Nepalese musical instruments have immense substance in its culture and society. No ritual, festival or any ceremony go without these instruments being played. If historic facts are anything to believe then Nepal has more than 200 musical instruments of its own and only about 100 have been discovered till date.

Nepal has so many forms of music of its own to share with the rest of the world. Moreover, the musical tradition is so diverse along with lots of unique musical instruments being played. Every ethnic group An ethnic group (or ethnicity) is a group of people whose members identify with each other, through a common heritage, consisting of a common language, a common culture (often including a shared religion) and a tradition of common ancestry (corresponding to a history of endogamy). has their unique set of instruments that they play. Amongst many, an ethnic community that has historic touch with Nepalese music is the Damai. They are the traditional musicians who play musical instruments in ceremonies, occasions, etc. to perform the rituals and tradition. The connection of Damai seems to be attached with the innovation of a flat drum called Damaha which is generally prepared by wood or metal. The name Damai denotes the functional relation between Damaha and the one playing it.

It is sad that there are still hundreds of instruments, which are unheard, untouched and unexplored but it is worse when beautiful instruments like the Sarangi
Musical Nepal

Man playing Sarangi, Nepal. Also get missing in the darkness. Sarangi is the Nepalese version of the violin and is loved by all the Nepalese people. However, the masters of Sarangi have slowly been moving away from it and we do not get to hear much of it today. The musicians of the ethnic Gandharbha community are the best Sarangi players in Nepal and they create magic when they play heart touching tunes with their Sarangi.

However, the most complex musical culture in this Himalayan nation is that of the Newars. Newar people are the indigenous people of Kathmandu Valley. They are known to excel in arts like wood crafting, pottery, music (mainly percussion and wind instruments), dance and paintings. Their arts today are mainly displayed in temples although many of their houses still have elaborate woodcarvings. The Newars are till date devoted to their ancient cultural skills and have been passing it to forthcoming generation since history.

Once a lake, Kathmandu Valley is the union of three Newar sister cities namely Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Surrounded by hills on all the sides, Kathmandu Valley has always remained the center of Nepalese civilization and current modern urbanization of Nepal and they are flourishing it till date. The Newars live in a Buddhist-Hindu society where the two religions coexist. Caste system exists within Newar community and each performs its own characteristic musical repertory and ritual duties during festivals and processions. Different musical instruments are in practice in joyful festivals and also in funeral processions.

Dhimey is the most common musical instrument amongst the Newars. It is considered as the oldest Newari musical instrument. This drum is played in almost all ceremonial occasions. Although it is made of brass or other metals today, Dhimay was actually constructed from cylindrical hollowed tree trunk with leather pads at both of its ends. Its left hand side sounds much than the other side which carries a tuning paste inside. Its main feature is its capacity to produce a multiple reverberating echo. Dhimay is always accompanied with Bhusyah (a pair of cymbals).

Nagara is another historic Newari musical instrument which is actually a kettle drum played with two sticks. This instrument has also been mentioned in Hindu mythology although in various other names. It is often played in pair, known as Joh Nagara. Nagara is also popular within other ethnic groups.

Even a conch or Sankha is a musical instrument in Nepal. It is an ancient instrument and is highly regarded by the Hindus. Playing of Sankha indicates starting of any new work. Sankha is usually played during rituals.
Any description of Nepalese musical instruments is never complete without a mention of Madal which also happens to be the national musical instrument of Nepal. It is a type of drum which is struck on both ends, using a rhythmic pattern. Nepali Folk dances are always accompanied by Madal, and it is virtually impossible to travel through any village in Nepal without hearing its soft and mellow sounds being played somewhere.

Another instrument worth mentioning is the tabla. The classical Kathak dance is impossible to perform without the beats of tabla. The tabla is actually two drums, considered as one instrument. It is believed that it originated when a much older style of drum, was "cut in two". It is a very diverse instrument and can also accompany Western style music. The performance of a tabla solo executed by a master can be unforgettable.

Nepali folk dances are jam-packed with dazzling premises of love, life, religion, happiness, sorrow and often a lot of good-natured teasing. Dancers wear traditional costumes that are colorful and have elaborate jewelry and hair ornaments.

Again, the Newars have a rich history in traditional, classical and folk dances. Various dance events take place in the Newar societies on various occasions. In fact, the Newars are so duly intermixed with music and dances that not a single festival, feast or ceremony passes without music and dance.

For instance, during the crop harvesting season, the farming couples celebrate with the Dhimey Dance between them in their community gatherings along with sparkling music and songs. Likewise, during all Chariot festivals
Musical Nepal

Chariot Festival: Kathmandu Nepal, the Newars witness the natural and impulsive Lakhe dance, which is actually a form of classical dance. This dance has religious beliefs attached to it. It is performed to the music of cymbals and special drums called Dhimey.

Similarly, the Newar Buddhists love to perform the Manjushree dance during rituals. It is credited to the god who founded the Kathmandu Valley. The physical and spiritual characteristics of the god are demonstrated in this beautiful stylized dance, which combines soft body movements with hand signs, each one with a meaning of its own.

Music and dance in essence have always played a crucial role in promoting harmonious relationships between people of this country. Nepalese music and dance are highly dispersed like its ethnicity. Cultural and traditional music and dance is the very pride and soul of this nation and is the mirror that reflects the beauty, nativity, and life pattern of the people.