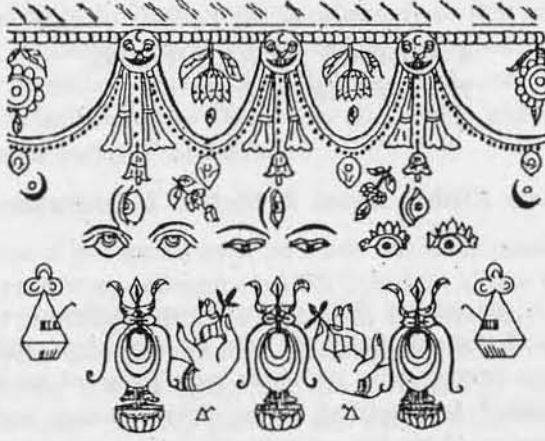


A HOMAGE TO NĀSAḤ DYO,
THE NEWAR GOD OF MUSIC

Ram Krishna Duwal & Madhab L. Maharjan

Nāsaḥ dyo is the tutelary deity of the Newar musicians, actors and dancers of the Kathmandu valley and other areas of Nepal. Nāsaḥ dyo is the deity who bestows on a person or on a group of musicians the qualities required for excelling in the field of music and for the successful staging of musical programmes, dances and dramas. There are many such divinities in and around the Kathmandu Valley. In addition to the Valley, Nāsaḥ dyo are also found in old cities such as Tansen in the west, Dolakha and Bhojpur in the east, where the Newar have migrated. But quite suprisingly, there are no Nāsaḥ dyo in Newar towns such as Narayan Ghat and Hetauda, located south-west of Kathmandu.

Many scholars refer to Nāsaḥ dyo as Nṛteśvar or Naṭarāj, the dancing Śiva. But it seems to us that this god can be distinguished from the Nāsaḥ dyo of the Newar, who is abstract like music and has the particularity of dwelling in a triangular-shaped niche in the wall of its shrines. This divinity is found both in *deo chē*, houses where the gods reside, and in private houses and inns. The slit representations of Nāsaḥ dyo are called *bālā pvaḥ* when located in a shrine, and *mibhū* when found in a private house or inn, although they have the same appearance in both cases. The slits and niches of Nāsaḥ dyo are covered during rituals by a piece of cloth called *dhakī*. The following illustration is a richly decorated example of such cloth, taken from *Smarika*, 2051 V.S.



Because of these specific characteristics, Nāsaḥ dyo appears as a local god, but nevertheless people do worship him ultimately as one of the manifestations of Śiva as Nṛteśvar. Nāsaḥ dyo is established with rituals to train groups of students in the arts of drama, dance and music, at a specific place called *ākḥā chē*.

In Newari, *nāsaḥ* means charm or grace. It is essential for every person to possess *nāsaḥ*. A person possessing *nāsaḥ* is referred to as *nāsaḥlaṃ liumḥ manū* while someone without it is regarded as *nāsaḥ madumḥ manū*, meaning "disgraceful" or "one with no knack at all". A popular saying among the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley is *nāsaḥ madusā kabilās hū*, "If you don't have *nāsaḥ*, go to the abode of Nāsaḥ Deo at Kabilās". Kabilās is the most sacred and powerful centre of all the Nāsaḥ Deo of the Kathmandu Valley. The great Newar musicians used to visit this temple; Krishna Bhai, a master of rhythmic drums, visited Kabilās five times. Recently, Ram Krishna, one of the writers of this article, who is a poet and singer, also had an opportunity to visit Kabilās for the second time. Upon reaching the temple, he composed the following poem in Newari, based on the *Bhagat* traditional *rāg*, expressing his devotion to Nāsaḥ Deo.

नासः द्यो
राग : भगत
ताल : चो
च्वमि : राम कृष्ण दुवाल

वय्धुन प्रभु थौ वय्धुन
छेलं मोलसां चुचुचुया
छिगु हे पाली नुगले भ्यानाः
वय्धुन छन्याय् पेपां चुयाः ॥ धु ॥

सकल नेवाया तःपुगु न्हाय् छ
संस्कृतिया ज्वाला न्हाय्कं थें
जल्ल थिना जिमि नुगले
नस्वा ह्वला च्वन जीवन बय् ॥ १ ॥

गन छ वयाच्वन न्हाइपुगु सघने
शान्त प्रकृतिया यइपु खेलय्
चुलुक पलाः छपलाजक चुलुसां
हाकत्यां वैथें झ्याया फलय् ॥ २ ॥

गवले ज्ञानं झ्वीं झ्वी कीकाः
कथं कथं जक तितुमतु तीकाः
थावँ क्वाँवँ झ्वागां पागाँ
वय्धुन थौ कबिलास धकाः ॥ ३ ॥

गवलें फल्चाय् गवलें बल्चाय
बास च्वना सां वय्धुन न्हा

नाट्यश्वरीया दर्शन यायवं
दुःख फुकंवन तनाः तनाः ॥४॥

ग्याम्ह मचां :योमां: बः कायथे
जिमितः नं हल बल थनाः
नासः द्यो ए गर्व धाज जीं
खेलुइताः थें च्याय्मा सदां ॥५॥

फ्रंकबेरेनेद वयाः च्वन
सात समुन्दर पारयानाः
छंगु व महिमां थःत भुनाः वल
भावं नुगले थःत थनाः॥६॥

राम कृष्णया भाव धुकूचां
थुलि च्वय्रवँ पु वनीमखु
गन सुर्घो त्वै जलल निभाः दई
च्वनेमा जिमी नुगले छ थिनाः ॥७॥

As a last homage to the god of music, the text of one song is published here, *Nāsaḥ dyo mye*. This type of song is traditionally sung with *dāphā* orchestral ensemble on different *rāga* and *tāla*. This text was found in a *thyāsaphu* during our fieldwork at Bālkumari *dāphā khalah*, Digukhel, Panga. It was composed during the reign of King Narendra Malla (1529-1560), and to our knowledge, it is the oldest Newari song or hymn devoted to Nāsaḥ Deo.

नासः द्योया म्ये माल ग्वारा ।
राग : मालुवा
घोचा : चो

हादे जये जये नित्येनाथ
हादे चद्रकला सिर
विसमविलोचणेः भास्य हभे हभे हभे
हादे जतामकुता सीर मुंदमाल गलसंः
गीरीजसंगर विराज्ये ॥

हादे सरसनवरस सिधीदायेक रीथु मंगल भाहासे
स्वयेंबु परवत नीस्ते करधर नरींदंभुस्पति भास्ये
जये जये निस्तेनाथस्वरं ॥ चो ॥

हर नर लक तथाः गनया थाकुर जुल
थर्थीन गणेस जुल आव ॥
विधीणे विनायेक सिदी विहुंणे छीनं पारवती
देवि जुल माम ॥१॥

वौवा जुल सदासिव ह प्यषनसं अतीरस
विभुतीन लपुः लपुः देव ॥
जव सहम सं तसे चन्द्रमा तस्य तल ॥
दुध लपु यस भोप्य येहेव ॥२॥

गंहाया रहुलियेः ताहाकल जन्त्र छपु
धु छेगुलि पाछाःवन वाहन॥
तील हिल विया भीनः लाहातीसं तसे तल

गलसं समुन्दर मल तिसा ॥३॥

जगत चन्दन ल्हान्या न्हापाहाल्यो नन्दि भींदी

जगतमोहन लप्य आवा व ॥

आदीभवानीयभ तुटीसं नीम्ह रसं वसलप्य फयकाव आव
॥४॥

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