principle of chordal harmony as an evidence of rationalization's effect on music (Turley, 2001).

With this conceptual framework, the section is an attempt to understand the process of rationalization on folk music and instruments of Damais of Nepal and

Sikkim. Darnal (2005) pointed out in Central Nepal the process of rationalization on Damai folk music had already begun, the Panchai baja and Naumati baja is being replaced by the modern Band baja because the clarinet, trumpet snare and bass drum band receives more than twice the income of traditional baja. In some cases, the process of rationalization has eliminated the entire genre of traditional folk music as discussed in preceding section that resulted in transformation from Panchai/Naumati baja to Band baja. And sometimes it only eliminates the interior and aesthetic elements of traditional folk music like notation, and inclusion and exclusion of folk musical instruments. The study revealed that in some parts of Nepal (Gorkha), Damai musician are changing their traditional musical genre into brass band and migrated to urban towns like Kathmandu in search of better market opportunity which may provide them relatively better and sustainable source of income. It has been also found that the original tones (ragas) is no more significant and is being replaced by modern and latest Nepali popular and Hindi filmy songs both in the context of Sikkim and Nepal to cater the audience demand.

The main reason behind such replacement is the changing situation and demand of the audience. The requirement of the society changed according to milieu of society, the musical requirement of the traditional Nepali society earlier was different from present society; when the society changed from agrarian and pre-industrial society into industrial society, many existing musical elements got irrelevant and as a result music has been dissociated from society and culture.

Empirically locating, the original ragas of Damai instruments lost its meaning along with changing social structure. The new generation cannot relate such ragas with their life and in present situation when the original ragas are played in any social occasions, the audience lack the interest and desired to play the latest notation that can

be related with present society, situation and generation. Accordingly, the musical instruments and notation of Naumati baja changed into standardized form basically to fit the requirement of the society and taste of the audience.

Similar work has been done by the Turley (2001) on process of rationalization of music, where he correlates the musical notation in Roman Catholic Church and rationalization. Turley's research proved his theory that it was the church monk who standardized notation to teach and pass on public worship music. Likewise musical instruments initiated standardized form to fit the requirements of the church music and other court orchestras, which demand to employ such musical notation.

Georg Simmel propounded that music helped to represent and express the social meaning and its function. Music portrays the social relationship by which individuals communicate among one another and also maintain structure and restructure the social relations. Musical instruments regarded as a symbolic and emblematic of communities and habitation would help to shape the society and culture. The function of the musical instruments is to convey the socially constructed meaning to the masses via producing sound. Musical Instrument has a culture specific meaning and has been used in ceremonies and ritual practices that are thoroughly shaped by their experience, skills, needs and desires and it has also great importance as emblem and marker of ethnic and cultural identity (Etzkorn, 1964).

Max Weber and Simmel also emphasized music as an artifact and have a meaningful part of society and its function. Sociologists could have explored many things that existed in the society from the perspective of music. The folk music and instruments enables us to understand and interpret socio- cultural aspects, of society, hidden meaning and significance of these cultural elements related to community,

tribe, caste etc. which cannot be expressed other than this means. Contextualizing in the present study, there are various meaning and social significance rooted in the Damai traditional folk music and instruments through which one can understand the socio-cultural practices, social structure and economic trends existing among the Nepali community especially residing in Eastern Himalayan. It also highlights the functional significance of music in the then existing agrarian society. The present study also brought to the limelight, how the traditional music of Damai community has been disassociating itself from its functional significance in the changing circumstances of modern society.

The occupational shift among Damai community shows the social mobility. Sorokin defined social mobility as “any transition of an individuals or social object of value anything that has been credited or modified by human activity from one social position to another” and the transition is always connected with a dissolution of old and an establishment of new social relation (Hoberle, 1928: 220). Socio-economic status is the most important dimension of occupational mobility (Haut, 1984: 1383). Such mobility provides economic and social benefits to the individuals. Sorokin had defined many form of social mobility viz., Horizontal, Vertical (upward/downward), intra-generational and intergeneration mobility. He also mentioned about the various conditions for inter-generational mobility, which include “change in occupational structure” in which he explained that with passage of time occupation gets upgraded or downgraded and their socially defined importance gets changed.

From the present study, it has been observed that occupational mobility among the Damais of Nepal and Sikkim is taking place. The majority of Damai young generation has made their mind not to be involved with traditional occupation related to folk music and instruments, which is seasonal in nature and is also associated with

low social status in the society. The empirical situation evidently shows that the social-economic status of the Damai musicians in the society has been changed both in case of Sikkim and Nepal. It is mainly due to traditional caste based discrimination associated with low social status in Nepali caste hierarchy which is also associated with occupation of playing Naumati baja. With the new scope of occupational diversification, the young generation preferred and opted other occupations such as mason, wage labourer, taxi/private driver, farming etc. instead of their traditional occupation. There are youths who are also employed in various government and private service sectors in various capacities as a teacher, engineer, peon, police, army etc. and few of them are employed in foreign countries in case of Nepal.

On an average 5.7 percent out of the total respondents comprising both Nepal and Sikkim are involved in government sectors in various jobs. This highlights that the vertical occupational mobility among the community is taking place although comparatively it is low as compared to horizontal occupational mobility as vertical mobility requires other factors like the higher educational qualification, better financial background, family support and so on for upward mobility. The empirical situation revealed that Damai community by virtue of inheriting traditional hereditary caste based occupation of music making in the past and being located in low socio-economic status till recent past generally accounts for lack of such skills and resources required for upward mobility as evidenced from few respondents in respect of vertical upward mobility. Nevertheless, the shift in occupation leading to horizontal mobility assures them comparatively decent work and better social status free from low caste stigmatization particularly at work place.

Contextually locating, the occupational pattern among the Damai community, which was predetermined and ascribed in nature has been changing in the last few

decades quite rapidly. The present generation is probably the first generation who has opted desired occupation which is different from their predecessors. The inter-generational mobility thus is quite visible among Damai community inhabiting in both Sikkim and Nepal. The shift from ascriptive to achieved orientation using Parsons pattern variables has characterized the occupational shift among the Damai community. Such inter-generational mobility is a result of recent developments in the various fields including the education, affirmative action and legal framework that aims to provide equal rights and opportunities.

There are various perspectives regarding the emergence, relevance and conversion of religion in the human history. As Marx states most of the religious movements originated from the social condition of oppressed sections. Similarly, Engels states that originally Christianity was emerged as to emancipate slaves and underprivileged sections from the clutches of exploitation. Whereas, Durkheim perceived religion is relevant to small and non-literate societies as compared to complex societies (Haralambos, 1980). Contextualizing it in the present study, Nepali society based on caste system locate the Damai community in low social position. And the community accepted this low social status for long, however in recent time the realization among the community it as oppression and exploitation began to surface. The study found in South Sikkim, Ranapayali village is one such instance where the entire pocket of Damai responded to such system by changing their religion to Christianity. The interview with the respondents highlighted although the manifest motives of such conversion are personal mainly salvation, tackling with the problems of alcoholism and poverty, the latent function somewhat lies in the aspiration of the community for equality and to escape the humiliation of caste discrimination. Religious proselytization among the Damais therefore is not just a denial of one

religion or philosophy over another but it is a voice against injustice, which oppressed them for generations. Despite all these constructive aspects, religious conversion also holds the aspect of cultural destruction as it alters the process of socialization among the coming generation which has an adverse impact on the traditional occupation.

One interesting paradox the study revealed was that the community was being labelled as impure and untouchable although their presence was regarded as inevitable and symbolizes auspiciousness in every social occasions and rituals in Nepali society. As a result they often were ostracized and faced discrimination on several grounds like commensality, intermarriage, social interaction etc. However, they never raised their voice against such practices and accepted it as their fate or result of previous wrong karma, which according to Marxian concept was a false-consciousness that has been propagated through misinterpreted religious faith. Consequently, they could not resist and raise their voice against such discrimination in social occasions and everyday life till the recent past.

However, the study revealed that the community has been raising their voice against such caste based discrimination and maltreatment if taken place in the present context of Nepal and Sikkim. The respondents stated that at present where ever the community musicians are invited to perform, they keep their terms and condition clear before accepting any kind of social invitation as musicians. Once the invitees agreed all the term and condition, then only the *naike* (group leader) accept invitation in the form of *baina* (advance payment). All these ensures musicians free from any kind of humiliation and discrimination, which is a clear indication that society is transforming which is reflected in the perception of the Damai community as well as acceptance by the wider society.

Caste system is regarded as a powerful mechanism of social stratification among the Hindu society where the commensality and connubiality are considered as the fundamental principles of inter-caste relations based on birth (Sharma; 1997). Louis Dumont (1970) considers the fundamental opposition between the pure and impure as the hallmark of the caste system. He further extends that caste as a unique system of ideas incorporating all other aspects of society and the sole institution of social ranking. Similarly, M. N. Srivinas (1979) considered castes as the basis of inter-group relation based on the principle of caste hierarchy, endogamy, hereditary and traditional occupations that finds essential co-operation among various castes and functional for several social activities.

The society is stratified into different layers or hierarchy on the basis of different parameters like caste, class etc. The caste group belongs to same layers shares the similar identity, occupation and social status, which are ascribed in nature. The Nepali society is also stratified on the basis of castes where each castes group holds the specific occupation and social status. The Damai and Magar belong to the two different layers of Nepali caste hierarchy. But in case of Nepal, Magar community who are not traditionally assigned to caste based occupation and holds higher ranks in caste hierarchy, are also opting the traditional musical occupation of Naumati baja. Thus indicating that at present such ascribed roles and positions are beginning to change among the communities due to various circumstances that were never encountered before.

The newly emerging musicians, Magars are actively playing Naumati baja during social occasions and festivals in place like Tanhau district of Nepal. The occupation related to folk music and instrument therefore is witnessing change from ascribed traditional caste role in the changing context and music related occupation is

surpassing beyond caste-cultural background due to market and changing socio - economic realities. Since the demand of baja has been increasing in Nepal irrespective of castes, communities and religion, therefore it has become lucrative source of income for the new emerging musical community. The case of Nepal is evident of the structural transformation that is beginning to change. However, this trend is virtually absent in case of Sikkim.

6.5. Conclusion

In the present chapter the focus has been made to understand several issues that has been contributing the community traditional folk music and instrument in the crossroad of continuity and change. The chapter highlighted many similarities and differences as well that is reflected in the existence of community folk music and instruments in two different field areas having distinct socio-economic and political boundaries. The chapter also included a section on sociological analysis of the empirical situation.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

I

The folk music and instruments are closely interwoven with the society particularly the traditional and preindustrial societies, which mostly existed in isolation and were homogenous in nature. Nnamani (2014: 305) conceptualized folk music generally referring to the music of rural community that often represents the activities of community everyday life, religious rituals, games etc. As a major cultural element of the society, the traditional folk music and instrument makes the community, culture and place extensively distinct from the rest and is symbolic and emblematic of the local people, the culture, the place which effectively convey the socially constructed and culture specific meaning and significance (Etzkorn, 1964) that is extensively used in socio-religious ceremonies and is thoroughly shaped by experience, skills, needs and desires. In addition to socio-religious and cultural significance, folk music is also attached to the economic aspect in many societies and is related to livelihood of communities especially where it is traditionally ascribed occupation.

Folk music is also seen as a powerful means of creating a sense of belonging, either to a specific ethnic group or place (Stokes, 1994; Hargreaves and North, 1997) which enables one social group to represent and reproduce their ethnic identity in everyday social life in a similar manner as the ethnic costumes, food culture, the cultural artifacts, the language and their belief system. It defines one's social structural position in the caste hierarchy, gender and ethnic group, thus defining the relation between the individual within the social order (Denora, 2000). As a cultural element, folk music is also related to rituals and beliefs systems that creates a bond

between descendants, living and gods and during offering and sacrifices (Nzewi, 1980) thereby provides an atmosphere in which gods/spirits accepts such offering. It is related to various socio- economic aspects of society like praise and worship of nature, the seasons, sowing, reaping, childbirth, marriage etc. (Joshi, 1982) and is the product of musical tradition evolved through the process of oral transmission that helps to bridge the gap between past and present (Karples, 1965: 312).

Every human society have gone through countless process of social evolution and institutional development and the existing social structure is the product of such evolution and development. As a cultural element, the socio- cultural significance of traditional folk music also changed as society moved from simple to complex. With the changing socio economic realities, the socio-cultural and economic dimensions of music were also affected resulting in change in the musical genres and tastes across time and space. Consequently, this trend affected the traditional occupation of folk musical communities in various parts of the world. Mukherjee (1947), made an extensive discussion on the impact of economic forces upon Indian traditional music and highlighted the impact of socio- economic changes in the traditional ascribed occupation of musical community.

Contextualizing this backdrop in the present study, Nepal and Sikkim have many socio- cultural similarities and common historical roots sharing the similar socio-cultural setups, ethnic and religious composition. In the caste based hierarchical Nepali society of both regions the communities like *Kami*, *Damai*, *Sarki*, *Gaina*, *Badi* etc. are the hereditary occupational castes occupying low social position in the caste hierarchy who are considered as impure and untouchable. The *Damai*, *Badi* and *Gaina* are traditionally involved in music making occupations in various social - cultural occasions.

Damai community who inhabits in Eastern Himalayan regions like Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling hillsis traditionally involved with the musical ensembles popularly known as Nepali *Panchai baja* and *Naumati baja* having huge socio cultural significance to the Nepali society. The custom of playing Naumati baja is considered inevitable in diverse social situations varying from marriage, sacred thread investiture ceremony, Nepali calendrical cycle of festivals, religious rituals in temples, leading civil processions and all kind of festivities. It has also a significant role during agricultural seasons particularly rice- transplanting when it is played basically to appease the serpent-god for good rice harvest. However, the social transformation, which has taken place over the years, has significantly impacted such traditional occupations and practices and it impacted the status of Damai community in the regions. Therefore the present study entitled “Continuity and Change in the Traditional Folk Music and its Impact on Damai Community in Sikkim and Nepal” is an attempt to examine how the Damai community of Nepal and Sikkim has been responding to changing socio- economic realities and how it impacted the traditional folk music of the community. It also focuses to understand the nature and the factors of continuity and changes in the community’s traditional folk musical occupation and its impact on socio-economic life of the Damai community. The study has been conducted across the borders in varied socio- cultural and political contexts of Nepal and Sikkim. The present study is primarily based on fieldwork conducted in Nepal (Gorkha and Lamjung districts) and Sikkim (West and South districts). The empirical study based on the indepth interview, collection of case study and narratives and observation has been analyzed within the conceptual and theoretical framework of Sociology.

The present study has been divided into seven Chapters. The first chapter basically introduces the research topic followed by the statement of the problems, the review of literature aiming to understand the study from various perspectives and establish research gap by reviewing existing similar studies. The rationale of the study was framed keeping all the research gaps in mind. Along with that the research questions, objectives, research methods and techniques, and the limitation of the study are discussed.

Based on secondary resources, the second and the third chapter highlight the historical backdrop and border contestation between Sikkim and Nepal which were more extensive than its present form. The chapter discusses about socio- economic and political context of Nepal that contributed to out migration of various communities to India and Sikkim and attempt to locate Damais community in Nepali society. The chapter also introduces Naumati baja and its social-cultural significance.

The fourth and the fifth chapters are exclusively based on the empirical study that has been conducted in Nepal and Sikkim. Both chapters made an attempt to explore all the possible aspects of continuity and changes in the community folk music and instruments and its impact on the Damai community in different socio cultural and political context.

The sixth chapter is divided into two sections, the first half deals with the comparative assessment of traditional folk music of Damai community, where the focus has been made to draw similarities and differences encountered in the present study in relation to community traditional folk music and instruments in two different geographical space of Sikkim and Nepal. Such variations are the product of their distinct social, economic, political, and religious backdrop. In the second section, the

empirical data has been analysed and interpreted using various sociological concepts and approaches of sociologists (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Pritrim Sorokin) along with the concepts of caste propounded by Louis Dumont and M. N. Srivinas. The thesis ends with concluding chapter seven, which contains summary and findings.

II

Based on field accounts and primary data, the study revealed various dimensions of challenges as well as the changing dynamics of folk music in both regions. As elsewhere, the community and tradition of Naumati baja in the study areas have not remained unaffected by the wider socio- economic and cultural changes that has affected social structure. An increasing level of education, changing occupational pattern, the trend of out-migration, evolving employment opportunities and the awareness among the community regarding low social status attached to this are some of the biggest factors that have adversely impacted the culture of Naumati baja.

In addition to challenges, the study also touched upon many interesting observations, which indicates the positive aspects in terms of continuity of traditional music. The new initiatives and mechanisms adopted at community level to promote culture by imparting training to youngsters and the state providing various incentives and platform to showcase the traditional music are contributing as motivating factors for preservation of this cultural element. Amongst fascinating field observations in Nepal, the shift of musical occupation beyond community, acceptance of this traditional music across religion as well as the trend of cultural revivalism in both

regions presents a ray of hope for its continuation for otherwise the endangered cultural practices.

Despite the challenges posed by the socio- economic transformations of Nepal, there are several observations that provide significant insights to understand the present status of Damai community's folk music in the crossroad of continuity and changes particularly in the case of Nepal. One such observation was the change in patron- client relationships due to change in the mode of production. Traditionally, known as *balighar bista pratha* which was an exchange of goods and services among the different occupational castes, this caste based interdependence has been replaced by the cash economy. With this changed patron -client relationships, now the baja players are no more confined to particular families and their scope of providing the service of baja has become more open to the larger section of the society. Instead of food grains or other basic needs, now cash payment has become very common in rural Nepal.

Like Nepal, there are many factors that have prompted changes as well as continuity with regard to the culture of Naumati baja in the state of Sikkim. Here also, the socio- cultural significance of community folk music has been changed to a considerable degree at the present context of Sikkim as a result of socio-cultural and economic transformations. The spread of education and occupational diversification are two main factors that contributed to the lack of interest among the young community members in pursuing the culture of Naumati baja. This is evident from the field as the study found that the community members who have been involved in music making are commonly illiterate or with low level of education, who do not have other required skills and option for other job opportunities. Unlike Nepal, religious conversion to Christianity also has impacted the baja culture considerably as

has been observed in the field in Sikkim. Despite many factors that has impacted the baja culture, few musicians have made an effort and developed coping mechanism by incorporating some other musical instruments in their traditional ensemble like bugle and bagpiper. Like Nepal there are many initiatives and strategies that have been taken both in the community and state level in order to preserve community musical tradition in Sikkim too.

It has been generally observed that very few Damai youths are indulged in traditional occupation related to folk music and instruments. The occupational diversification, the flexibility in occupational choices, the spread of modern education coupled with various employment avenues, exposure of youth in contemporary music and musical instruments, use of electronic media have negatively affected the interest of youth in opting the traditional occupation. The narratives of the respondents from field study revealed that the low status attached to the traditional musical occupation primarily contributed to the lack of interest and motivation among youngsters in pursuing such traditional occupation.

An analysis of socio- economic background revealed that majority i.e. 41.43 per cent of the respondents in Nepal who are actively involved in music making are above the age 61 years, while in Sikkim respective figure of 45.71 and 22.86 per cent are above the age of 51 and 40 years. Very few young generation are pursuing traditional occupation is mainly because of out migration for employment opportunities either in urban centers or abroad. It is quite evident that earlier the society was rigid in terms of free choice of occupation. In the current scenario, the young generation has been losing their interest because of various opportunities. Therefore, it would be safe to conclude that folk music of Damai exists so far because of involvement of relatively elderly people both in case of Sikkim or Nepal.

The Damai population residing in study areas of Nepal is predominantly Hindus and 95 per cent are still following old age Hindu religion. Although insignificant 5 percent have religious conversion, they are still practicing their caste-based occupation and also want their children to continue the same occupational pattern. It is even found that Christian families started using Naumati baja during social occasions like marriage in Nepal. The empirical findings therefore suggest that religious conversion into Christianity does not have much adverse impact on musical cultural practices. Whereas in Sikkim although 85.7 per cent of Damai respondents are Hindus and the remaining are Christians, the influence of Christianity is visible in a village of South Sikkim, where the changed religious ethos has been one factor for not following this traditional musical occupation. The instance of music beyond community or other community opting this occupation was virtually absent.

The field study revealed the respective 53 and 47 percent respondents as illiterate in Nepal and Sikkim and only 19 and 7 percent of respondents with the highest qualification of Secondary level in respective areas, it is clearly evident that traditional music and instruments as profession are opted by those who are either deprived of education or achieved low level of education and have a very limited career choice because of lack of education degrees and skills.

However, although these are challenges, the empirical evidence shows the traditional folk music and instruments of Naumati baja continues and is not totally ousted, although changes have been noticed in both regions. However, there are considerable differences across borders. It has been established that the status and popularity of musical occupation has been threatened among the Damai community to a large extent and the youngsters of Damai community are losing motivations to pursue this profession as a main source of livelihood. However, one unique finding

and ray of hope observed in Nepal was Magar community began to practice this musical occupations which traditionally was beyond their purview. The adoption of Naumati baja by the Mangar community is because of emerging crisis of Damai musicians on the one hand and its socio- cultural relevance and inevitability during social occasions on the other. Therefore, this new trend not only bridged the gap of shortage of folk musician contributing to its continuity, it also transcended the traditional caste barriers. However in Sikkim, the occupation of traditional music making is still restricted to Damai community and other communities and castes have not adopted this profession.

Another change noticed in the use of Naumati baja was its popularity transcended the religious barriers in Nepal as traditionally it was being used by Nepali Hindus only. In the changed scenario, the tradition of Naumati baja and its acceptance has crossed the religious barriers as in recent times, people belonging to other religious background like Muslims and Christians also started inviting the Naumati baja players especially during the wedding. However, such cases of adoption by other community and religion is virtually absent in Sikkim

The culture of Naumati baja still has enormous religious roles and significance in the context of Nepal. The study revealed few religious places still existing where such auspicious music continues even today. The field study in Lamjung district of Nepal highlighted that the Devi temple at Gaunshahar VDC is one such example where the Damai musician is still required on a regular basis for the accomplishment of religious rituals and occasions. However, in case of Sikkim, the use of community traditional ensemble in temple was not reported and found.

Few modification on traditional instruments is another important aspect that shows the community's effort to keep the tradition alive and adapt in the age of modernity. In West Sikkim, musicians added new instruments viz., bagpiper and bigul in the traditional ensemble. Inclusion of such new instruments has been reported as an attempt to attract and motivate the young generation towards their lost traditions. However, it has also been reported that the addition of extra instruments contaminated the pure essence of Naumati baja.

An increasing trend of tourism industry both in Nepal and Sikkim has also provided an ample space for the promotion of community traditional folk music in the present scenario. Sikkim and Nepal are known for the tourist destination for both domestic and foreign tourists. With the concept of cultural tourism, Naumati baja has become popular during the time of tourist festivals in both the context of Sikkim and Nepal.

An emerging trend of cultural revivalism is a pertinent factor that is instrumental in continuing the culture of community folk music even today. Efforts are being made at individual and community level working for preservation for example *Kanchandzonga Naumati Sanstha* of Barnyak, West Sikkim and *Naumati Baja Sangrakshan Samithi* of Milantol (Lamjung district of Nepal) are actively involved in imparting training of folk music and instruments to the younger generation through various workshops and periodic training. The state is also concerned about the facilitating culture of Naumati baja, by providing many promotional initiatives by providing sets of Naumati baja to the musical group both in case of Sikkim and Nepal. As in many cases musicians leave their traditional occupation because they cannot afford to buy instruments. In Sikkim, it was also found that sometime musicians are sent out of the state to represent the distinct

culture of Sikkim during cultural exchange programs, where they find the best platform to showcase their culture that facilitates in continuation of the Naumati baja. However, despite its survival amidst challenges, the cultural space for playing Naumati baja has seen noticeable changes. In addition to wedding and rituals, now it has been extensively found in the political gathering, tourist festivals, and other important state-level programs.

While analyzing factors that have prompted change in the community's traditional folk music and instruments, the study found two basic reasons that contributed to such changes: One prime reason is low social status attached to it and its economic inconsistency mainly due to its seasonal demand. The reasons are equally applicable in both Sikkim and Nepal. The other factors that affected the culture of Naumati baja which are specific to each region include the religious proselytization and the trend of out-migration. Among other factors common to both regions includes increased hiring charge of Naumati baja, the technological intervention in the form of modern electronic gadgets, the changing musical taste of audience in the era of information revolution, etc. are other reasons revealed in the study. An overview of these factors has been presented in the following section.

The out-migration is one of the major issues being faced in Nepal over the last two decades that was triggered by the Nepal's civil war, unemployment problem and poverty. The study shows that considerably large numbers of Nepalese youths including Damais went abroad which made them economically sustainable, however the outmigration has also hampered the traditional culture of the community folk music. The able youths who are expected to inherit the occupation have out-migrated in search of better life and be economically sustainable has direct bearing resulting in shortage of community musicians in the study areas.

Religious proselytization was found as a major threat to the community folk music in case of Sikkim. As study found 87.5 per cent of Damai populations in one of the Damai settlement area are Christians and the consequence of religious conversion in traditional occupation is evidently visible, as most of them have left their traditional occupation. There is a major concern about the future of the traditional music, as the upcoming generation of newly converted will be socialized in the new religious environment and ethics which will have negative consequences on the baja culture, which is already under threat of survival.

The study also shows that there is an inverse connection between the increasing costs of Naumati baja with its diminishing popularity. The demand for baja has decreased over the years in social occasions like wedding also because of very high hiring cost. This has been substituted by electronic media, which are comparatively cheaper and convenient to manage.

One common factor identified is the trend of occupational diversification among the community. The traditional restriction of occupational mobility has been relaxed and now community members have started preferring and opting other forms of occupation instead of sticking to traditional music making. The low social status prompted the community youth to chose other professions that could provide them better social status, respect and privilege in the society. These factors also contributed to diminishing interest of community youths for which society is confronting the issue of shortage of musician.

The present study also identified many similarities between two regions. The tradition of Naumati baja witnessed both addition as well as deletion of some of its instruments. The original ragas are no more exists and has been replaced by popular

Nepali/Hindi songs. Although, musicians are still visible during social rituals and occasion but what generally people missed is the presence of its original ragas.

Some noticeable differences have also been identified with regard to the status of community folk musical ensemble in Sikkim and Nepal. The caste barriers in opting Naumati baja is relatively less visible in context of Nepal. Whereas, in Sikkim, such profession is still under the domain of Damai and has not been taken by others. The trend of out migration in Nepal is significantly noticeable and can be taken as one of the major factor that has contributed to declining interest of the Damai youths in traditional music making. But such trend of outmigration to abroad was not found a noticeable in Sikkim, although migration to urban areas of Sikkim has been found. The Damai musicians of Nepal are adopting Band baja by including other brass instruments and drums instead of Naumati baja in case of urban places in Nepal instead of their traditional ensemble because of its marketability and demand, however in rural areas it has remained same. Whereas, in Sikkim conversion to band baja has not taken place except inclusion of extra new instruments like the bagpiper and bugle. But in case of Nepal there is no any such addition. The religious conversion among the community creates serious interruptions in the continuation of the music-related occupation and this is more visible in Sikkim.

The study revealed that socio- economic status of the Damai community has been changing. The discriminatory treatment reported to be widely practiced in the past due to their low caste status has been relaxed and the perception of the society towards the community has become more positive and open in recent time. The occupational diversification has been found and the Damai community is freely adopting diverse occupations.

While locating the empirical study in theoretical framework, the theory of rationalization has been found relevant in eliminating the entire genre of traditional folk music resulting in transformation from Panchai/Naumati baja to Band baja and also in terms of inclusion and exclusion of folk musical instruments, replacement of traditional ragas with the popular songs to cater the audience's demand. However, while doing so, it only eliminates the interior and aesthetic elements of traditional folk music like notation as various meaning and social significance rooted in the Damai traditional folk music and instruments through which one can understand the socio-cultural practices, social structure and economic trends existing among the Nepali community especially residing in Eastern Himalayan. Taking Max Weber and Simmel that music as an artifact having socio-cultural meaning and function, the study revealed how despite it as an important cultural artifact, the traditional music of Damai community has been disassociating itself from its traditional functional significance in the changing circumstances of modern society.

Using the concept of social mobility, occupational mobility among the Damais of Nepal and Sikkim has been observed. In the changing socio-cultural context of Nepal and Sikkim, the low social status, hereditary caste based occupation and discrimination of the Damai community witnessed relaxation. With the new scope of occupational diversification, the young generation prefers and opt other occupations. Although, the vertical occupational mobility among the community is taking place it is comparatively low as compared to horizontal occupational mobility as vertical mobility (upward mobility) requires other factors like the higher educational qualification, better financial background etc. The empirical situation revealed that the sample population of Damai community by virtue of inheriting traditional hereditary caste based occupation of music making in the past and being located in

low socio- economic status till recent past generally lack such cultural capital in the form of education degree, other professional skills and resources required for upward mobility as evidenced from few respondents in respect of vertical upward mobility. Nevertheless, the shift in occupation leading to horizontal mobility assures them comparatively decent work and better social status. While studying continuity and changes, the study revealed considerable relaxation in terms of commensal relations as well as concept of purity and pollution that characterized the traditional caste system in Nepali society.

The present study is confined to the status of continuity and change in the traditional folk music of Damai community that exists in the few districts of Nepal and Sikkim. There are other places in Eastern Himalayan regions that include the hilly regions of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, where the presence of Damai community and their traditional folk musical culture is very much visible, which provides further scope for exploration. These regions can be included as the future scope of this study where the culture of Naumati baja is equally relevant and significant during social occasions and religious rituals.

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Glossary of Meanings

Glossary	Meanings
<i>Aadhaya</i>	Form of contractual sharecropper
<i>Acchut</i>	Untouchable
<i>Adhunik git</i>	Modern songs
<i>Ashad</i>	Nepali month falls in the month of June in English calendar
<i>Baina</i>	Advance booking payment for baja player
<i>Baja</i>	Musical instruments
<i>Bali</i>	Harvest grains
<i>Balighar bista pratha</i>	Traditional system of caste based exchange of services in Nepali society.
<i>Barthaman</i>	Sacred thread ceremony
<i>Bazaar</i>	Town
<i>Beha</i>	Wedding
<i>Bethi</i>	Rice transplantation season, when the traditional Naumati baja is being played to please serpent god
<i>Beuli</i>	Bride
<i>Beulo</i>	Groom

<i>Bhatti</i>	Traditional Pubs
<i>Bidesh</i>	Abroad/Foreign
<i>Bugle</i>	Small copper wind instrument with no valve.
<i>Chaurasi</i>	Eighty-four birth anniversary
<i>Chhoichittohalnunaparna</i>	Impure but touchable caste
<i>Chhoichittohalnuparna</i>	Impure and untouchable caste
<i>Chutke</i>	Nepali dance and instrumental piece/ beat
<i>Chyapasal</i>	Tea shop
<i>Dal</i>	Local pulses
<i>Damaha</i>	Large kettledrum
<i>Darbar</i>	Royal palace
<i>Daura- suruwal</i>	Male traditional attire of Nepali community
<i>Devi</i>	Goddess
<i>Devithan</i>	Goddess temple
<i>Dhaka topi</i>	Nepali traditional brimless cap
<i>Dhan Diwas</i>	Paddy day
<i>Dhara</i>	Spring, pond
<i>Dhol</i>	Double headed drum
<i>Dholaki</i>	Person who play double-headed drum

<i>Dohori</i>	Folk duet song usually sung between male and female – expressions of world and day-to-day life experience
<i>Gandharva</i>	Celestial musician- name adopted by gaine
<i>Ghal</i>	Sharecropping
<i>Ghanta</i>	Bells
<i>Gorakhnath</i>	Protecting deity of the Saha dynasty
<i>Guthi</i>	Community organization
<i>Hatt</i>	Weekly market
<i>Heelay bethi</i>	Wet land bethi
<i>Jati</i>	Caste
<i>Jhaure</i>	Instrumental piece of panchai baja repertories/ political satires or crime attempts
<i>Jhayali</i>	Cymbals
<i>Jhyauregeet</i>	Song include political satires or crime attempts/ romance
<i>Jor damaha</i>	Pair of kettledrum
<i>Jumla</i>	Copper- plate inscription
<i>Kahal</i>	Natural horn/ <i>a Narsingha like instrument</i>
<i>karkha</i>	Songs of great historical events and heroism
<i>Karnal</i>	Conical-bore natural trumpet

<i>Kartik</i>	Nepali month (November- December)
<i>Khajjar</i>	Traditional folk instrument of magar commuinty
<i>Khetal</i>	Agricultural labours
<i>Kirati</i>	Community including Rai and Limbu
<i>Kul- Devata</i>	Family deity
<i>Kutia</i>	Form of tenancy, where the cultivator pays a stipulated fixed amount to the owner
<i>Lahuregit</i>	Songs of Gorkha soldiers
<i>Lok git</i>	Folksongs
<i>Madesh</i>	Plane/lowlands
<i>Mandali</i>	Christian religious congregation
<i>Mansir</i>	Nepali month (December- January)
<i>Masinyamatwali</i>	Enslavable alcohol drinkers
<i>Matwali</i>	Alcohol drinker castes
<i>Mela</i>	Public event that is organized to celebrate a special cultural or religious fair or festival
<i>Nagara</i>	Large kettledrum used for ritual music
<i>Nagara bana</i>	Ritual ensemble including nagara
<i>Nagarpalika</i>	Municipal council
<i>Naika</i>	Leader of naumati baja team.

<i>Namasinyamatwali</i>	Non- enslavable alcohol drinkers
<i>Naqqarakhana</i>	Ensemble of kettledrums, shawms and trumpets
<i>Naumati baja</i>	Musical ensemble contains nine musical instruments
<i>Paakeha bethi</i>	Dry land bethi
<i>Pahar</i>	Hilly region
<i>Paharis</i>	People residing in hills
<i>Panchai baja</i>	Musical ensemble contains five instruments
<i>Paninachalne- chhoichittohalnunaparna</i>	Impure but touchable caste
<i>Paninachalne- chhoichittohalnuparna</i>	Impure and untouchable caste
<i>Pasna</i>	Rice feeding ceremony
<i>Paus</i>	Nepali month (January- February)
<i>Phulko doli</i>	A ritual offering of flowers to a divinity
<i>Prakriti</i>	Naturism
<i>Pratha</i>	System
<i>Puja</i>	Daily offerings/prayers
<i>Ragas</i>	Musical tones
<i>Raksi</i>	Nepali locally brewed alcohol
<i>Ranapayali</i>	One of the Damai sub-caste

<i>Rastriya baja</i>	National music
<i>Riti-bhagya</i>	Patron- client
<i>Ropai</i>	Rice transplanting
<i>Samudai</i>	Group
<i>Sankha</i>	Conch
<i>Sanstha</i>	Association
<i>Shahanai</i>	Clarinet
<i>Shanai</i>	Shawm
<i>Sindur</i>	Vermilion
<i>Sova-yatra</i>	Religious procession
<i>Sta- coat</i>	Nepali traditional half coat
<i>Swayamber</i>	Betrothal
<i>Tabl khana</i>	Middle Eastern military band (Arabic)
<i>Tagadhari</i>	Caste wearing sacred thread/twice-born castes
<i>Tamko</i>	Small kettledrum
<i>Tanam</i>	Form of land tenancy in which the fixed rate of yearly lease for the acquired land should be paid
<i>Thar</i>	Sects or clans
<i>Thikadar</i>	Rent collectors and dispute mediators.
<i>Tithi</i>	Date

Ulto baja

Music palyed by the Damai during funeral
processions

Vatmas

Local soybean

APPENDIX

Deptmrt of Sociology

Sikkim University, Gangtok, Sikkim

Continuity and Change in the Traditional Folk Music and its Impact on

Damai Community in Sikkim and Nepal

Questionnaires

Date: _____

Personal Background of the Respondent

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Religion:
4. Address:
5. Marital status of the respondent:
6. Educational status of the respondent:
7. Main Occupation of the respondent:
8. Subsidiary Occupation:
9. Average monthly Income of the respondent:
10. Landholding:

Family Background of the Respondent

11. Type of Family: (a) Nuclear (b) Nuclear Extended (c) Joint

12. Number of family members: Male = _____ Female= _____

13. Details about Family members:

Family Member	Relation	Sex	Age	Education Qualification	Main Occupation	Subsidiary Occupation	Income

14. What has been your family traditional occupation?

15. What occupation, has by and large been followed by:

- a. Your father's father: b. Your father:

Musical Occupation

16. Since how long you are involved on family traditional occupation (Musician)?

17. From where did you learn to play the folk musical instruments (Naumati/Panchai Baja)?

- a. Family b. Friends
 c. Community members d. Others _____

18. Which particular folk instrument do you play?

19. Why are you involved on this occupation?

a. Self interest

b. Imposed by family or society

c. Lack of other opportunities

d. If any _____

20. Details about occasion and season in which you are mostly engaged and its charges:

Occasion	Season/Month	Charge

21. Which communities mostly invite you to perform such Baja?

22. Do audience prefer Naumati/Panchai Baja on social like Marriage, Bartaman ect.?

a. Yes

b. No

23. Which age group shows maximum interest on Naumati/Panchai Baja?

a. Old generation

b. Young generation

c. Both

d. Others

Socio-Economic Status of Musicians

24. How do you perceive folk musician as a profession in the present time?

- a.High income + high status
- b.Low income+ low status
- c.High income + low status
- d.Low income + high status
- e.Others (Specify)

25. Do you ever experience the discriminatory behavior from the members of other communities?

- a. Yes
- b.No

26. If yes, on what ground?

- a.Caste
- b.Occupation
- c.Wealth
- d.Personal habit
- e.Others (Specify)

27. Has your source of income is being hampered due to such changes?

- a. Yes
- b.No

28. Do you think that the member of your community is leaving their family traditional occupation?

- a. Yes
- b.No

If, yes what are the reasons?

- a. Economic reasons:
- b.Status:
- c.Employment opportunity:
- d. Educational reason:
- e.Other (specify):

29. How does other perceived Naumati Baja player as a profession in present time?

30. Are you satisfied with your family traditional occupation as a musician?

- a. Yes b.No

If not, why?

31. Do you want to follow the family's traditional occupation by your coming generation?

- a. Yes b.No

32. Your children show interests on Naumati/Panchai Baja?

- a. Yes b.No

33. What is the opinion of your children about family's traditional occupation?

Changing Aspects of Traditional Music

34. Do you think that the musical test of people has been changing during various social occasions?

- a. Yes b.No

If yes, what are the changes?

35. Have you ever thought of switching over to other profession?

- a. Yes b.No

If yes, why

44. Do you ever teach young musicians the original ragas of Naumati/Panchai Baja?

If, yes what is their response?

45. Do young musician shows interest on original ragas of Naumati/Panchai?

If not, what is their interest?

46. Do you think the original ragas/tunes will be sustained in the future?

a. Yes b.No

47. Do you think it is possible to preserve the original ragas of Naumati/Panchai Baja?

If, yes how

48. Is there any changes taking place in terms of musical instruments of Panchai/Naumati Baja?

If, yes what kind of changes?

50. Details about the instruments inclusion, exclusion & modification of Panchai/Naumati Baja:

Inclusion of new instruments	Exclusion of old instruments	Instruments modified

51. What kind of feedback musicians get from others about such changes?

NGOs & States Initiatives

52. Has any initiative taken by any NGOs, State and Community to protect and promote the tradition of Naumati/ Panchai Baja?

- a. Yes b.No

53. Who has been taking such initiative?

- a.NGOs b.Government/ State
c.Own Community d.Others (Specify)

54. What kind of programs / schemes they have conducted till so far?

55. If not taken any initiatives: Have you ever raised such issues to the government, NGOs and own community?

- a. Yes b.No.

If, yes what was their response/

56. Do they organize any awareness campaign?

57. Does government invites your community to perform Naumati/Panchai Baja during tourist festivals?

- a. Yes b.No

58. Do you think that tourism is playing a role to protect and expose the Naumati/Panchai Baja?

If yes, how

Narratives

59. Do you know the social significance and symbolic importance of Naumati/Panchai Baja on various occasions?

If yes, what are those?

60. Can you tell me any changes that you observed in the folk musical culture of Damai community?

If yes, what are the changes that you have been witnessing?

61. What are the factors responsible for such changes in the Panchai/Naumati Baja of the Damai community?

62. What will be the consequences of such changes on Panchai/Naumati Baja in the future?

63. What kind of initiatives does your community need to safeguard Naumati/Panchai Baja?