



Diversity of Contents in Dhrubesh Chandra Regmi's Music, Myth and Melody: A Brief History of Nepali MusicYam Prasad Sharma^{#*}[#]Lecturer (English) at Lalitkala Campus, Tribhuvan University.^{*}Corresponding Author: yamprasadsharma@gmail.com**Citation:** Sharma, Y. P. (2025). Diversity of Contents in Dhrubesh Chandra Regmi's Music, Myth and Melody: A Brief History of Nepali Music. *Journal of Fine Arts Campus*, 6(1). 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jfac.v6i1.76082>

Abstract

Prof. Dr. Dhrubesh Chandra Regmi's book *Music, Myth and Melody: A Brief History of Nepali Music* presents the history of Nepali music in concise form analyzing multiple genres of music including classical, spiritual, folk, ethnic, modern and contemporary music, compositions and instruments. The work traces the roots of Nepali music along with the evolution and development. Professor Regmi emphasizes the significance of classical music in composition of aesthetic forms in contemporary times. Time, place and context affect the development of art. Socio-political and economic condition of the country is closely connected to the creation of art. Royal patronage helped in the institutionalization and development of Nepali music. The blend of classical and native folk music has given unique identity to Nepali music. The book introduces most of the dynamics and genres of the music and indicates the directions for further exploration and research. The coherence, clarity and conciseness in presentation makes the reading experience rich. The book is equally useful to the music students, teachers, researchers and general readers as well.

Keyword: Classical, folk, gharana, music, myth.

Introduction

Prof. Dr. Dhrubesh Chandra Regmi is not only the renowned sitar player but also researcher, writer and music educationist. He belongs to the Regmi *Gharana* (the school) of music in Nepal. After the graduation in law, he completed Sangeet Alankar in Sitar from Gandharva Mahavidyalaya and Master in Music from Delhi University. Later, he got the mentorship of Sitar Virtuoso Pt. Uma Shankar Mishra. Regmi earned Doctor of Philosophy in Music from Delhi University. The title of his dissertation is 'History of Music in Nepal with Special Reference to Classical Music during the Rana Period'. As a Fullbright Visiting Scholar, he completed his Post Doctorate on the theme of music for peace and harmony at Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA in 2014. He is one of the founders of Sukarma, popular folk-classical music group, founding president of Nepal Classical Music Society. He was the Goodwill Ambassador for Nepal Tourism Year 2011. He has been teaching music at Tribhuvan University (TU) for more than three decades, and at present he is the Head of Central Department of Fine Arts, TU. He has written several research articles and books. He has conducted dozens of research in the area of music. He has released more than 15 audio-visual collections of his performances. His extensive travelling and performances has taken Nepali music across the world. The wider exposure also refined the aesthetic qualities of his works.

Latest representative of Musical legacy of last four generation of Regmi family great grandfather Pandit Dev Chandra Regmi, grandfather Pt. Krishna Chandra Regmi, father Pt.



Satish Chandra Regmi (Regmi, preface, 2023). Regmi Gharana. His first music lessons were from his father, professor of music at Tribhuvan University. Many books and research works are found in classical music but the domain of Nepali music has remained unexplored. He has thrown light on the concept of music and traced the mythical, cultural, religious and social roots of Nepali music. He has analyzed various Nepali music in different historical periods like Lichhavi, Malla, Rana and Shah period along with recent developments. The book gives special emphasis on the Rana period in terms of investment, development, promotion and preservation of classical music. The period set the foundation for classical music in Nepal. Music and cultural performances are the integral parts of feasts and festivals of various ethnic groups (Regmi, 2015).

The information has been taken from reliable sources like books, research articles, visual arts, archives and cultural performances. All the sources and references have been documented systematically and academically so that the readers and researchers can reach there easily. Despite the fact that Regmi is professional performer, his exploration of the subject matter is deep. Regular performance and travelling are his top priorities, for they broaden his creative horizon. The book is the result of fifteen years' painstaking research and exploration. The information is reliable due to the credible references and systematic presentation. It is a condensed picture of history of music in Nepal. The book is highly useful to the music students, teachers, researchers and general readers who are interested in Nepali music. (Regmi, preface, 2023).

The renowned Nepali musician, scholar and performer Prof. Regmi throws light on the evolution and development of Nepali music (Subedi, 2023). He presents historical narratives and analyzes them suggesting the significance (Sharma, 2017). Human values and cultural dimensions have been rendered through the discourses on music. In addition to the Nepali music, Prof. Regmi has presented the South Asian music in the background with great clarity in concise form. Along with the art and music, the book throws light on the historical changes and political dimensions. Religion, myths, culture and music are interconnected. The diversity of places, people and culture make the mosaic of music and performances in Nepal, for different culture presents different variation in music. Despite the diversity, the author shows the common thread underneath the surface. The marginalized communities in Nepal have been providing live cultural performances from the time immemorial. The classical touch has provided depth and sustained aesthetic value to the folk music of Nepal (Regmi, 2005).

Research Methodology

Prof. Regmi's *Music, Myth and Melody: A Brief History of Nepali Music* is the research area of this paper which has been analyzed taking consideration of its diverse contents. Multiple contents and issues of Nepali music have been traced and their significance have been explained. The book itself is the primary source of search. Research articles and books related to the subject matter are the secondary sources. This is the qualitative research, for the findings depend on the analysis and interpretation of the researcher. Furthermore, the inclusion of multiple issues in the book makes it complex to explore all the issues in detail.

Analysis and Interpretation

Regmi's book *Music, Myth and Melody: A Brief History of Nepali Music* also emphasizes the substantial contribution of monarchy and aristocrats in the institutionalization and development of classical music in Nepal. The royal patronage contributed for the continuity of classical music in local context. The musical taste in the connoisseurs of music facilitated the



arrival of new forms. The masters of music were appointed in the court that groomed the royal bands. It introduces multiple forms music existing even in the nooks and corners leaving space to the new researchers for further exploration.

Theatrical performance, dance and music come simultaneously in integrated manner. Folk ritual performances also include music and dance (Regmi & Yonjan, 1977). The author puts the traditions of Nepali music in theoretical framework with appropriate terms of reference with simplicity and clarity. The book traces the *mélange* of classical traditions with folk and local forms. The experiment brings up new style of Nepali music. Another remarkable dimension of the work is its pedagogical importance for students, teachers and researchers. It helps to transfer knowledge from one generation to other generation.

The tradition of music is as old as the Vedic civilization. This can be conjectured, for the *Samveda* has been dedicated for music. Hindusthani classical music is the common heritage of South Asian countries (Regmi, 2013). Despite the political changes and the shifting of state authority in the history of Nepal, the patronage of the state to the classical music supported for its development. Most of the medieval festivals, Newar traditional music and dance were embraced by the new rulers. Patronage also provided the livelihood to the individual artists. The domain of music and art got support during the period of various rules like Lichchhavi, Malla, Shah and Rana (Regmi, 2018).

The writer has reviewed about two hundred already done researches and created the strong foundation of history of music in Nepal. He has thrown light on history, culture and social setting of the time with special reference to music and art. After acquiring the traditional roots of Nepali music and presenting the present scenario, the author provides his own insight on the area of exploration (Sharma, 2020). The book emphasizes the special connection of music and monarchy. The center of power and resources created the situation beyond the daily need toward the aesthetic perception due to the surplus in the palace. The music and arts go beyond the basic function toward the ideal beauty. The contribution, support and royal patronage have been highly appreciated.

The interconnection of Nepal culture, art and music have been explored in detail. Music is the integral part of our festivals and traditional rituals related to birth, wedding and funeral along with other ceremonies. The connection of music, spirituality and religion is another powerful dimension of Nepali music. The initiation of knowing ourselves begins with music. The Brahma or the universe is full of music. The realization of *Nadabramha* unites individual self with the cosmic being. The sublime experience of such music resolves all the conflicts and contradictions existing in the self and the world. This is the aesthetic and spiritual experience of oneness of all matters and beings.

Nepal is multicultural nation. Cultures, rituals, languages and festivals differ due to geographical variation of the nation. Ethnic and cultural diversity presupposes the musical variation in the communities. Cultural diversity along with geographical diversity brings up different flavors in music, dance and arts. The author goes to the origin and sources of Nepali music using secondary sources. Religious and spiritual practices of different communities used music as the integral part of their rituals. This is the earlier phase of musical practice in formal gathering. Vedic civilization mentions the use of music elaborated manner. Music and cultural dance in temples and their premises also contributed to institutionalize the music as profession in later phase. The trends of using music continued in Buddhist era as well. There are various



divinities in both Hinduism and Buddhism. Individual deities have their separate musical compositions for devotion. This also contributes for the variety in structure and aesthetic value.

Regmi also connects music with different castes of Nepal. People of different castes have different music, and the people of some castes are professional musicians. Whenever there is any feast, festival or ceremony in the community, those musician come and perform. Such music is not taught in the formal institutions but the younger generation spontaneously learns from their elders, fathers and grandfathers. The book also connects various forms of music with corresponding dance forms. Generally, there is the simultaneous performance of dance and music in festivals and ceremonies. There is a sort of inter-art relationship. The author throws light on various genres of popular music, classical music, folk music and dance, religious dances and folk traditions of Mithila culture. Seasons also determine the form of music. Music is linked to the nature along with the culture. Seasons give color to the space and setting, and music gives voice the nature and life.

He has introduced Nepali musical instruments used in classical music, folk music, funeral music and the music in Nepal Army. He even explains about the musical instruments that have been forbidden to play. The link of musical instruments to the varieties of music makes the study deeper and more reliable. The work captures the connected chronological history of music in Nepal summarizing the trends, techniques, instruments of music, and compositions of the Lichhavi, Malla, Shah and the Rana period as well as the present scenario of music in Nepal (Regmi, 2019). Having the detailed survey of already done researches, Regmi asserts his insights on the basis of analysis and interpretation. At last, he shows the area and direction for the further researches.

He sketches the portraits of music lovers including various kings and aristocrats. The book also underscores the musical conferences and gathering on philosophy, theory and practice of music in the history of Nepal. He explains the life and livelihood of professional musicians along with their socio-economic status. Regmi also points out the tradition of providing wages to the musicians. In the present time, the developed state of this tradition contributed for the evolution of music as independent genre and musician as a profession. In addition to the integration of music and dance, he also analyzes the theatre and drama in terms of musical performances. Music has been a constituent of drama. While studying one art form, other many aspects of arts and life have been revealed in the book arousing the interest to go forward.

Jatras, ritual processions and festivals are the fertile ground for the practice music. They have philosophical, social, cultural and aesthetic values. Music and dance add color to the festivals and carnivals. People are oblivious to the pain and suffering of the life when they glide in spontaneous music and dance (Sharma, 2009). The border between classification and hierarchy is blurred and vanished. The entire community becomes one while dancing in music. This is the power of dance and music.

Another important aspect of this study is the analysis of the foreign influence in Nepali music. The Rana rulers visited western countries and they got exposure to western music and dance. Their fascination with the foreign form brought the western music and musician in Nepal. During the Rana rule, there are four trends of music. In certain sects, there is the practice of purely classical music among the religious people and the elites. On the other hand, there is the practice of western music in its own form. Next trend is the folk form among ordinary people. The blend of traditional forms and western forms gave way to new genre of music having ambivalent nature.

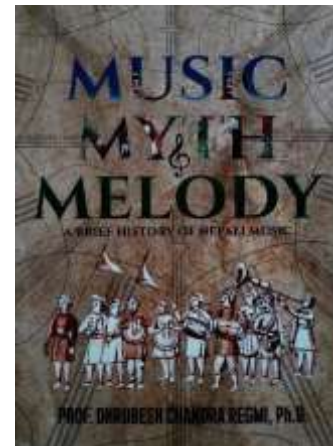


This period also facilitates for creating the foundation of musical *gharanas* in Nepal. Certain families practiced music professionally from generation to generation. Regmi *gharana* is one of such schools of music in Nepal that has carved its own unique identity. The book also discusses about the initiation of formal music education in Nepal including the music courses at Tribhuvan University and some other organizations. Both private and government organizations and institutions have played important role for the development and institutionalization of music in Nepal as a distinct genre of learning in academia (Regmi, 2020).

The book also gives voice to women musicians from the historical past to present. Many articles, books and researches have ignored women artists, and sometimes, they have been misrepresented and underrepresented but Regmi gives ample space to the women singers, dancers and musicians. He acknowledges their contributions in the development of Nepali music.

Bibliography, glossary and annexes provide additional information to support the main text. Clarity of contents and theme, organic unity of the diverse elements, chronological and concise presentation and lucid language make the book worth reading. As we learn about history of music in Nepal, we become aware about our invaluable scriptures, mythological text, magical and mystical events, historical figures and political changes, cultural shifting according to the time and geographical space. We view unusual scenes and landscapes, we visit strange characters that contributed to build nation along with art and culture. The authentic sources given in citations and references are the milestones to the forthcoming researchers. The book creates the strong foundation to carve the history on Nepali music.

Music, Myth and Melody: A Brief History of Nepali Music by Professor Regmi captures the major trends of Nepali music from the antiquity to the present time including various forms like folk music, ethnic presentation, classical compositions and contemporary forms. The work presents the initiation and institutionalization of musical forms including the gradual development. The royal patronage significantly contributed for the survival and enhancement of the art form. The author firstly studies the individual forms as they are, later he points out how various early forms blend and create musical *mélange* having new aesthetic value. Contemporary compositions share from both folk and classical forms despite their unique identity. The information is reliable, for the author has written on the basis of hundreds of sources and his first-hand experience. He includes all the available sources. As a result, it opens door to the various areas of exploration. The concise work includes the entire domain of Nepali music. The coherence and clarity of presentation makes the book worth reading. The book is the invaluable treasure for the music researchers, teachers, students and general readers interested in music.



Conclusion

Prof. Dr. Dhrubesh Chandra Regmi's book *Music, Myth and Melody: A Brief History of Nepali Music* is a serious research work on Nepali music from its beginning to the present state including the various stages in-between. Music reflects the political changes, and socio-political changes bring transformations in musical trends. However, sometimes, core elements of Nepal remain the same despite the changes on the surface. The author elaborates the music practices in various regimes like the Lichchhavi period, the Malla period, the Shah period, the Rana period and the developing trends in the present time. In the beginning state, temples, religious places



and Vedic recitations were the sources of music. The entire Samaveda has been dedicated to music. Music is as old as our civilization. Classical music contributes to realize oneself, the universe and the Brahma. *Nadabramha* gives the feeling of oneness among the things, beings and the self. The book critically appreciates the royal patronage in the preservation, institutionalization and development of music in Nepal. This provided the livelihood to the artists and musicians. The author also highlights flexibility and softness of aristocrats and rulers toward new forms of music. As a result, traditional forms are preserved, new forms of music have been development. This is a sign of living culture. He also explores the western influence in Nepali music. The mélange of traditional forms and modern techniques has gave birth new forms of music in Nepal. Variety of contents, authenticity of sources, visual pictures, clarity in language and quality publication make an interesting reading of the history of Nepali music.

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