# Sound-tracking Mysore

## *Music Space and Communitas at the Daśaharā Festival Procession*

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# Music, Space and Communitas at the Daśaharā Festival Procession

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# Abstract

Keywords: procession, Indian festival, mobile music, spatial order, ritual, social interaction, social & interpretive anthropology

This PhD project examines the Jumbo Savari Procession during the Daśaharā Festival in the city of Mysore, Karnataka, India, with a particular interest in spatial organisation and social dynamics. The procession, which marks the culmination of the festival, involves the worship of the local goddess Chamundeshwari before her figure is paraded on an elephant through the streets of Mysore. Building on original fieldwork, this ethnographic research explores spatiality and social interaction within the procession. By examining musical representations and spatial indicators, this study investigates the intersection of space and social activity in light of musical performances. While the entire procession is analysed, the focus is on the Mysore Police Band, a key participant identified through fieldwork. Victor Turner's concepts of liminality, liminoid phenomena and communitas provide a theoretical lens through which the analysis of the ritualistic and performative elements of the Jumbo Savari Procession highlights the associated social dynamics.

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# Note on Transliteration

For my dissertation, I have chosen to use the ISO 15919 standard transliteration system for all South Asian languages, including Sanskrit, Hindi, and Kannada, to maintain consistency in both academic and linguistic contexts. However, for names, I adhere to the conventional spelling used on official government websites, such as the Department of Tourism (2024) and Mudde (2016), to ensure emic coherence and to align with previous research, including Fuller (2004), Hancock (2001), Hayavadana (1936), Sivapriyananda (1995). As an example of optional spelling, Mysore was officially renamed Mysuru on 1 November 2014. The spelling change was part of a wider initiative by the Karnataka state government in India to restore traditional and historical names of cities and places, e.g. Mahiṣūru (transliterated from Kannada) = Mysore (anglicised) = Mysuru (restored version), equivalently Bengaḷūru = Bangalore = Bengaluru (TNN 2014). In most cases, however, the still widely used spelling is Mysore and Bangalore.

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# Contents

# 1

# Introduction

*Processions are among the most striking visual displays of a religion. They reveal important aspects of religions. They are rituals but they are also much more. They display many of the dimensions of religion at the same time: art, sacred narratives, social hierarchies and competition, communities and identities. They are signals of social change. They are preservers of the past. They are continuously reinvented and may reflect strategies for groups to become visible in order to protect their place in the hierarchy or to compete for resources. (Jacobsen 2008: 9-10)*

In this ethnographic study, my intention is to examine dynamic processes within a particular type of mobile music: the procession. The focus is on the Jumbo Savari Procession taking place during the Daśaharā Festival in the city of Mysore, located in the state of Karnataka in southern India. On Vijayādasamī, the 10th day of the festival, which is celebrated during the Hindu month of Ashvin (23 September to 22 October), people worship their local deity Chamundeshwari by attending and participating in the Jumbo Savari Procession, which simultaneously

serves as a commemoration of past kings and an event to worship their living descendants.

## 1.1 Objectives and Research Questions

Two central aspects of this procession will be the main focus of my study. The first concerns its historical, social and participatory scale. Events such as processions require a variety of engagements and responsibilities with participants belonging to different groups. These groups include musicians who walk the prescribed procession route, those who do so without playing music, residents who live along the procession route, and various other spectators. They also include individuals engaged in the organisation during the actual event as well as during the preparation period or are generally associated with the procession. Based on their social agendas, imagination of history, and music played in the procession, they all have their respective conceptions of the significance of the procession. In light of this, my aim is to examine the role of music in the Jumbo Savari Procession in relation to the corresponding social order, hierarchy, and related power dynamics. The second concerns the spatiality. During musical processions, the spatial relationship between the participants and music can vary. The music moves mainly with the musicians, so from their point of view it stays with them. In contrast, spectators along the procession route experience the music as first approaching them, then staying with them for a while, and finally moving away from them. Both perspectives highlight the dynamic relationship between music, space, and participants. In this regard, I intend to explore the contribution of the music played during the Jumbo Savari Procession to the creation of space and its potential as a structuring element. More specifically, the Jumbo Savari Procession in Mysore serves as an example to explore the interplay between a) spatiotemporal aspects that affect how participants perceive music as mobile or stationary, b) space-constituting conditions for which music may be determinant, and c) associated social interactions and engagements that may occur during musical processions. To address these key issues, my research is guided by the following main research questions:

- What patterns of social interaction are part of the Daśaharā Festival and how do they shape processional musical practices? And how does the festival context constitute the social engagement of procession participants?

- How does music, as a central aspect of the Jumbo Savari Procession, affect the physical dimensions of the procession, taking into account its potential to shape spatial arrangements, create dynamic spatial experiences, and structure participation within the procession?

To further refine these questions regarding the relationship between music, space, and social interaction, the following questions are relevant. How does the act of rehearsing music connect with the sharing of ideas through social interaction? Are there musical markers associated with certain areas, places or moments along the processional route? Is the constitution of the processional space related to musical characteristics, such as style, instrumentation, singing, volume, etc.? Do these characteristics affect the interaction of the participants, for example, while the musicians in the procession stand still and continue to play in place, causing the audience on the side of the procession to experience the music as a rather stationary performance?

As described by Hagedorn (2002) and Sallnow (1981), the constitution of space is a collective process with a community-building effect. In this sense, and in relation to the concept of space theory developed by Michel de Certeau (2011), I understand musical processions as collective activities with socio-spatial relationships. Following de Certeau's perception, social spaces serve as a basis for local community-building processes. They are initially constituted by individual actors and their subjective experiences of space. In processions, space constitution is experienced as a collective activity. Collectively constituted spaces, again, are a prerequisite for local community-building processes (Giddens 1996; Stokes 1994) for different social groups and the identities of the associated members marked by, for example, class, caste, gender, language, profession, or ritual roles. In processions, these processes may be temporal, for example, for tourists or other groups of spectators who come together spontaneously to watch the procession. Alternatively, they may be time-spanning, as for musicians in music groups who meet for preparation and musical rehearsals on a regular basis to represent religious and ritual contexts during the procession. Some groups are formally constituted, including military bands, police bands, and political parties, which may participate in parades for specific purposes such as hierarchical order or demonstration of authority. In short, this Dissertation will present an ethnographic study that provides a consolidated understanding of the cultural practices and the role music plays in the course of the Jumbo Savari Procession.

## 1.2 Overview of Chapters

Following the above introduction of my research questions and the aims of this study, in Chapter 2, I will expand my understanding of the concept of procession by first providing a detailed specification of the term, followed by clarification of the various names associated with the procession and the surrounding Daśaharā Festival. To provide a contextual understanding of the thesis topic, I offer an overview of the relevant literature concerning processions in general and the Jumbo Savari Procession in particular as well as a comprehensive analysis of its historical and cultural context and a description of the Jumbo Savari Procession itself. This leads to Chapter 3, where I provide a description of the research field in India and the qualitative research methodology adopted to explore the mobile, spatial, and social dynamics of the Jumbo Savari Procession in Mysore, including participant observation, audio-visual recordings, and interviews. I also discuss the key aspects of conducting this fieldwork, such as ethical considerations and limitations, offering insights into my researcher's role and approach in the field. Chapter 4 is dedicated to my key research partners who played a crucial role in facilitating the historical, social, and spatial dimensions of the procession. It serves as an analysis and interpretation of my findings based on a combination of my field observations and interviews. I examine the musical contributions and social significance of the Police Band, while also analysing the layered meanings embedded in the spatial and musical order of the procession. Building on the interwoven layers of historical context and mythological constructs, spatial organisation, musical performance, and social dynamics, I will explore the concept of communitas as an integrating experience through the example of the Police Band. Accordingly, Chapter 5 examines how the participation of the Police Band as key performers in the Jumbo Savari Procession, guided by Victor Turner's concept of normative communitas, provides a compelling example of how liminoid phenomena can generate meaningful communal expressions within organised contexts, thereby enhancing the event and fostering a stronger sense of community and belonging among participants. Chapter 6 provides a summary of my study on the Jumbo Savari Procession, recapitulating its historical, social, and spatial aspects. This concluding narrative not only summarises the findings of this ethnographic study but also lays the foundation for future research on public rituals and events, such as processions, ultimately contributing to the enrichment of scholarly discourse on the diverse terrain of Indian society.

## 1.3 Communitas

In order to provide a theoretical framework for the term "communitas" used in the title of this dissertation, Victor Turner's[1] groundwork on ritual and his related concept of communitas provide a valuable conceptual foundation. His empirical work on ritual has profoundly shaped anthropological views of cultural practices, such as community building and associated values, and it serves as a promising concept for this work. In the following section, I condense Turner's ritual theory. In doing so, I will not only introduce terms that will be used later in this dissertation but also add a theoretical framework. Using Turner's definition, I adopt the terms "ritual" and "rite" as interchangeable notions for

> *"prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in invisible beings or powers regarded as the first and final causes of all effects" (Turner 1982:79).*

Further, ritual and rites can be understood

> *"essentially as performance, enactment, not primarily as rules or rubrics. The rules 'frame' the ritual process, but the ritual process transcends its frame" (Turner 1982:79).*

A central aspect of Turner's insights is the concept of communitas, in which he proposes a dialectic between social structure and communitas, revealing moments of collective solidarity and equality in ritual contexts and beyond. Based on his extensive fieldwork among the Ndembu[2] people in north-western Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) between

[1] Victor Turner (1920-1983) was a prominent British cultural anthropologist born in Glasgow, Scotland. He studied poetry and classics before joining the British Army during World War II. After the war, Turner shifted his focus to anthropology, earning a doctorate at the University of Manchester under Max Gluckman. He is known for his extensive work on ritual and symbolism, particularly among the Ndembu people in Zambia. Turner's seminal concepts, such as 'communitas' and 'liminality', profoundly influenced the study of passage rites and social processes. His notable works include "The Forest of Symbols" (Turner 1967) and "The Ritual Process" (Turner 1969), which emphasise the dynamic and transformative aspects of rituals, challenging the static views of earlier anthropological frameworks, such as structural-functionalism.

[2] The Ndembu are a matrilineal ethnic group living in north-western Zambia. They live in small, dispersed villages, typically numbering from a few dozen to several hundred people during Victor Turner's research in the 1950s and 1960s. Ndembu society is organised around kinship ties, with a strong emphasis on matrilineal descent and the role of maternal uncles. Their communities have a high degree of personal spatial mobility, with frequent migrations and splits over time, resulting in variable village structures (Turner 1967:1-3).

December 1950 and June 1954, Victor Turner identified instances of conflict which he termed "social drama". His observations were instrumental in developing his concept to explain social change and to understand the personal experiences of the people involved. In his view, social drama has four stages: 1. violation, 2. crisis, 3. process of adjustment and resolution, 4. reintegration or permanent split.[3] According to (Förster 2003)[4], a violation represents the initial stage of a social drama, marking a disruption or breach of established norms and expectations within a community. This breach triggers the subsequent stages of the social drama, leading to an escalating crisis if not adequately addressed. The breach is not merely a breakdown of social order, but also serves as a catalyst for the community to address underlying tensions and conflicts, potentially leading to transformative resolutions or further divisions within the community. The crisis triggers the third stage, which consists of attempts to deal with and reflect on the situation, and can include forms of conflict resolution, such as political processes, legal proceedings, or ritual activities, such as divination, various rites, and sacrifices.[5] Ultimately in the fourth stage, these efforts lead to either reintegration or non-repairable splits. By closely examining these stages, Turner recognised the importance of ritual processes and the influence of symbols in human communication, allowing for a broader perspective on society through the "process lens" (Förster 2003).

In his analysis of Ndembu social dramas, Turner recognises, in particular, the power of ritual and symbolic practices in resolving conflicts, which takes place in the adjustment and resolution process of the third stage. Consequently, his ritual theory is based on the assumption that rituals are inherently processual, and they require a temporal analysis. These four stages, and the associated analytical approach of identifying underlying structures and patterns that characterise ritual processes, are rooted in the work of the anthropologist and ethnographer

[3] See top row of the diagram in Fig 1: Victor Turner's Social Drama, page 21.

[4] Till Förster is a renowned German anthropologist, focusing on visual culture, political anthropology, and social change in West and Central Africa. His work explores the intersection of art, politics, and society, offering valuable insights into the culture of African communities. Förster (2003) provides a detailed exploration of Victor Turner's theoretical concepts, making it a valuable resource for understanding Turner's ideas on ritual and social processes. It effectively situates Turner's contributions within broader anthropological discussions, and demonstrates how his ideas can be applied across various cultural and ritual contexts. Using Förster's interpretations helps clarify theoretical concepts and illustrates their applicability in contemporary anthropological research, making it an invaluable reference for anyone studying Turner's impact on the field of anthropology.

[5] See second row of Fig 1: Victor Turner's Social Drama, page 21.

Arnold van Gennep in 1909[6] (Förster 2003:704), who identified a consistent pattern in the organisation of transition ceremonies or "rites de passage" (Van Gennep 2005) that change a person's status.

According to Turner (1969:94), the passage rites during the third stage mark a transition from a previous state to a subsequent state. He understands "state" as any kind of permanent or recurrent, "culturally recognised condition", including "such social constancies as legal status profession, office or calling, rank or degree" (Turner 1967:93). The term further applies to

> *"ecological conditions, or to the physical, mental or emotional condition in which a person or group may be found at a particular time" (Turner 1967:94).*

These passage rites always follow a three-part sequence[7]: separation from the everyday environment, isolation or seclusion, and after varying durations, eventual reintegration into everyday life and society (Van Gennep 2005:50).

Turner follows Van Gennep in identifying three phases in ritual processes, with the middle phase being the "liminal" period on which he focuses. This liminal period lies between the times when the persons undergoing the passage rite are no longer who they were before but not yet who they will be after the rite is completed. It includes transitional or threshold experiences that involve temporary suspension of social norms and structures, leading to a sense of ambiguity and transformation. In this ambiguous status, Turner identifies the existence of "transitional being[s] or liminal persona[e]" during the ritual who are "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and

[6] Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) was a French ethnographer, folklorist, and cultural anthropologist, renowned for developing his concept of rites de passage, which he introduced in his 1909 work "Les rites de passage" (Van Gennep 2005). This concept of passage rites refers to ceremonial activities associated with transitional stages in a person's life, such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. Van Gennep's theory emphasised the importance of these rituals in facilitating and marking the transition from one social or life stage to another. Van Gennep's method involved a systematic categorisation of rituals into three distinct sequential phases: separation, liminality (or transition) and incorporation. This model allowed him to compare and contrast rituals from different cultural backgrounds, highlighting their universal functions and commonalities in symbolic practices. His structuralist perspective was central to providing a conceptual framework for understanding the social and symbolic significance of rites in the life cycle of individuals within their communities. His work created a foundation for anthropological studies of ritual and transition and influenced scholars such as Victor Turner, who developed his ideas into his own theories of social drama and liminality.

[7] See "Ritual Process" and below in Fig 1: Victor Turner's Social Drama, page 21.

ceremonial" (Turner 1969:95). During this transition period[8] all "transitional beings" or initiates are treated equally. In particular, they are subject to the same authority. For instance, in the Ndembu transition rites, all young initiates are equally subject to the authority of the elders, who in turn are obliged to supervise the performance of the ritual acts, thus ensuring that the rite is performed according to the rules, within a certain degree of variation (Förster 2003:707). This phase involves communicating the "sacra" (Turner 1969:103,133) – the transmission of essential and often sacred elements of the culture or community – which may include the unveiling of sacred objects, transmission of myths, or performance of ritual acts that reaffirm the shared values and continuity of the group, and highlights the role of ritual in reconnecting the community to its core beliefs and traditions, and emphasises continuity itself even amidst the transformative potential of the liminal phase. Along with this, participants engage in a symbolic play that allows them to experiment with, deconstruct, and rearrange cultural symbols and social norms, potentially leading to new understandings or social configurations in which established cultural patterns can be creatively dismantled and reassembled. The usual hierarchical structures are minimised or temporarily dissolved, leading to a state of what Turner (1969) introduces as the concept of "communitas"[9] - an unstructured community[10] in which individuals are equal without regard to normal social hierarchies. The concept of communitas is discussed in more detail later in this section.

Turner extends the concept of liminality beyond van Gennep's analysis, which refers specifically to the rituals of what Turner calls "simple"

[8] See "Liminal Period" and below in Fig 1: Victor Turner's Social Drama, page 21.

[9] See bottom row of Fig 1: Victor Turner's Social Drama, page 21.

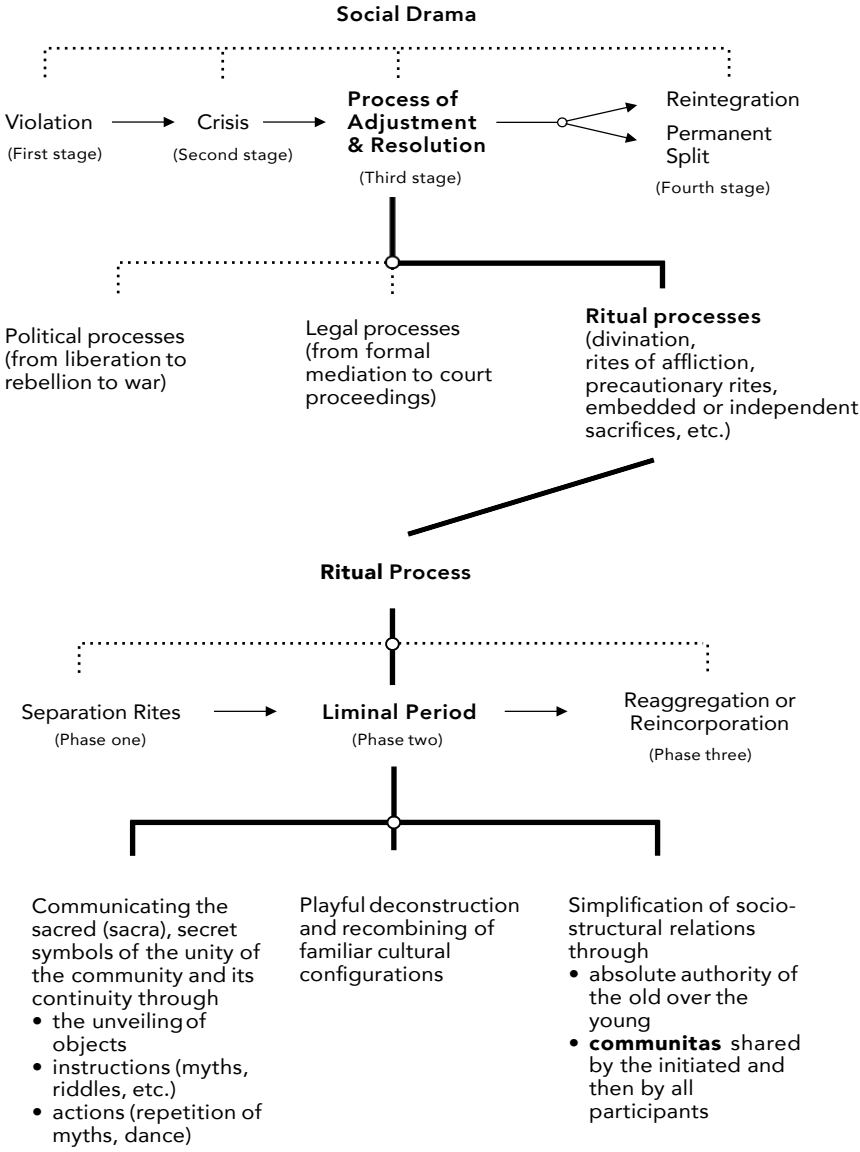



Fig 1: Victor Turner's Social Drama (Förster 2003:706)

peoples[11]. In more differentiated societies, similar phenomena would develop on the margins, outside normative economic, social and political constraints. Turner applies the term "liminoid" to distinguish these from the concept of liminality. These liminoid phenomena can affect the centre of society, allowing for a rethinking of everyday life and leading to a social critique of existing conditions and structures. He mentions theatre, sport, and literary and art scenes as examples and adds places such as universities, libraries and institutes as "neutral spaces" or privileged areas set aside from the mainstream of productive or political events. He calls them

> *"'liminoid' settings for all kinds of freewheeling, experimental cognitive behavior as well as forms of symbolic action, resembling some found in tribal society, like 'rushing' and 'pledging' ceremonies in American college fraternity and society houses ..." (Turner 1982:33).*

To further distinguish the difference between liminoid and liminal, Turner considers the concept of play in the context of work and leisure (Turner 1982:30-33,35-40). He concludes that in modern industrial or post-industrial societies, liminoid phenomena are typically characterised by their fragmentary, pluralistic, experimental, and playful (ludic) nature. They tend to be individual productions, and are often used to communicate social criticism (Turner 1982:32-33). In summary, liminoid phenomena are similar to liminal experiences but occur in everyday, secular contexts outside of traditional rites and rituals. While both involve moments of transition and potential transformation, liminal phenomena are deeply rooted in rituals that follow strict procedures, whereas

[10] In the context of 'communitas', it is helpful to distinguish between broader sociological terms. Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), a pioneering German sociologist, and co-founder of the German Sociological Association who greatly influenced the study of social theory and the development of modern sociology, articulated a basic distinction in his work "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft" (1887) (Tönnies 1979). Tönnies described "Gemeinschaft" (community) as a social grouping based on personal and family bonds, characterised by close, enduring relationships, shared values and strong emotional ties, echoing Turner's description of communitas. In contrast, "Gesellschaft" (society) refers to relationships based on rational agreements, typical of business or formal associations, where interactions are more impersonal and structured. This distinction is relevant to understanding communitas as a deeply connected, egalitarian community, distinct from more structured societal interactions.

[11] Turner included "... as a proviso here that in matters of religion, as of art, there are no "simpler" peoples, only some peoples with simpler technologies than our own. Man's "imaginative" and "emotional" life is always and everywhere rich and complex" (Turner 1969:3).

liminoid phenomena encompass a wider range of individual lived experiences unrelated to traditional rites of passage. Or, to add in Turner's own words:

> *"The one [liminoid] is all play and choice, an entertainment; the other [liminal] is a matter of deep seriousness, even dread, it is demanding, compulsory" (Turner 1982:43).*

Turner introduced another concept closely related to the idea of liminality, which concerns the social conditions experienced during periods of transition, when individuals are between their previous and future social positions.

This concept – communitas – is integral to human experience with significance in various fields such as religion, literature, drama, and art, and its traces can be found in areas such as law, ethics, family, and even economics (Turner 1974:231). Turner specifically addresses the characteristics of human relationships that occur in liminal and liminoid conditions. He chose the term "communitas" over "community" to "distinguish this mode of social relationship from an area of common living" (Turner 1969:96). To further illustrate the characteristics of ritual experience and communitas, and to offer a nuanced understanding of the transformative process inherent in ritual, while also highlighting its prevalence across different cultural and historical contexts, Turner draws on examples ranging from Ndembu society to cultural phenomena as diverse as the 1960s hippie movement (Turner 1969:112-113,138) and medieval religious orders (Turner 1969:133,140-154).

In contrast to liminality's focus on the formal aspects of rites of passage, communitas is concerned with the interpersonal dynamics that emerge during these periods of change. However, both concepts share the premise that rites serve as catalysts for individual transformation, often at a profound level. By shifting the perspective from the integrative aspects of rites emphasised in the concept of social drama to the subjective experiences of participants, Turner underlines the central value of these experiences in the transformative capacity of rituals. The experience of communitas is characterised by the direct, immediate, and total involvement of individuals, stripped of their social status, in a shared human bond that transcends the constructs of society during the liminal phase and liminoid states, respectively. According to Turner,

> *"the liminal Group is a community or comity of comrades and not a structure of hierarchically arrayed positions. This comradeship transcends distinctions of rank, age, kinship*

> *position, and, in some kinds of cultic group, even of sex" (Turner 1967:100).*

Turner further differentiates between rituals and ceremonies based on the presence or absence of transformations. Rituals lead to profound changes in participants and their social positions. In contrast, ceremonies merely serve to reaffirm the existing social order without facilitating existential change:

> *"I consider the term 'ritual' to be more fittingly applied to forms of religious behavior associated with social transitions, while the term 'ceremony' has a closer bearing on religious behavior associated with social states, where politico-legal institutions also have greater importance. Ritual is transformative, ceremony confirmatory" (Turner 1967:95).*

This distinction underlines the importance of participants' experiences in shaping the effectiveness of rituals. Communitas, therefore, is not only a descriptive term for a type of social relationship, but also a dynamic force within rituals that enables personal and collective transformation. In this context Förster (2003:707) identifies a general requirement: As communitas emerges among participants during the transitional phase of a ritual, it is only during this phase that individuals experience equality and fraternity in a nonhierarchical manner. However, this experience cannot occur in isolation and requires the presence of a structured everyday society. Communitas, as a concept for understanding and analysing social behaviour, thus depends on a complement, and Turner consistently identified it in terms of contrasting concepts or a "distinction between structure and communitas" (Turner 1969:96). Turner contrasts communitas clearly with what he regards as "structure". He characterises structure or social structure as organised sets of roles, statuses, ranks, and their hierarchical order, widely recognised and actively maintained within a society, and fundamentally linked to the norms and sanctions of legal and political systems. (Turner 1974:201).

Communitas provides removal of structural constraints that allows participants in the ritual to be themselves and interact directly without assuming predetermined roles. Förster (2003:707) provides a series of contrasting terms used by Turner in association with the concept of communitas, which shows its suitability as a framework for sorting and analysing diverse social phenomena:

| **Communitas** | **Structure** |
|---|---|
| Equality | Inequality |
| Fraternity | Hierarchy |
| Selflessness | Selfishness |
| Statuslessness | Status |
| Propertylessness | Property |
| Homogeneity | Heterogeneity |
| Liminal | Central |
| Transition | Conservation |
| Dynamic | Static |
| Silence | Speech |
| Existential | Cognitive |
| Religious Knowledge | Technical Knowledge |
| Totality | Particularity |

These pairs reflect Turner's exploration of how rituals and their associated social processes influence identity and social structures. At the same time, they demonstrate the transformative potential of liminal stages and the corresponding communitas over social structure and the established order of society. Communitas is further characterised by spontaneity, immediacy, and concrete presence, and Turner sees it as an allegory of universal human solidarity and equality in line with social ideals. Unlike structure, it is also inherently transitory and temporary (Turner 1974:44). He points out that

> *"the spontaneity and immediacy of communitas - as opposed to the jural-political character of structure - can seldom be maintained for very long" (Turner 1969:132).*

Members of religious, millenarian, or revivalist groups typically describe communitas as a paradise or utopia, characterised as a transcendent state, featuring an eternal present that is both within and beyond the confines of time (Turner 1974:231,237-238).

Turner believes that communitas exists beyond the confines of structure, but liminal situations possess their own distinct forms of structure and symbolism, which are primarily influenced by and reimagined from the dominant cultural norms within their society. To collectively characterise communitas and liminality, Turner frequently refers to both as anti-structure (Turner 1974:272-298).

> *"Liminality, the optimal setting of communitas relations, and communitas, a spontaneously generated relationship between leveled and equal total and individuated human beings, stripped of structural attributes together constitute what one might call anti-structure" (Turner 1974:202).*

For example, in the context of a pilgrimage, pilgrims share a path and purpose irrespective of the social distinctions that normally separate them. The journey creates a sense of unity and mutual support, illustrating communitas – and, by extension, anti-structure – since the usual societal roles and hierarchies become irrelevant (Turner 1974:182). In contemporary society, anti-structure can be witnessed in situations such as festivals or protests, where individuals come together, focusing on a shared experience or goal, often leading to a temporary breakdown of the usual social order and allowing a collective identity to emerge. To summarise, anti-structure can be seen in various cultural practices and communal experiences that promote equality, shared humanity, and a sense of community that goes beyond conventional social structures and hierarchies. Turner views this as crucial to human experience and social dynamics, suggesting that instances of anti-structure are important for personal growth and societal progress (Turner 1974:252). More specifically, he argues that societies are characterised by alternating experiences of structure and anti-structure, with individuals moving between structured roles and moments or phases of anti-structure. He believes that while social structure is required to meet physical and material needs and to prevent social disintegration for all societies, it also inherently segregates, differentiates, and categorises individuals. Unless regenerated by some significant force, structure alone may lead to stagnation and the eventual demise of human existence. Turner identifies this force as communitas, implying that the condition of society is not static but a dynamic process:

> *"'Societas,' or 'society,' as we all experience it, is a process involving both social structure and communitas, separately and united in varying proportions" (Turner 1974:238).*
>
> *"In human history, I see a continuous tension between structure and communitas, at all levels of scale and complexity. Structure, or all that which holds people apart, defines their differences, and constrains their actions, is one pole in a charged field, for which the opposite pole is communitas, or anti-structure, the egalitarian 'sentiment for humanity' of which David Hume speaks,*

> *representing the desire for a total, unmediated relationship between person and person, a relationship which nevertheless does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness. Communitas does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms, though this is necessarily a transient condition if society is to continue to operate in an orderly fashion" (Turner 1974:274).*

Structure, as noted above, is critical to all societies, as is the requirement of communitas for maintaining social structure. Their dialectical relationship implies that structure without communitas may stagnate or become overly partisan and self-serving. Therefore, it is necessary for structures to be regularly infused with the anti-structural morality of communitas to remain in the wider public interest. This happens through rituals (Turner 1969:104-105,178,184), (Turner 1974:259-260).

Turner also emphasises that structure and communitas cannot be entirely separated, because both are human. Within any sustainable and persisting socio-cultural system, each form and level of structure is associated with a corresponding mode of communitas, thereby creating cultural associations between them (Turner 1974:254). Against this background, he believes in society's capacity to regulate itself through ritual practices. By engaging in such rituals, people are able to participate in temporal spaces in which communitas can emerge.

Turner (1969:132) understands communitas again as a process that gradually unfolds a structure in which free relationships develop into normative relations and roles. Therefore he proposes three modes of communitas: 1. Existential or spontaneous communitas: This form of communitas could be compared to what the hippies would have called "a happening". Thus, it captures the immediate, fleeting experience of social unity and equality arising during the liminal phase of rituals or in other spontaneous circumstances, while being removed from the usual constraints and structures of society. Historical evidence suggests that all spontaneous communitas ultimately undergo a shift or they "decline and fall" (Turner 1969:132) towards a structure defined by rules and regulations. 2. Normative communitas: Over time, the spontaneous spirit of existential communitas usually tends to lead to the necessity of some form of organisation. This transition is driven by the necessity of mobilising and managing resources and maintaining social control within the group to achieve common goals, which involves the establishment of social norms and practices that reflect the egalitarian and communal spirit

of spontaneous communitas, but within a more regulated and stable framework. Thus, existential communitas gradually becomes normative communitas, forming a more structured and enduring system while institutionalising the initial spontaneous experience into a regulated social order, often integrating aspects of communitas into everyday practices and norms of society. Religious groups, intentional communities, and specific collaborative organisations can serve as examples of normative communitas, where the principles of equality and mutual assistance are deeply ingrained in the group's structure and functioning. 3. Ideological communitas: Turner describes this mode as an attempt to capture and preserve the fleeting experience of spontaneous communitas through systematic organisation and ideology. Ideological communitas is both a conceptual label and an ideological blueprint for utopian societies or movements that embody the egalitarian connections experienced in existential communitas. It seeks to capture and articulate the visible, outer expressions that arise from the profound inner experiences of existential communitas, and to specify the ideal social conditions necessary for such experiences not only to occur but also to multiply. Normative and ideological communitas already exist within an established social structure and cannot be considered permanent. As temporal phases, they eventually merge with or are replaced by a framing-predominant social structure. Turner aimed to develop a classification system for ritual practices applicable across cultures and historical contexts, emphasising the subjective experiences of the participants. By focusing on their role in ritual transformation, he constructed a framework to explore the intricate relationship between rituals, experience, and transformation. Unlike the structural-functionalist[12] schools, Turner sees society not as a closed system but as a process determined by human agency and cultural symbols:

> *"To view "societas" as human process, rather than as an atemporal timeless or eternal system modeled either on an organism or a machine, is to enable us to concentrate on the relationships, existing at every point and on every level in*

[12] Structural-functionalism, a key theoretical framework in anthropology, is based on the idea that every aspect of a society's culture is interdependent and contributes to the stability and functioning of the society. Critics argue that structural-functionalism fails to account for social change and inequalities within a society. It also has a tendency to overlook social conflicts and power dynamics, and is inherently biased towards maintaining the status quo. One notable critique comes from Edmund Leach, who emphasised that structural-functionalism often ignores the fluid and dynamic nature of social systems and how they are influenced by historical and political contexts (Leach 1954).

> *complex and subtle ways, between communitas and structure" (Turner 1974:52).*

This perspective breaks with those earlier understandings of social change as a response to adapt to tensions between various parts of a primarily integrated and rigidly structured social system. Although Turner's contribution to the understanding of ritual and communitas in anthropology is clear, it is important to consider the potential drawbacks and limitations of this concept. A critical reflection on his work reveals methodological and interpretive limitations that can be further considered. I agree with Förster (2003) on the following critical aspects. Turner's approach to ritual focuses primarily on symbolic processes and places more emphasis on the cognitive interpretations of ritual practices than on the actions of the individuals who participate in them. His reliance on symbols and language may diminish the importance of ritual experiences by emphasising symbolic interpretation rather than human interaction and innovation during rituals. This perspective risks overlooking people's agency in creating and experiencing rituals and reduces participants to responding to symbolic structures rather than creating them. The performance of rituals leaves a lasting impression on individuals, motivating them to change their everyday conditions and consider alternatives to current social conditions. Yet Turner's ritual theory alone cannot fully explain and interpret the relationship between ritual and everyday behaviour. In order to understand this relationship, it would be necessary to examine the traces of everyday life in ritual and the traces of ritual action in everyday life not only for contrasts but also for continuities. Moreover, all forms of knowledge, including everyday and non-everyday, should be regarded as equally important. In addition, Turner's methodological approach can be criticised for its somewhat limited empirical grounding, sometimes using deductive reasoning that imposes predetermined conceptual frameworks on observed facts. This method can lead to generalisations that do not adequately reflect the nuances of cultural phenomena. I align with Ivanov (1993) in her critique that the concepts of liminality and communitas, which have gained prominence in ethnological discourse, tend to become blurred and are often used as imprecise phrases to describe metaphysical projections that obscure reality. These concepts should be constantly tested and redefined in order to be used effectively in anthropology. Despite these criticisms, there is an underlying humanist dimension to Turner's work that recognises the creative act inherent in people's engagement with rituals

suggesting that they are not just inherited traditions but are actively shaped and reinterpreted by participants.

As part of symbolic anthropology[13], Turner's method emphasises the interpretation of cultural symbols and their roles in social processes, particularly during passage rites and other ritual contexts. He was concerned with how individuals and communities use symbols to address existential questions, manage social transitions, and resolve conflict. With this semiotic approach he analysed how symbols communicate and signify within specific cultural contexts, influencing behaviour and social structure. This also allowed for the study of the actions of individuals and forces operating outside the socio-structural framework of society and arguably provided an early momentum in the theoretical-historical transition from the structural-functional model to the linguistic-cultural[14] turn in the 1960s.

Turner was critical of the static nature of structural-functionalism, which often viewed social structures as unchanging and ignored the dynamic and processual aspects of social life. By focusing on how individuals and groups actually experience and interpret rituals, Turner's approach brought attention to the fluidity of social roles and the capacity of cultural practices to challenge and change social structures. It changed

[13] Symbolic anthropology is a subfield of cultural anthropology that emphasises the study of symbols and their role in the construction and maintenance of social structures and worldviews. It seeks to understand how people interpret, negotiate, and give meaning to their experiences using symbols. Pioneered by scholars such as Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, symbolic anthropology focuses on the interpretive analysis of cultural phenomena, arguing that culture is constituted by an intricate web of symbols and meanings. In particular, Geertz (1973) used a method known as "thick description" to capture the layers of meaning embedded in cultural practices and rituals. This approach has significantly influenced the way anthropologists understand and describe cultural dynamics, moving beyond mere observation to interpret the underlying significance of social actions and interactions.

the way anthropologists, such as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown[15] viewed rituals by shifting the focus from their role in reinforcing social structures and functions, to exploring the symbolic and interpretive layers of these ceremonies. Turner emphasised the importance of symbols and meanings in understanding rituals, suggesting that these elements played a central role in shaping human experience and social action. This approach was already in line with the linguistic-cultural turn, which emphasised language, symbolism, and meaning as central elements of social life. In proposing and developing his ideas of liminality and communitas, Turner focused on the transformative, unpredictable, and creative aspects of rituals characterised by liminality in the transitional phase of rituals where participants are in a state of "betwixt and between" (Turner 1969:95,138) conventional categories and social frameworks, leading to new perspectives and potentials for change and critique. This emphasis on the transformative capacity of rituals differs significantly from the structural-functional approach, which perceived rituals largely as a means of maintaining social cohesion and order. Turner's work was also interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from psychology, literature, and drama that broadened the scope of the anthropological analysis of ritual. In turn, it has influenced not only anthropology but also other fields interested in narrative, performance, and symbolic analysis. Interdisciplinarity is a key aspect of the cultural turn that embraces a wider range of methodological tools and theoretical perspectives for the

[14] The linguistic-cultural turn in anthropology, emphasising the importance of language, symbols, and meaning in understanding cultural practices, has been significantly influenced by several key theorists. For example, Clifford Geertz, in his influential work "The Interpretation of Cultures" (1973), argues for an interpretive analysis of cultures through their symbols and meanings, describing culture as a "web of significance" spun by the people themselves (Geertz 1973:5). James Clifford, particularly prominent in postmodern and interpretive anthropology, co-edited "Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography" (1986) with George Marcus, a work that critically examines the literary dimensions of ethnographic writing (Clifford & Marcus 1986). In this edition, George Marcus himself has contributed considerably to the development of a more reflexive form of ethnography that acknowledges the narrative aspects of cultural representation.

[15] Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) were prominent figures in this school of structural-functionalism. Malinowski's fieldwork and theoretical insights, particularly in "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" (1922), emphasised the role of culture in satisfying the biological and psychological needs of individuals within a society, analysing the Trobriand Islanders' kula ring as a system of exchange that maintains social stability and individual well-being (Malinowski 2002). A.R. Radcliffe-Brown focused on the systematic study of social structures and their function in maintaining overall order and balance within societies. His influential book "Structure and Function in Primitive Society" (1952) explains how social institutions, such as kinship and political systems maintain social cohesion and perpetuate social norms (Radcliffe-Brown 1965).

study of human societies. Additionally, Turner's methodological approach included detailed ethnographic work that highlighted the subjectivities and emotional experiences of individuals participating in rituals, aligning with the cultural turn's focus on understanding local meanings and practices from the perspective of those enacting them.

In conclusion, while Turner's work has significantly shaped the field of symbolic anthropology and offers valuable insights into the symbolic dimensions of social life, it also exemplifies the need to balance interpretive analysis with empirical investigation to produce credible anthropological research. Emphasis on symbolic analysis should be complemented by a focus on human agency and the study of the particular conditions under which rituals are performed.

# 2

# Processions

This chapter introduces and defines the topic of processions as a particular form of mobile music phenomenon and provides an overview of existing research on the subject. It then narrows the scope to focus specifically on processions as the central theme of my research, leading from a broader view of the surrounding Daśaharā Festival to the more specific instance of my research subject, the Jumbo Savari Procession. In doing so, this chapter provides a general introduction to the topic.

## 2.1 Mobile Music

Music ethnographers typically view music culture as centred on local or stationary activities that are confined to a specific location. However, ethnomusicology has increasingly investigated non-local musical phenomena that have emerged because of contemporary global media content availability and escalating mobility, (Greve 2003; Levi & Scheding 2010; Myers 1998; Reyes 1999; Slobin 1993; Turino 1993). A series of studies have contributed to a paradigm shift in contemporary social science and the humanities (Featherstone et al. 1995) as well as in ethnomusicology by examining the impact of global flows, migration, translocal exchanges and the associated mobility of music consumption (Bohlman 2011; Giddens 1996; Robertson 1995). Baily & Collyer (2006) and Krüger & Trandafoiu (2013) both emphasised the role of migration in shaping music production, consumption, and performance with Baily providing a typology for understanding this relationship and Krüger exploring the globalisation of music in transit. Increasing fieldwork across multiple locations, or multi-site fieldwork (Fitzgerald 2006), has contributed to the paradigm shift. Hosokawa (1984) and Bull (2000; 2015) illustrated the emergence of a unique form of mobile music distribution and consumption among urban residents, employing personal stereos such as Walkmans, MP3 players, and streaming music on mobile devices as an innovation in media technology that has been prevalent since the 1970s. Nettamo et al. (2006) conducted a cross-cultural study on retrieving, consuming and managing digital music content related to mobile music consumption in New York City and Hong Kong. In such contexts, the term "mobile music" is often associated with music as a cultural product or commodity, rather than a live performance. It refers to the ability to produce and distribute music across multiple locations, its ease of transmission through digital technologies, and the way in which music is consumed, with individuals moving or carrying music stored on devices during playback. The following section provides a general overview of processions, which I regard as the primary mode of mobile music performance.

### 2.1.1 Processions as Mobile Musicking

It should be noted that mobile music consumption and production are not unique to the late 20th century. Historical accounts attest to the enduring existence of mobile music practices such as hiking songs or music played during processions. Music processions typically involve a form of

musicking, as defined by Small (1998), along a series of locations that create a "sound track" in sequence. Thus, I consider music in a procession as mobile musicking – a mobile practice that is not restricted to a particular location, but physically traversing space.

As a mobile phenomenon, processions have long been a vital component of human culture. Yet, the significance and meaning of processions vary across cultural, political, and historical contexts. While there may not be any universally applicable characteristics, or even a definition, certain common elements are frequently associated with processional performance. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett & McNamara (1985a) have compiled a descriptive inventory including the following components typically found in processions:

- Processions are not merely a means of transportation from a starting point to a destination but rather a ceremonial and symbolic journey that holds significant importance.
- Processions dominate the surroundings and temporarily become a prominent feature distinguishing themselves from everyday activities by incorporating unique elements, such as distinctive scenography, costumes, music, and choreographed movements. These elements are used to display fundamental symbols that are easily recognisable and visible in non-processional environments. Symbols can represent significant occurrences in a community, such as religious, political, or social events, or a combination of these.
- Processions are important community events. They may serve a direct purpose, such as transporting participants in funerals or weddings, or they commemorate past events that continue to hold significance, including victories, sacrifices, and miracles. They may also commemorate a recent event such as a parade held in the honour of a national hero.
- Processions may take various forms, ranging from casual wandering in costumes to highly choreographed events integrated into a specific theme. They can be formal or informal, with a set or undefined route, and varying interactions between performers and spectators. Stopping at specific locations may also be incorporated into the procession to perform related activities.
- Procession are often used in a religious or political context, for example a military parade, a march, or a demonstration, to show unity, strength or shared beliefs, or to highlight a common historical heritage. The term

can also refer to legal or administrative procedures, such as court processions.

In summary, I refer to the general idea of a procession as the organised and structured movement of people, sometimes including vehicles and animals, in a formal or ceremonial manner through a prescribed itinerary. This often involves the carrying of symbols such as banners, flags or other emblems, and may be accompanied by music and some form of entertainment, such as dance and artistic performances.

## 2.2 Scholarly Context

Most scholarly works on processions primarily concentrate on individual representations. However, some works delve into theoretical or conceptual discussions of the phenomenon of processions as a whole, such as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett & McNamara (1985b), as well as Wiesenfeldt (2014), and Reily (2016). Generally the literature on processions can be categorised based on methodological perspective, into historical and ethnographic research by both, non-musicologists and musicological works, complemented with some transdisciplinary additions from the field of geography and urban studies, e.g. (Kong 2005; Luz 2022; Singh & Singh 2014), with Kong providing insights into the role of music in ritual, and the ways in which processions can both construct and fracture identity and community.

### 2.2.1 Literature on Processions in General

Historical studies address processions mainly through written sources, pictorial representations and (rarely) other artefacts. These publications are mostly limited to European examples, e.g. (Ashley & Hüsken 2001; Gräf 1959; Gvozdeva & Velten 2011; Hofmann 1964; Leone 2014; Pascher 1968; Quack 1999). Notably some German historical works within the framework of the Heidelberg special research programme (Sonderforschungsbereich 619 Ritualdynamik Teilprojekt 5) have, besides Europe, placed a broader focus on Central and East Asia (Gengnagel et al. 2008) as well as India (Gengnagel et al. 2012). Furthermore, Knuth A. Jacobsen provides a diasporic perspective on certain South Asian processional activities in Europe (Jacobsen 2020), and provides a wide range of examples by scholars from diverse subjects in his edited volume "South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia

and in the Diaspora" (Jacobsen 2008). Music plays a subordinate role in the majority of historical and often religious studies. Nevertheless, there is a range of existing works by musicologists on processions that can provide valuable insights.

Historical musicologists have primarily focused on Christian processional music and its progression throughout history, examining the role and function of music, e.g. (Fernández et al. 2020). Meanwhile, many anthropologists have focused on contemporary individual processions from different parts of the world, e.g. (Borland 2003; Grieve 2004; Hetzel Gunkel 2003; Jacobsen 2008). An initial attempt of a rather systematic generalisation was edited by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett & McNamara (1985b), who present and compare processions from different regions worldwide. The effect of processions on local community building (Delgado 2016; Hamilton-Smith et al. 2015; Weber & Winckelmann 1956), has been repeatedly pointed out primarily in anthropological writings, e.g. (Ashkenazi 1993; Cadaval 2021; Sallnow 1981). In addition, a detailed research on the community impact of public processions was commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2013 (Hamilton-Smith et al. 2015). Publications in anthropology and the social sciences rarely discuss music itself, despite the fact that few processions occur without music.

The majority of research conducted by ethnomusicologists looks at musical processions as a component of larger ritual events, such as marriage (Booth 1990; Cooley 2005; Doubleday 1999), burials (Agawu 1988; Bakan 1998; Jones 2007), and other ceremonies (Jones 2009; Reily 2006; Seeger 1987). Some of the ritual contexts in which musical processions play a central role, such as the Caribbean Carnival or the Pernambuco Carnival in Brazil, have received a considerable interest (Cowley 1998; Dudley 2004; Guilbault 2007; Pinto 1994, 1994, 1996).

A number of ethnographic studies have focused on music as it is performed during processions, e.g. (Bakan 1998; Caletta 2010; Schechter 1994; Wegner 2009, 2023; Widdess et al. 2022). They delve into the lived experiences of participants in processions and parades, exploring themes such as the social and cultural significance of these events, the role of music in shaping the procession experience, and the relations between procession participants and spectators. In her study on the Cuban San Lázaro procession in Rincón, for example, Hagedorn (2002) highlights the political dimension of the community-building effect of musical processions. The studies mentioned above collectively underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of musical processions in community-building.

The role of processions, with special regard to their spatial and mobile elements, which will be central to this dissertation, in relation to community building, has been the focus of research in only a limited number of studies. Trouillet (2008) provides an example of how musical practice during processions influences community-building processes in relation to the spatial arrangement of diverse groups of participants. Greene (2003) demonstrates the importance of ceremonial practice in sacred areas by examining the Gunlā festivities in Kathmandu, with a specific focus on the function of music. David (2012) contributes to this discussion by examining the use of sound and ritual movement in territorialising space and the relationship between the configuration of public space and outdoor acoustics. By analysing the soundscape of moving processions, her work demonstrates how sonic elements can serve as a potent tool in defining ritual space, as well as facilitating the sanctification of the area through the use of sonorous and loud music.

### 2.2.2 Literature on Daśaharā & Jumbo Savari Procession

The Navarātri Festival, in many cases referred to as the Daśaharā or Dussehra (Scialpi 1986:106-107) with its concluding procession, has been thoroughly analysed in Caleb Simmons' edited book "Nine Nights of the Goddess: The Navarātri Festival in South Asia" (Simmons et al. 2018). This book offers a comprehensive perspective on the festival through a diverse range of instances and methodologies that have been carefully selected and compiled. Another Navarātri Festival, the North Indian Kullu Dussehra in the Himalayas, has been studied in terms of its historical, political, and ritual dimensions (Berti 2011), while the Daśaharā Festival in Jaipur, Jodhpur, has been examined with special respect to the legitimacy of political rule (Gengnagel et al. 2012).

The Jumbo Savari Procession was initially documented and analysed by C. Hayavadana Rao in 1936 (Hayavadana 1936). Subsequently, the procession is addressed in detail in an article published by the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (Scialpi 1986), as well as in Swami Sivapriyanandas Book "Mysore Royal Dasara" (Sivapriyananda 1995).

## 2.3 Context of Ritual, Culture and Religion

The Jumbo Savari Procession concludes the Mysore Daśaharā Festival which is celebrated every year during September and October. Situating the topic within the context of its cultural, ritualistic, and mythological

foundations is essential to gain a basic comprehension of its significance. In his brief consideration of the place of the Daśaharā in the Hindu Calendar and the related cultural implications, Scialpi (1986:109-112) concludes that, historically, the Daśaharā represented the annual transition from one year to the next. Moreover, it usually lines up with the end of the southwest monsoon, marking the start of a new season. Farmers saw it as a symbol that their summer crops, particularly rice, were at their peak harvest time. The festival is often depicted as a pan-Hindu celebration that embodies India's national culture because of its numerous regional variations and extensive performance history (Hayavadana 1936:12-16, 35, 51). The name of the festival and the deity being worshipped differ depending on the region, with variations observed throughout India (Fuller 2004:108-109; Lochtefeld 2002:751). The two superseding Names of the festival are Navarātri ("Nine nights")[16] and Durgāpūjā.[17]

Drawing on two mythological stories from the Sanskrit literary tradition[18], the festival is centred on the triumph of the god-king Rama over the demonic king Ravana, as well as the victory of the deity Durgā over the demon buffalo Mahishasura who embodied the forces of ignorance and chaos. Ruling an army of demons, he won the battle against the gods and due to a boon he received, the gods were powerless to destroy him. They created the goddess Durgā, equipped her with a sword to defeat Mahishasura and she cut off his buffalo head; hence the festival's name Durgāpūjā. The extent to which the two stories intersect or take precedence may vary depending on the region (Berti 2011:128). In parts of northern and western India, it is celebrated as Navarātri and

[16] The Sanskrit term Navarātri means "nine nights", nava meaning "nine" and rātri meaning "nights" (Lochtefeld 2002:468-569).

[17] The term "puja" refers to a practice central to Hindu religious and cultural traditions, encompassing both acts of worship and festive events. As a form of worship, puja involves ritualistic offerings and prayers to deities, invoking divine blessings through a series of sacred acts that may include chanting mantras, lighting lamps, and offering food and flowers. This ritual may be performed daily at home, in temples or on special religious occasions. Puja is also used to describe the broader festive events surrounding these rituals, especially during major religious festivals such as Diwali or Durgāpūjā. These events are characterised by elaborate preparations, community gatherings and a festive atmosphere, transforming ritual worship into a communal celebration that reinforces social bonds and cultural identity. In this context, the puja transcends its religious connotations to become a cultural event involving music, dance, food, and other communal activities, making it a vital aspect of social life in communities of Hindu tradition.

[18] According to Sivapriyananda (1995:22), the Devi-mahatmya, a section of the extensive ancient text called Markandeya Purana, presents the mythological basis and accompanying rituals for this festival in a rich and elaborate manner through 13 chapters (81-93).

places significant emphasis on the worship of the deities Rama and Durgā. In Calcutta, as well as many other parts of northern India, the festival is referred to as Durgāpūjā, and is characterised by extensive city wide public ceremonies. The Daśaharā in Mysore is centred around the victory of the local goddess Chamundeshwari[19] over Mahishasura.

### 2.3.1 Festival of Gods and Kings

Upon closer examination, I distinguished three primary layers of meaning within the Daśaharā Festival, one of which, let me call it the Kings' Layer, is the reverence currently paid to former kings and their present-day royal families. According to Fuller (2004:106), Navarātri or Durgāpūjā or Daśaharā - commonly known as the Festival of Kings and Kshatriyas - is widely regarded as the most important ritual of kingship and is considered to be of greater significance than other major rituals and festivals associated with kingship in India. Although it is primarily a religious festival, it additionally serves as a symbol of royal or political authority, thereby validating and sanctifying the power of kings or former rulers. To comprehend the relationship between the reverence paid to deities and the veneration shown to previous kings and present-day royal households, during the festival and in particular during the procession, Fuller provides an insight into why kingship remains important to many Indians even without monarchies in India. After the country gained independence in 1947, a significant number of the 565 princely states or kingdoms on the Indian subcontinent, which were not under British control, ceased to exist within a year or two. The various large princely states included Hyderabad under Muslim rule, Mysore, Travancore, Kashmir and Baroda under Hindu rule, as well as many smaller ones. All territories were legally combined with either Pakistan or India (except for Kashmir), while most of the former kings retained their titles and private incomes until 1971. Fuller further points out that, in light of a traditional Hindu worldview, even in contemporary India, and as a consequence of history, kingship is seen as very important, with the absence of a king believed to lead to a chaotic society. An unprompted remark, made during

[19] Chamundeshwari is a form of the Hindu goddess Durgā, worshipped primarily in southern India. She is believed to be a powerful deity who embodies the fierce aspect of Durgā, known for her victory over the buffalo demon Mahishasura. Chamundeshwari's temple is located on the Chamundi Hills near Mysore, Karnataka, where she is celebrated with great reverence, especially during the Daśaharā festival. The association with Durgā emphasises her role as a protector and warrior goddess, embodying the triumph of good over evil.

an interview discussion of a different subject, suggests that this perspective is deeply rooted:

> *"The Mysore Palace previously was the property of the kings and all that. Now currently it is taken care of by the government. And the King is given a partly place inside of the palace to live there. Because if we completely send off the King, then, there will be some chaos and some issues" (Advith M., interview with author, Oct. 26, 2019. Audio, 00:19:10).*

According to Fuller (2004:106) kings are often viewed as both peacekeepers and disruptors who nevertheless primarily have the responsibility of protecting their kingdoms and citizens by guaranteeing their safety, prosperity, and welfare. This includes safeguarding the hierarchical caste system, shielding the privileges of the Brahmins, and upholding the rights and relative rank of different castes, all while reaffirming the authority of the caste courts.

Moreover, the kingdom is considered a miniature representation of the universe, and ideally, the boundaries of both coincide. This social and cosmic order, known as dharma, is maintained not only by the king, but also by deities working in tandem with him. Here, the next layer, which I call the Divinity Layer, is involved. The idea of kingship is closely associated with the divine world, where the highest god, Indra, often takes on the role of the ruler. The relationship between human kings and deities is characterised by two key ideas: the king is the prime minister or regent of the state deity, or he is an incarnation or manifestation of state deity. However, there is only a slight distinction between these ideas in the Hindu polytheistic belief system – a king is considered a mere mortal while still being a divine deity (Fuller 2004:107). After stating why kings are believed to be divine Fuller (2004:108) adds to the importance of royals and why the continued idea of kingship as a socio-religious institution is still present after the absence of Hindu kingdoms in India: the royalty of deities. For instance the concept of the ideal state as Rama's kingdom, known as Ram-rajya, is still widely present in the Indian Republic. Interestingly, the adaptation and broadcasting of the Ramayana to Indian state-controlled television during the late 1980s played a significant role in its growing popularity and in preserving the notion of divine sovereignty. Furthermore, the capital of a column erected by Emperor Ashoka, a Buddhist ruler who unified the country in the third century B.C., was chosen as the Indian national emblem after independence.

The significant role of the previously mentioned layers can be seen when considering their relevance to the festival as a whole as well as to

the various performances within the Jumbo Savari Procession, particularly in the context of political power. At this stage, the third level of my layered framework comes into play, and I refer to it as the Politics and Heritage Layer, which plays a role at least in shaping cultural identity. Drawing on her research on a North Indian Navarātri Festival, the Kullu Dusserah in the Himalayas, Berti (2011:126) concludes that postcolonial Indian leaders noticed how significant ritual festivities were in asserting territorial and political identities by either differentiating them or bringing them together. Following independence in 1947, they promoted national integration through rituals, while simultaneously shaping or redefining local characteristics. Within the next 30 years, local politicians typically took over the role of organising royal festivals from kings, and the government's sponsorship of these events provided an ideal opportunity for political symbolism. In some cases, politicians took on the role of former kings; in others, they worked together or competed with them in the festival arena. In both instances efforts have been made to promote regional culture. This is concurrent with the growing international recognition of local customs and cultural diversity. As a result, some royal festivals were developed into "cultural" or folk festivals, which included various forms of entertainment, such as artistic performances, cultural forums, exhibitions, and competitions. Consequently, Berti (2011:127) suggests that the role of the festival committees became critical in managing the "heritage industry", guaranteeing that cultural value (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995:369) is incorporated into the festivals by emphasising the continuation of traditions, which is crucial for preserving the unique identity and shared memory of different regions.

### 2.3.2 Daśaharā in Mysore

The Daśaharā Festival celebrated in Mysore is a highly prominent and well-known instance of Navarātri, as explained above. Generally, the festivities in Mysore adhere to the same mythological foundation and the same criteria that determine this festive period on the larger scale. As a local specialty, according to Scialpi (1986:125), the Daśaharā in Mysore was consistently celebrated as a tribute to the Maharaja of Mysore, since the times of the south Indian Vijayanagar Empire between 1336-1565. Until today, the Daśaharā Festival has historically served to reinforce and strengthen the bond between the king and the local goddess Chamundeshwari, who is the tutelary deity of the Maharajas of the Mysore Kingdom and the presiding deity of present-day Mysore City.

Furthermore, the festival guarantees the well-being and harmonious coexistence of the community with the divine realm.

My study shows that the Daśaharā Festival in Mysore displays all three of the aforementioned layers in their respective local characteristics, as followed. The Politics and Heritage Layer is evident in the transformation of the Daśaharā from a former kingship-focused ritual celebration into a "cultural" or "folk" festival, as mentioned in an interview.

> *"Like the folk dancers folk dance. You can see multiple folk styles here. You can even make a research on just that. Right? Just folk styles. There are very different forms. And also as I told, very different journeys. All the teams which may be Bharatanatyam[20], has a different form of music and have a different music. And Dollu Kunitha[21] has a different music. Everything has a different music. So it is totally different things coming together in Daśaharā you can see all that in a single go" (Soupi S., interview with author, Oct. 26, 2019. Audio, 00:21:26).*

While Soupi uses Daśaharā as an umbrella term, she is referring to the many different performances within the procession, including Bharatanatyam dance groups and Dollu Kunitha dance groups, as was clarified during the interview. Simmons et al. (2018:63) state that the Mysore Daśaharā is the Karnāṭaka State Festival, which underscores its importance across regions, as well as the cultural diversity shaped by state policies. The festival features a wide range of events, including a fair called Daśaharā Exhibition, performances by musicians from all over India, classical concerts of Carnatic Music, and shows of theatre and performing arts, which are held in various venues across the city during

[20] Bharatanatyam is a classical Indian dance form that originated in Tamil Nadu, a state of southern India. It is known for its fixed torso, bent legs, and intricate footwork combined with expressive hand gestures and facial expressions. Historically performed in Hindu temples and at court festivals, the Bharatanatyam was a solo dance that conveyed religious themes and spiritual ideas. The dance is not only a form of artistic expression but also a medium of storytelling, often depicting scenes from Hindu mythology, particularly the works of the Tamil poets who composed the Carnatic music that accompanies the dance.

[21] Dollu Kunitha is a traditional drumming dance from Karnataka, performed mainly by the Kuruba community of the region. It is characterised by vigorous drumming and energetic dancing using a large, decorated drum called a "dollu". This dance form is typically performed during temple festivals and other religious celebrations such as artistic expressions and ritual practices. Dollu Kunitha is also a medium for storytelling, often accompanied by songs telling tales from epics, folklore or praise of Shiva, the patron deity of the dance.

the Daśaharā festive season, as well as a motorcycle parade and a torch light parade after the Jumbo Savari Procession.

One such venue is the famous Mysore Palace, also known as the Amba Vilas (District Administration 2024). During my field stay in 2019 I attended "various musical and religious programs highlighting Karnataka dance and music culture, performed in front of the illuminated Palace" (Fieldnotes by author, Sep. 16, 2019). The Mysore Palace, a significant symbol of the era of kingship and one of the most famous palace buildings in India, plays a crucial role in connecting the king and the Goddess during the Daśaharā festival. Beyond serving as a sightseeing destination, museum, and concert venue during the Daśaharā festive season, it also serves as a ritual site where the divine and royal aspects of the festival come together, representing the divine and kingly dimensions of the celebration in a single location. The Daśaharā rituals conducted at the Palace, as explained by Hayavadana (1936:22-23), and described by Scialpi (1986:126-131) in great detail, proceed in the following manner:

On the first day, the king holds a royal gathering (Durbar) in the evening at 7 pm, during which he receives homage, watches wrestling matches, and other demonstrations of martial skills, as well as the state elephant and horse paying their respects. A similar durbar is repeated from the second to eighth day, accompanied different forms of entertainment, which are open to the public as well. On the seventh day, the king conducts Sarasvati puja (worshipping for the goddess Sarasvati) within the private inner sanctum of the palace. On the eighth day, called Kalaratri, a ritual called Mahisasuramardini takes place. It commemorates the defeat of the demon Mahishasura by the Goddess Chamundeshwari and follows prescribed rituals at night. On the ninth day, a worship ceremony is performed for weapons, including the royal sword. Offerings are made to the state elephant and horse, as well as the goddess of wealth, Lakshmidevi. Furthermore, a Chandi-homam ceremony (a sacred fire ritual) is held in honour of Chamundeshwari. The king finally removes a silken thread tied to his right wrist, signifying the successful completion of the vow made to celebrate. The day ends with special activities for the guests who join the Durbar. Sharma (2005) remarks that most of these royal family ceremonies are usually close to public. The king climbs up one by one the seven steps to a golden throne, installed as per religious specifications, at a fixed hour to receive homage from the public. Thereafter, court musicians play a special tune composed for the occasion of the Wodeyars' ascension to power. On the tenth day the festival ends with the grand Vijayadasami celebrations, also known as Jumbo Savari,

which made Mysore Daśaharā a world-famous event. On this day, the king performs a puja for the royal sword and places it on a palanquin, while offering an ash gourd smeared with vermilion as a sacrifice. The sedan chair or howdah is then carried through the city carried by the royal elephant in a procession. The most notable change in modern Jumbo Savari is the replacement of the king with a figure of Chamundeshwari, placed in the 75-kilogram golden howdah and carried by the royal elephant in the procession. Additionally, the procession no longer features military soldiers. As well as entertaining the crowds, the focus today is on showcasing the achievements of the state government, with the Chief Minister and the current succeeding King of Mysore opening the procession and performing a ritual in honour of Chamundeshwari. This event has become a platform for showcasing and performing political power dynamics, sovereignty, and traditions involving politicians, royal family members, and residents of Karnataka (Sharma 2005; Simmons et al. 2018:64).

### 2.3.3 The Jumbo Savari Procession

The following description is mainly based on participant observation of Vijayadasami, the tenth day of Daśaharā in 2019, during which I observed the procession from various angles and recorded a large part of it on video. With permission from the Mysore Police Commissioner, K.T. Balakrishna, and the backing of any department under his jurisdiction, which included the provision of a VIP gold card for the Jumbo Savari issued by the tourism department, I was granted the privilege of filming and moving freely between locations during the procession and associated events. Before the procession started, I moved among the dance groups and plateaus, engaging in conversations with some people awaiting their part in the procession within their dedicated area of the Mysore Palace grounds. An internal program sheet that was shown to me revealed that a grand total of 38 artist groups would participate in the procession. These dance and music groups alternate in the procession with decorated floats and wagons, artistically designed to represent social, communal and political themes and institutions.

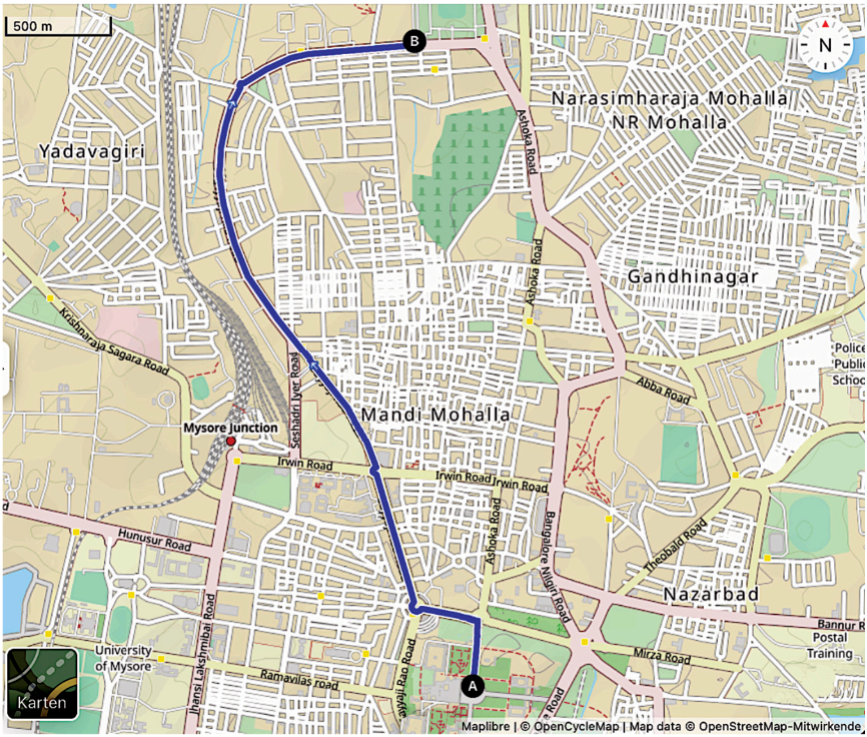
Img 1: Artists Order for Jumbo Savari 2019 (Field data, foto by Author, Oct. 08, 2019)

Excluded from the program sheet and appearing in the procession in the following order were the Mysore Police and the State of Karnataka, whose representatives were mounted on horses to trail the tableaus and performing groups, followed by a police marching band, representing several district police and the Karnataka Band on a tableau, followed by three decorated elephants at the end of the procession, with one carrying the golden howdah with the visible figure of goddess Chamundeshwari.

Img 2: Golden howdah with Chamundeshwari (Field data, foto by Author, Oct. 08, 2019)

This elephant-borne figure is the main focus point, paraded 4,6 km through the city of Mysore in the Jumbo Savari Procession that begins at the Mysore Palace and culminates at Bannimantap[22] Grounds, a huge stadium-like venue with a capacity of 32,000 seats.

[22] "Bannimantap" is a term that originates from the Kannada term "banni mara", which is used to refer to the Prosopis cineraria tree. In Indian architecture, the Sanskrit term Maṇḍapa (मण्डप, "hall") refers to a common concept found in the ancient Indian "science of architecture" (vāstuvidyā). Maṇḍapa or Mantapa is an open pillared hall for public events, including rituals, discourses or art performances. (Shridhar 2020)




Img 3: Procession Path leading 4.6 km through Mysore[23]

The Jumbo Savari Procession has been a long-standing tradition for over 200 years, starting at the Mysore Palace and ending at the Banni tree (currently the Bannimantap parade grounds) in the northern part of Mysore. According to Sivapriyananda (1995) the Jumbo Savari Procession dates back to the Vijayanagar kings. The festivities were initially held in Srirangapatna, the former capital of the kingdom of Mysore, from 1610 to 1799, before being relocated to Mysore by Krishnaraja Wadiyar III, where it was celebrated since 1805. It included a display of fireworks, a review of army units, and the worship of weapons, particularly the state sword. The Maharajas would hunt wild animals that were specially captured for the occasion and offer prayers to Banni Mahakali, the goddess of the tree. Finally, the king would return in a torch-lit procession to the palace after these ceremonies. According to an interview conducted by Milton (2012)

[23] Map created with Komoot using data from OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL 1.0). Visualisation and map data: MapLibre | © Komoot | Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors. The route was individually added. URL: www.komoot.com.

with Echanuru Kumar, a member of the Mysore heritage committee and commentator on Mysore City buildings, Bannimantap is considered a sacred site because it sheltered the weapons of war, including the (state) sword used to kill the mythical Mahisasura. After the victory, the goddess Chamundeshwari no longer needed her weapons and bade them farewell by burying them under the tree, an event now celebrated as Aayudha Puja. This tradition of revering the Banni Tree was upheld by the Kings of the Vijayanagar Empire and later by the Maharajas of Mysore until the Karnataka government assumed responsibility for the celebrations in the early 1970s. Today, the ritual is performed by the current descendant of the King of Mysore.

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# 3

# Methodology

This chapter introduces the qualitative research methodology employed to investigate and understand mobile, spatial, and social dynamics in the context of the Jumbo Savari Procession. It includes the research design, a description of the field including the methods used during field research. Additionally, ethical considerations and limitations related to the methodology as well as my researcher's role in the field will be considered. In the course of my fieldwork, I visited relevant institutions responsible for the preparation and organisation of the Daśaharā Festival and the Jumbo Savari Procession in Mysore, such as the Comissioner of Police, the Department of Tourism and the Mounted Police Headquarters. I also made contact with, frequently visited and spent time with musicians, guides, officials and other people who are relevant to my research.

Methods for data collection included participant observation during events related to the Daśaharā, such as the rehearsals of the Police Band and related concerts during the ten days of the festival. For the Jumbo Savari Procession, audio-visual recordings from different angles were taken simultaneously with the help of my partner Mirka and a close friend Ilja. I instructed both in principles and ethics of ethnographic

filming as introduced and discussed by Pink (2013:49-70, 103-121). Throughout the fieldwork, field notes were taken and continuously edited, particularly during participant observation and informal conversations with key figures involved in the procession. Semi-structured and unstructured Interviews with participants, mainly including members of the Police Band were recorded using both an iPhone and, in some cases, a ZOOM recorder. The iPhone offers portability, convenience for spontaneous interviews, and quick access to recording features, with advanced microphone technology for clear audio capture. Socially, iPhone is non-intrusive as people are used to the presence of mobile devices in everyday conversations, reducing potential discomfort or inhibition. Recording with ZOOM Recorder offers superior audio clarity and noise reduction, which is ideal for capturing nuanced verbal and non-verbal cues. In addition, ZOOM Recorder's long battery life and expandable memory are beneficial for longer situations such as rehearsals or uninterrupted interviews, ensuring comprehensive data collection. This study also takes into account various forms of media that document the procession and its accompanying music, including audio recordings, musical notations, press releases, and textual materials from archives, (online) newspapers, and social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, by critically reading and incorporating them as field data.

In order to maintain openness to emerging themes and patterns and to adapt and refine my data collection strategies in response to initial findings, I utilised the principles of the grounded theory method presented by Charmaz (2006) in her comprehensive guide and Strauss (2004). This provides a flexible yet structured approach to address fieldwork dynamics, allowing for systematic data collection and analysis, while facilitating the identification of patterns and themes within the data through the creation of categories. In addition, grounded theory methods enhance the rigour of research by ensuring that the findings are deeply rooted in data. It is important to note that in this study, grounded theory methods were used exclusively for data analysis without the aim of constructing a new theory. This approach ensured a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the research questions. Initially, I segmented the materials into distinct categories based on my research queries, such as historical context, social dynamics, musical practices, spatial organisation, cultural / religious significance, and political aspects. Subsequently, I delineated subcategories and additional categories through in-depth line-to-line coding until a sufficient saturation or depth level was achieved. Throughout the process, I changed or merged the subcategories according

to new insights and questions. For example, the code Musical Practices was first expanded to include subcategories such as the Role of the Mysore Police Band, Types of Music Played, Rehearsal Processes and Performance Preparation. Later, I refined these subcategories to better reflect the nuances and specificities observed during the fieldwork. This included distinguishing between traditional and contemporary musical styles and separating the organisational aspects of rehearsals from actual performance dynamics. I have also added new sub-categories, such as Audience Engagement with Music, to name one example. This emerged as a relevant theme, highlighting the interactive aspect of musical performances and their impact on the participants and spectators of the procession. The iterative process of refining the categories ensured that the coding scheme remained flexible and responsive to evolving data.

In the course of my data collection and analysis, I relied primarily on Evernote and Apple Notes for field notes, which greatly enhanced the chronological and digitally linked organisation and structure of my data throughout this research. Apple Notes provided a seamless, intuitive platform for capturing observations and reflections in real time during fieldwork. Its cross-device synchronisation ensured that all notes were easily accessible and up-to-date, allowing immediate documentation and retrieval of data as insights emerged. Evernote, on the other hand, offers robust features for organising and structuring data. With the ability to create notebooks and tags, Evernote facilitated the categorisation of data into different sub-categories and themes, enabling efficient cross-referencing and integration of different data points. The ability to attach multimedia files, such as audio recordings, photos and documents, directly to notes provided a seamless, interconnected repository of information. This digital interlinking was particularly useful for tracking the progress of topics over time and ensuring that all relevant data was available for analysis. Using both, Apple Notes and Evernote enhanced the methodological quality of the study by providing a useful fieldnotes-taking framework and helped in managing and organising my data. The F5 transcription software allowed me to efficiently transcribe the audio recordings. The software's ability to use a pedal to control playback, manage large audio files, adjust playback speed, add timestamps and rewind 1-2 seconds beyond the point at which the recording is stopped, streamlines the transcription process. In terms of coding and data analysis, I primarily used MAXQDA as a tool to navigate through my dataset using the codes applied. Its advanced features for organising, coding, and locating data were of great help in managing the increase in data. The ability to add codes to the video material allowed me to

systematically categorise and retrieve relevant visual information and correlate it with audio and textual data. This was particularly useful for identifying and analysing the interactions between musical performance and spatial arrangements within the procession. The search capabilities of the software allowed quick access to specific categories and subcategories. It also supports the visualisation of data relationships and patterns, although these features were not used for theory development or qualitative evaluation. Instead, MAXQDA served as a robust data management tool that facilitated the organisation, navigation, and retrieval of coded data, thereby increasing the overall efficiency of the data analysis process.

The methodology employed in this study was greatly influenced by the work of Boellstorff et al. (2012) and that of Ghodsee (2016). Boellstorff and colleagues provide clear and concise descriptions of ethnographic fieldwork processes, including participant observation, field notes, interviews, reflections on insider vs. outsider positionalities, and data analysis. Complemented by Ghodsee's recommendations on the role of theory in ethnography and her emphasis on staying close to practice when writing, these two guides provided a valuable framework, including ethical considerations, for navigating the research methods used in this project.

In addition to employing conventional field research techniques[24] as mentioned above, I also explored the use and application of visual methods, as discussed by Pink (2013), to comprehensively and correspondingly document and analyse a visually striking event, such as the procession. Audio-visual documentation also entailed rehearsals conducted by musicians in preparation for their processional performances. Some of the informal interviews were audio-recorded and the events I attended were mostly documented through photographs and videos. This provided me with a body of ethnographic material to work with and to discuss and evaluate my findings with the respective informants in the sense of intra-cultural feedback (Baily 1989:5). By

[24] In anthropology, conventional fieldwork techniques, such as participant observation, field notes, interviews, and data analysis, are central methods for gathering in-depth and nuanced data on human behaviour and cultural practices. Participant observation in particular involves integrating the researcher with the community being studied to gradually gain an insider's perspective while simultaneously maintaining an analytical perspective on social interactions and cultural norms. This dual role allows for the collection of qualitative data, and contributes to a rich understanding of the research subject. As Bernard (2006) articulates, these techniques enable researchers to observe and engage with participants in their social worlds, thus allowing for a broad and contextualised understanding.

incorporating videos and photographs into my research, I was able to work closely with people to discuss footage. Through this collaborative effort, I achieved informed findings. In many cases this method proved more helpful than providing detailed explanations, especially because English was not our first language. Repeatedly presenting and discussing photographs and videos of the events, including those captured during the procession, gave valuable insights and highlighted and confirmed the relevance of visual methods, as suggested by Pink (2013:49-70). This approach also takes into account the increased prevalence of audiovisual media as a prominent means of both remote and direct communication, using smartphones as a common display medium also in face-to-face situations. Overall, the use of visual methods facilitated more immersive and interactive engagement with people, for instance, when reviewing footage, allowing them to provide richer and more detailed feedback, including their emic views and interpretations, particularly of the procession and rehearsals I attended. This not only increased the reliability of the data, but also created a deeper connection and mutual understanding between me as the researcher and the participants, in line with Pink's emphasis on the collaborative and participatory qualities of visual ethnographic research.

Although there are common perceptions and methodological concepts of how fieldwork can be conducted, such as (Boellstorff et al. 2012; Ghodsee 2016; Näumann & Probst-Effah 2021; Rice 2017), each fieldwork is unique and must be seen as an individual approach related to the research questions being asked and as an abstraction of the everyday realities of the people involved, including that of the researcher who participates in the routines of the people being studied. Therefore, my research plan, initially formulated around two successful grant applications, was subsequently modified according to the resources that became available and the insights gained during the research process, as well as in light of the limitations discussed below in chapter 3.2.2 Limitations.

## 3.1 Research Field and Historical Context

The city of Mysore is situated around 150 km southwest of Bangalore, the capital city of the State of Karnataka[25], and is accessible by either train or bus within a duration of two to three hours. It is widely recognised for its modern and dynamic atmosphere which stands out from other neighbouring cities. Mysore is home to a wide range of diverse communities and traditions, which together contribute to a vibrant social and cultural environment. This has given my research a compelling context, while combining traditional and contemporary elements to add challenging depth. Mysore has emerged as a centre for education, with institutions that attract students and scholars from all over India. Several languages are spoken, reflecting the linguistic diversity characteristics of the region. The primary languages include the following. As the official language of the state of Karnataka, Kannada is widely spoken in Mysore. It serves as the medium of instruction in schools and is used in official communication. Given Mysore's status as an educational and cultural hub, English is widely understood and used, particularly in academic and business contexts. In general, the language was well-suited for my research, with only a few exceptions that required translation, which was easily obtained with the help of others. Due to its location near the state of Tamil Nadu, some communities in Mysore speak Tamil. Telugu, Marathi, Malayalam, and Hindi are also spoken but to a much lesser extent.

### 3.1.1 Musical Royal Ancestors

The historical significance of Mysore as the former capital of the Kingdom of Mysore adds to the scope of my research. It is therefore imperative to provide a brief historical background to my research field, with the Wodeyar Kings and their royal family being at the centre of worship during the Jumbo Savari Procession. The Kingdom of Mysore was founded in the area surrounding the present-day city of Mysore. Its

[25] Karnataka is divided into 31 districts and 4 administrative divisions, which are responsible for managing its three main regions: The coastal plain region Karavalli, the hilly region Malenadu of the Western Ghats, and the elevated region Bayalu Seeme of the Deccan Plateau. It covers an area of 191,791 square km with an urban population of 23,578,175, comprising 38.57% of the state's total population. In 2016 the rural population of Karnataka was 37,552,529, or 61.43% of the state's population. According to the 2011 census, the population of Karnataka is 83 percent Hindus, 12.2 percent Muslims, 3.1 percent Christians, 0.8 percent Jains, 0.7 percent Buddhists, and less than 0.1 percent Sikhs. The remaining population follows other religions (Madur 2013; Mudde 2016).

earliest rulers were members of the Wodeyar family, who had previously belonged to the household of a local chieftain who ruled the region near Mysore City. The Wodeyar dynasty was established in 1399 and expanded into the Mysore kingdom. The Wodeyars first served as vassals of the Vijayanagara Empire from 1399 to 1565. The Empire was named after its capital, Vijayanagara, now called Hampi, which lies in present-day Karnataka. From 1565 to 1761, the Wodeyars ruled as independent rulers, then as puppet rulers under the Islamic rulers Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan from 1761 to 1796, and finally as allies of the British Crown from 1799 to 1947. In the 17th century, after several major conflicts, Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan fought four Anglo-Mysore wars. After Tipu Sultan's death in 1799, the British restored the Wodeyars to the throne by installing the five-year-old Krishnaraja Wodeyar III as ruler of the state of Mysore. The diminished Mysore was transformed into a princely state. Under the leadership of 25 Kings, the Wodeyar family maintained its rule for over 500 years until Indian independence in 1947, making it an exceptional example of continuity. In 1974, the Mysore princely state joined the Democratic Union of India and was subsequently renamed as the present-day State of Karnataka (Madur 2015; Rao 1943; Shama Rao 1936). The Jumbo Savari Procession can be traced back to 1610, when the Daśaharā was first celebrated in Srirangapatna. After the demise of Tipu Sultan and the subsequent relocation of the capital back to Mysore, the Daśaharā Festival and its procession was shifted to Mysore in the year 1799 (Fuller 2004:115; Simmons 2014:119).

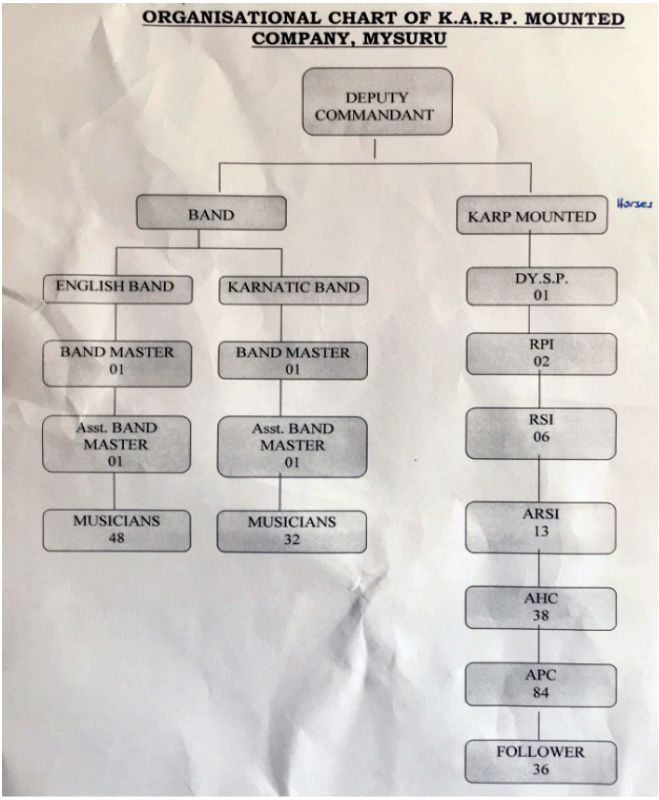
### 3.1.2 From the Royal Carnatic Orchestra to the Police Band

One of the less documented aspects of the Wodeyar Kings that is relevant to my subject is their devotion and passion for music, which created the conditions for the existence of today's central performers in the procession, the Police Band. According to Pranesh (2003), quoted in the New World Encyclopedia (2023), many of the Mysore Kings were patrons of music and several were qualified musicians themselves. Particularly during the reigns of King Krishnaraja Wodeyar III (1794-1868) and IV (1884-1940), music flourished in the Kingdom of Mysore, which became a renowned centre for Carnatic music and a distinctive school of music during these periods. King Krishnaraja Wodeyar III was widely recognized as a skilled musician, musicologist, and composer. He published his works under the pseudonyms "Chamundi" and "Chamundeshwari", the names of the deity of the Wodeyar family and the deity of Mysore respectively. I interpret the use of these pseudonyms

as an expression of the inextricable link between the divine and the royal, as discussed in chapter 2.3.1 Festival of Gods and Kings, in this particular case at a conceptual level of divinity incorporated into the musical composition. King Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV was regarded as a knowledgeable patron of Carnatic music. His court hosted a number of esteemed Indian musicians, as well as several Western musicians who lived there and composed music, taught, and performed. My point here is that the Royal Wodeyar family had a number of distinguished Carnatic music experts who were also deeply involved in Western music – a family tradition that was repeatedly mentioned in my conversations in Mysore. This led to the establishment of the Royal Carnatic Orchestra. Consisting of 150 composers and musicians, the orchestra performed a unique style of Carnatic chamber music using a combination of Indian and Western instruments including the xylophone and trombone Madur (2018). The Royal Carnatic Orchestra underwent major transformation when it was integrated with the Police Band in 1951 and renamed the Mysore Government Orchestra. Despite its status as a renowned ensemble, the orchestra now counts a modest membership of approximately 30 with several vacancies remaining.

During my first short field stay in Mysore from August 10th to September 14th in 2018, I visited various places that could potentially be relevant to the Daśaharā Festival and its procession, both within and outside the city of Mysore. I travelled to Srirangapatna, a historical site for Daśaharā, about 20 km from Mysore, and to Nagarhole National Park, about 60 km from Mysore, where I was invited to attend a ritual called Gajapayana. During this celebration, members of the Daśaharā Festival Committee announce the Daśaharā festive season, while the processional elephants are worshipped in a religious ceremony. This first field trip served as a brief orientation and provided an opportunity to collect initial ethnographic data. I talked to musicians, guides, government officials, and other potential research partners such as journalists, local experts, and two mahouts[26]. Most importantly, I established contact with research partners within the most relevant institution for the Daśaharā music

procession, the Mounted Police Company Mysore, a division of the K.A.R.P. (Karnāṭaka Armed Reserve Police)[27].




Img 4: Organisational Structure of Mounted Company Mysore (Field data, foto by Author with permission, Sept. 05, 2018)

[26] A mahout is a person trained to handle and care for elephants, typically involving tasks such as training, feeding, and managing the animal's work in activities like logging or ceremonial duties. The term originates from the Hindi word "mahāvat," which is derived from the Sanskrit "mahāmātra," signifying an individual of great importance (Trautmann 2016).

[27] The K.A.R.P. (Karnāṭaka Armed Reserve Police) Mounted Company Mysore was established on Nov. 1, 1952, by King Krishnaraja Wodeyar, using the Non Indian State Forces as its foundation. Today they are used for traffic duties, night patrols, officer training, and the Mysore Daśaharā. The force is composed of 90 horses, 150 officers, and men (Mysore City Police 2023).

I interviewed the Commissioner of the 5th Battalion Mysore of the K.S.R.P. (Karnataka State Reserve Police)[28], as well as the deputy Commandant of the K.A.R.P. Mounted Company Mysore. They gave their approval for further interviews and my collaboration with any individuals who could provide assistance in my research, including allowing me to engage in participant observation during any Daśaharā-related event. As a result, I was subsequently introduced to some of my potential interview partners who were members of the Mysore Police Band, still frequently called the Mysore Government Orchestra (Mysore City Police 2024). The Police Band has evolved over the years and undergone several name changes. Their initial purpose was to provide ceremonial music for the reception of dignitaries and the performance of western music at banquets. Over time, the ensemble began to integrate Carnatic music into their repertoire, resulting in the formation of two distinct wings: the Indian Orchestra, also called Karnataka Band and the English Band. Francis, the conductor of the English Band, became my primary interview partner, along with other members of the Police Band, such as the conductor of the Karnataka Band and Christopher, who is an arranger and composer for the English Band. Both bands are central performers in the Daśaharā and the Jumbo Savari Procession each year.

At the K.A.R.P. Mounted Police Quarter, which was shown and explained to me during an afternoon of informal yet recorded interviews and conversations, I was given exclusive access to restricted areas of the Police Band, including a small museum. According to Ravikumar (2021) and my own observations, the museum houses a remarkable collection of Police Band artefacts, including a variety of musical instruments such as clarinets, piccolo, flute, oboe, bassoon, saxophone, trumpets, French horn, contrabass, euphonium, trombone and drums, piano, violin, viola, cello, double bass, harp and bass saxophone. The collection also includes some rare instruments such as the horn cello, tubular bells, deagan, tubular organ, accordion, glockenspiel and xylophone. In addition, the Police Band has an extensive archive of the "original notation of European classical music dating back to colonial times" (Francis, during participant observation, field notes by author, Aug. 24, 2018). These artefacts provided a glimpse into the musical accomplishments of both the Police Band and the former Royal Orchestra and were proudly shown and explained to me by Francis, the conductor, who uses the classical

[28] Currently, the K.S.R.P. (Karnataka State Reserve Police) comprises twelve battalions. Among these, four battalions have their headquarters in Bangalore, while one battalion each is stationed in Mysore, Belagavi, Kalaburgi, Mangaluru, Shivamogga, Shiggav Tumakuru, and Hassan (Karnataka State Police 2024).

notations to rewrite individual pieces for the current size of the English Band.

### 3.1.3 Participant Observation among the Police Band

In order to gain a thorough understanding of my research subject, I recognised from the early stages of my fieldwork that extensive participant observation would become the central tool of qualitative data collection. One instance of participant observation during my first field stay in 2018 is notable for its methodological significance. On this occasion, my role differed from the common understanding of a participant observer held by contemporary anthropologists such as Bernard (2006) and DeWalt & DeWalt (2011) in that, rather than engaging in daily routines of the community being studied or actively participating in their activities, I found myself in the following position. During my first appointed visit to the K.A.R.P. Mounted Police headquarters on September 4, 2018, I was fortunate enough to attend a private concert that had been specially arranged for the occasion, on the command of the Deputy Commandant of the K.A.R.P. Mounted Police. My position to observe the event was from an elevated seat, separate from the ground where the English Band was performing.

Img 5: English Band Concert Presentation (Field data, foto by Mirka Kirsch, Aug. 24, 2018)

Mirka, my partner, who was accompanying me for ten days for filming purposes, was allowed to move around with the camera during the presentation of the whole concert presentation. Between the music pieces, Francis the conductor came up to show me the corresponding musical notations. The scenario evoked images of an armchair anthropology[29], where researchers like the American anthropologist and ethnographer Frances Densmore apparently recorded and collected music and data from a position of privilege and comfort in the first half of the 20th century. I was surprised and somewhat uncertain about my researcher role during the music presentation, as it seemed quite different from the kind of rehearsal announced to me the day before. In his article "What is armchair anthropology? Observational practices in 19th-century British human sciences", Sera-Shriar (2014) questions the widely held view that armchair anthropology was a passive pursuit, arguing instead that it also required the active acquisition and examination of data, including anthropologists' participation in the culture being studied. In retrospect, this article, along with my extended visits to the Police Band, helped to alleviate my concerns about the situation. Instead of being just an instance of armchair conduct, I can now see it as an appropriate act of commissioned hospitality and a reasonable introduction to the musicians and their musical repertoire. It was undoubtedly an honour to attend and hear some of the music for the upcoming Daśaharā season, and to be formally introduced to the musicians as potential research partners following the concert. The kind of participant observation I had in mind would take place later during subsequent appointments, when I was invited to observe the band's routine rehearsals whenever possible. Further elaboration on the Police Band will follow in Chapter 4 Social and Spatial Order, where I will look more closely at social and spatial roles, both in general and during the procession.

[29] Armchair anthropology refers to the practice of anthropologists conducting research and developing theory without engaging in direct fieldwork or first-hand observation, relying instead on second-hand accounts and reports from missionaries, colonial administrators, and travellers. This approach, prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was criticised for its lack of empirical detail and the potential biases introduced by relying on non-specialist sources. Scholars such as James Frazer and Edward Burnett Tylor were notable practitioners whose works, while foundational, often reflected ethnocentric perspectives and speculative reasoning. Critiques of armchair anthropology emphasise the importance of participatory fieldwork and direct engagement with the communities studied to produce more accurate and culturally sensitive anthropological knowledge (James 1973; Stocking 1984). The shift from armchair methods to participant observation marked a significant methodological shift in anthropology, emphasising the value of empirical data and the ethnographer's active participation in the cultural settings being studied.

In 2019, during my second field stay, I attended rehearsals on a semi-regular basis for nearly two months. Specifically, I participated as an active listener in the practice sessions of its branches, the English Band, the Karnataka Band and the marching band, at two locations within the same premises: the Band House and the Parade Ground at the K.A.R.P. Headquarters. During these rehearsals I used my filming in part as a means of establishing my repeated and prolonged presence. The camera became integral to my expected role as a researcher and the established trust allowed me to move freely without attracting much attention. The Deputy Commander of the K.A.R.P. Mounted Police provided positive feedback on the footage, which further validated the use of visual methods in my research process.

## 3.2 Research Ethics

The ethical considerations that guided this qualitative research prioritised the protection of the rights, confidentiality, privacy, informed consent, and welfare of the study participants and were carefully considered throughout the course of this study. The central component of the ethical framework was the official permission granted by the Commissioner of Police, City of Mysore. Furthermore, rigorous data analysis and validation procedures, including thematic coding, constant comparison, and feedback, were employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings and enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research results. All collected data were solely recorded and processed for the purpose of this PhD project. Upon request, data will be made available to research partners, students and researchers at the Department of Musicology, University of Cologne and, depending on local opportunities, the Department of Studies in Anthropology, University of Mysore. Digital copies of the audio-visual research data can be sent to research partners and associated institutions in Mysore. The publication of this PhD thesis will be accessible through libraries.

### 3.2.1 Researcher Positionality

Researchers should always consider their positions in relation to their research partcipants to prevent the creation of unequal social power dynamics. Having spent an extended period of six months travelling around India in the late 1990s, and having completed a degree in Indology in the early 2000s, I have gained sufficient experience and cultural

understanding to navigate the country with ease and confidence, and to engage with its people in a way that is both respectful and beneficial. Reflecting on my identity as a European researcher during my research, I have constantly tried to remain aware of my position in the field and my relationship towards my research partners. Throughout my research stays, I was aware of different identities that I needed to reflect on and incorporate into my daily work. The most obvious was that of a tourist, which was helpful in many everyday situations. According to Krüger & Trandafoiu (2013:3), becoming a primary or genuine ethnographer, rather than a music tourist, is a widely recognised objective, as evidenced by various works, such as those by Amico and McIntosh, included in their volume. McIntosh states that researchers may initially assume the role of a tourist or at least be perceived as such, but they transition into the role of an ethnographer in the context of tourism. By referring to Cooley (1999:32) and Nettl (2005:195), Krüger & Trandafoiu (2013:3) also state that "music tourism is still often seen as an 'Other' of ethnographic fieldwork" and that this may be a response to general negative perceptions of tourism, such as colonialism, commodification, cultural erosion, contrived authenticity, capitalism, and related issues. During my own fieldwork as an ethnographer in Mysore, I noted that being perceived as a tourist did not carry any negative or unethnographic, or even "inauthentic" connotation. By contrast, it is important to acknowledge the significant role played by the helpfulness and hospitality of many people in Mysore. Their perception of me as a tourist frequently initiated informal discussions that uncovered various aspects of the city, including its people and the musical events that took place during the Daśaharā season. However, my role as a European researcher quickly became a prominent aspect of my identity, even in casual situations, such as having lunch in a restaurant. When introducing myself, I could easily complement or supersede the notion of being a tourist if necessary or desired. In some cases, the playful shifting of this perception turned initial "tourist-conversations" into valuable discussions on my topic. My prevalent role as a researcher has also given me an advantage in accessing people and areas within my research field that are typically not accessible to tourists, as mentioned in chapter 3.1 Research Field and Historical Context. For instance, the researcher's identity helped when obtaining research permission from the highest authorities in the Mysore Police, starting with the Commissioner of police. Within the multiple roles of tourist, researcher and private individual, the recognition of my distinct personal identity became important. This identity, while allowing for subjective judgement, romanticising, and critical European perspectives,

is also partially informed by an emic view through the field experience and an embrace of empathy. In navigating this complex interplay, I sought to differentiate and use multiple perspectives and associated knowledge to foster both a nuanced understanding and an insightful lens in my research endeavours.

### 3.2.2 Limitations

Ethnographic fieldwork can be challenging when the chosen topic is seasonal and seems obscured at first by temporal and spatial barriers that make the experience transitory or uncertain for too long. This was particularly the case when the local people had already begun to suggest that the ideal time to start exploring the topic would be in about a month's time, when the Daśaharā Festival begins, which did not coincide with my first period of presence in the field. Although it is important to consider the insights of local experts, it is equally vital to acknowledge the practical constraints that may arise. For example, teaching duties back home may hinder the ability to spend sufficient time in the field to attend key events and crucial activities. To be successful in this line of work, it is essential for researchers to develop qualities such as resilience and patience, and to have a positive outlook on life in general. Furthermore, a good portion of creativity, luck, and courage may also be necessary to try unusual or improbable paths and make spontaneous decisions.

A notable challenge, at least from the perspective of a European fieldworker in the Indian bureaucratic environment, is the considerable amount of time required to accomplish specific tasks. Waiting in front of offices can extend throughout the day and scheduled appointments may be subject to delays or even cancellations. This slow pace is exacerbated by the cultural perception of time flexibility, where the term "tomorrow" may be meant or interpreted as an unspecific "next time we meet in the near future". Therefore, spending a month in the field followed by a second two-month trip were relatively short periods for collecting data. I soon realised that in order to demonstrate the reliability and importance of my research, it was necessary to meet with the same people on a regular basis, which was crucial to obtain valid research results. Building a research network involved a gradual process that required time and cultural sensitivity. Making appointments for interviews typically entailed one or two informal meetings before reaching a core objective. Participating in such preliminary casual conversations became a common and effective practice for establishing commitment to my research endeavour.

For example, during my first days of fieldwork in Mysore in 2018, I read in the news about the Police Band that is a key player in the Daśaharā and might also be part of the procession I wanted to learn about. After nine days, unable to find anyone to talk to about the procession, I walked desperately past a random police station. I took the chance to stop and ask one officer about the Police Band making music during the Daśaharā Jumbo Savari Procession. Jackpot! I was directed to Karenji Lake Police Quarters, which was not the official name, but the rikshaw driver who was stopped and instructed by the police officer to bring me there knew where to go: Police Quarters, JC Nagar, Mysore. When I arrived there, I was advised to return the following day no earlier than 11:00 (Field Notes by author, August 19, 2018, 17:30). After nearly 10 days of trying to work out who to talk to among the Jumbo Savari Performers, I finally found where to start. What I did not know at the time, but found out during my second field trip a year later, was that the police officer responsible for giving me permission to carry out my research regularly changed his post. For instance, the police commissioner of Mysore, Chandragupta, who has served for two years and nine months since February 2020, has had the longest tenure among all previous police commissioners of Mysore (The Times of India 2022). For my second field stay in 2019, the ever-changing positions of police and government officials required me to start the important task of asking for permission from scratch. This entailed again spending a significant amount of time outside offices trying to secure or maintain appointments – a frequently experienced situation during my fieldwork when dealing with government officials, regardless of whether there was a queue.

> *"Appointment with Mounted Police Commandant at 10:00 am., I am sitting in front of the office of the Commandant since one hour. I am hoping to get a permission to attend a rehearsal of the Police Band. 1:00 pm., I am still the only person waiting, nobody else is here! Don't know, if any bribe money is required? I am going to have 2000 Rp. visible in my iPhone pouch. Maybe there will be a glimpse? Finally… 1:30 pm., no money involved…. ok, this was nice! Conversation with the friendly Commander, see audio memo" (Field Notes by author, August 24, 2018).*

Typically, service positions last for one or two years. H. Venkatesh Prasad, for example, who works for the government at the Department of Tourism was a key informant during my second field stay, where he helped me establish new and institutional contacts. There was no point in

trying to catch up with him after my return in 2023 for a third period in the field, as he had already been transferred.

As intended, my entire field research began with a preparatory phase of four weeks in 2018, followed by an eight-week period in 2019, during which I witnessed the Daśaharā Festival. Funding for both stays was granted by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), one directly and the other through a funding programme of the a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, international researchers were unable to conduct fieldwork abroad, resulting in the cancellation of my planned third and substantial research phase. In addition, in German academia, contracts for Teaching and Research Assistants are limited to a maximum of six years. This constraint, together with the above disadvantages, considerably limited the time I was able to spend on my research and in the field. Despite unforeseen work-related setbacks, including the sudden job resignation of my first supervisor, who was also my colleague, I managed to return to India for three months towards the end of 2023 to focus on my thesis. During this mainly self-funded period, I conducted final archival research at the recently opened Mysore Public City Central Library and engaged in informal discussions related to my study while dedicating most of my days to writing.

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# 4

# Social and Spatial Order

This chapter analyses the social and spatial dynamics that shape the Jumbo Savari Procession in Mysore. It highlights the symbolic significance of the Police Band and how it contributes to the manifestation and mediation of the spatial and hierarchical order within the formal structure of the procession. By examining the interactions of participants and their contributions through music, the chapter explains the symbolic meanings involved and the inherent order of the event. In addition, Turner's concept of communitas finds relevance in the symbolic significance of the Police Band and their formal role.

## 4.1 Police Band

The historical context of the Mysore Kings, as previously presented in chapter 3.1.2 From the Royal Carnatic Orchestra to the Police Band, indicates their strong inclination towards music, which led to the establishment of an orchestra capable of performing both Carnatic and Western classical music, and its subsequent transformation into today's Police Band with two distinct branches, the English Band and the Karnataka Band. Musicians of the band often accompany Carnatic music concerts or perform as soloists, but they rarely perform as a band, other than at state functions. The band members do not have any police duties, instead they devote their time to rehearsing and acquiring new musical pieces to add to their existing repertoire. In addition, the Mysore Police Band has become a training centre for martial music. As a result, district police bands of Karnataka regularly come to the Mysore Police Grounds for training. From these district police bands a special marching band is formed and trained during the Daśaharā season to perform in the Jumbo Savari Procession.

Img 6: Marching Band Rehearsal (Field data, foto by Author, Sept. 20, 2019)

Outside of the Jumbo Savari Procession, the two branches of the Mysore Police Band are relevant social contributors for cultural exchange through their regular rehearsals at the Band House and their role as a training institution. Furthermore, their museum is set to be maintained and made accessible to the public, according to recent developments Ravikumar (2021). Both bands rehearse regularly at their Band House, a location within the K.A.R.P. Police Grounds. Remarkably, the two police bands play in very close proximity to one another, at times, even simultaneously.

Img 7: Band House Karnataka Band (left) English Band (right) (Field data, foto by Author, Sept. 20, 2019)

The Band House, which consists of two separate halves, one for the Karnataka Band and the other for the English Band, creates two connected spaces between which the meaning and significance of both groups are negotiated, even at an acoustic level – during rehearsals they can clearly hear each other.

Img 8: Band House Karnataka Band (Field data, foto by Author, Sept. 20, 2019)

On occasion, they would listen to or comment on the other group's playing, for example when they would share musical jokes. However, most of the time, their music overlapped.

Img 9: Band House English Band (Field data, foto by Author, Sept. 20, 2019)

Members of both bands explained their different understandings of how their music contributes to the Daśaharā Festival and the Jumbo Savari Procession. In summary the English Band is more associated with "the representation of the King and entertaining the people", while the Karnataka Band is "responsible for the connection between the people and Chamundeshwari music" (Informal interview, field notes by author, Sept. 20, 2019). In this separation, I also identify another instance of the assignment of layers of meaning , as explained in chapter 2.3.1 Festival of Gods and Kings. While the English Band signifies the Kings' Layer as well as the Politics and Heritage Layer, the Karnataka Band explicitly emphasises its association with the divine.

### 4.1.1 Music as Divinity

This division between the two bands' musical significance highlights the complexity of meaning-making in religious narratives as a dynamic process shaped by historical, cultural, and religious factors, thus underscoring the importance of considering multiple interpretations. It is therefore important to approach my analysis with a nuanced understanding of the realities in which such narrative layers are created and transmitted. In this respect, the Hindu perspective on processional music as a tangible embodiment of the divine was explored in a conversation I had with Nandini Muthuswamy at the Hildesheim Centre for World Music in 2019. As an experienced Brahmin musician from Tamil Nadu, she has extensive knowledge of ritualistic practices prevalent in Hindu temples and festivals. She suggested that I explore the many small processions accompanied by music that take place regularly throughout Mysore. According to her,

> *"these processions pass through a few streets around the temples. So, instead of the people having to come to the temple to worship, the gods are coming directly to the people, also in the form of loud music. This is basically the same as in the great Daśaharā procession. It is just a matter of scale" (Nandini Muthuswamy, memory note of informal interview, by author, Jun. 20, 2019).*

I understand that this concept is deeply rooted in the Hindu religion and thus contributes to the associated worldview in which Carnatic and Hindustani classical music, in particular, are believed to embody the presence of divinities. This perception of profound spiritual significance of music in Hinduism has been widely discussed by different scholars, such as Beck (2014), and Rejimon (2017).

Beck (2014) examines the concept of music in Hinduism, including its categorisation into southern Carnatic and northern Hindustani classical music, as well as other genres in general. He provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between Hinduism and music, highlighting the spiritual and ritual role that music plays in Hindu traditions. He shows that Hindu religious practices are integrated with sound, rhythm, and dance, which are not merely artistic expressions but are seen as divine in origin. This perspective is particularly apparent in worship practices where deities such as Sarasvatī, Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva are portrayed as patrons of music. Beck further emphasises that music in Hinduism transcends mere performance and serves as a conduit for devotional and mystical experiences, underscoring its essential role in ritual and worship. Beck also explores the historical context of Hindu music, tracing it back to the Vedas and Upanishads, where sacred sound (Śabda-Brahman) and musical chanting (Sāma-Gāna) are integral to religious ceremonies. The transition from Gandharva-Saṅgīta[30] to classical musical forms illustrates how music has been adapted and refined over the centuries, while retaining its spiritual significance. Beck's work underscores the notion that music in Hinduism is both an aesthetic and spiritual pursuit, aimed at achieving a deeper connection with the divine.

Rejimon (2017) looks at the philosophical foundations of Indian music, particularly addressing its origins and significance within the broader context of Hindu religion and spirituality. He states that the concept of śabda (sound) in Indian philosophy is multifaceted, encompassing not only the audible aspect but also its metaphysical dimensions. According to Rejimon, Indian music is inseparably linked to the spiritual journey of the jīvātma[31] (individual soul) towards the

[30] Gandharva-Saṅgīta refers to celestial music associated with the Gandharvas, mythical musicians in Hindu mythology. It is considered a divine art form that includes vocal, instrumental, and dance elements, and is believed to have been brought from heaven to earth by the sage Narada to benefit humanity Beck (2014).

[31] Jīvātma, in Hindu philosophy, is the individual soul or self, regarded as a manifestation of the universal soul or Brahman. The journey of the jīvātma is spiritual and aims to reunite with the paramātma or supreme soul, reflecting the inherent connection between the individual and the divine Rejimon (2017).

paramātma[32] (supreme soul), reflecting the deep-seated belief that music is a divine gift and a means of spiritual upliftment. Rejimon also emphasises the historical continuity and preservation of Indian classical music through oral tradition and the guru-śiṣya-parampara (teacher-student lineage). In his view, this mode of knowledge transmission ensures continuity and 'purity' of musical expertise across generations. Rejimon discusses the relationship between rāga (melodic framework) and rasa (aesthetic emotion), explaining that the accurate performance of a rāga can evoke specific emotional states, thereby enhancing the spiritual experience of both the performer and the listener. This connection highlights the unique aesthetic philosophy underlying Indian music that combines artistic expression with spiritual practice. However, it cannot be overlooked that Rejimon's view of Indian music is somewhat essentialist in the sense that he sees it as an inherently spiritual practice and a divine gift meant to aid in the spiritual journey. Moreover, the timeless preservation of Indian music through the teacher-student lineage suggests an unchanging core that remains intact over centuries, irrespective of historical and cultural changes. The fixed relationship between rāga and rasa, with specific rāgas designed to evoke particular emotions and spiritual states, underscores an essentialist perspective by suggesting that these musical elements possess inherent, unchanging qualities that universally and timelessly affect listeners in predetermined ways. This view implies that the emotional and spiritual effects of music are rooted in its underlying structure, regardless of context or individual interpretation, thus reinforcing the notion of an intrinsic and unchanging connection between musical form and experienced outcome.

Beck (2014) and Rejimon (2017) both emphasise the spiritual and historical background of Indian music, highlighting its integral connection to Hindu religious practices and its role in signifying divinity. This understanding is relevant to the study of the Police Band in the context of the Jumbo Savari Procession, as their performances integrate these elements within a contemporary framework. While Rejimon takes on an essentialist perspective, seeing music as having inherent, unchanging qualities, he nonetheless presents a primarily emic view and thus serves as a valuable resource. However, for my research, I attempt to adopt a non-essentialist approach. Focusing on the dynamic and changing nature of musical practices, I consider how contemporary socio-

[32] Paramātma is the supreme soul or universal spirit in Hindu philosophy representing the ultimate reality or Brahman. It is the source and oneness of all individual souls (jīvātmas), and the ultimate goal of spiritual practice is for the jīvātma to realise its unity with the paramātma, thereby achieving liberation and eternal peace Rejimon (2017).

cultural contexts and individual interpretations shape the music performed during the procession, demonstrating its adaptability and diverse influences that contribute to its current form.

In conclusion, I agree with both Beck and Rejimon that music plays an integral role in religious ceremonies, such as processions, as it is believed to not only communicate or represent the presence of the gods, but to be a form of divinity in itself.

## 4.2 Spatial Dimensions

The findings presented above are closely tied to the order and arrangement of participants in the Jumbo Savari Procession mentioned in chapter 2.3.3 The Jumbo Savari Procession. On the 8th of October 2019 I witnessed the entire Jumbo Savari Procession, followed by an entertainment programme at Bannimantap Grounds. According to my observations and the footage captured by cameras from two different angles, complemented by additional field data, the procession order can be described as follows. It began with rhythmic music and dance groups flanked by police on foot, with each group followed by a decorated float or waggon.

Img 10: Music and Dance Groups (Field data, foto by Author, Oct. 08, 2019)

The 38 groups and floats constituted the longest part of the procession. Each year, these dance and music groups are selected in advance through competition. They represent different districts of Karnataka, with political and communal aspects displayed on top of the wagons.

Img 11: Tableau representing Mysore University (Field data, foto by Author, Oct. 08, 2019)

Towards the end, they were followed by the police marching band led by the English Band on foot, and the Karnataka Band seated in another moving tableau.

Img 12: Karnataka Band Wagon (Field data, foto by Author, Oct. 08, 2019)

In a stop-and-go manner, the procession passes along sun-shaded temporary seating platforms separated from the procession path in front of Mysore Palace. At the end of the procession, three decorated elephants make their grand appearance, one of which bears the golden howdah, displaying the visible figure of Chamundeshwari. Before they followed the procession from the palace grounds and began their journey through the city streets towards the Bannimantap grounds, they stopped next to a temporary platform set up in front of the palace next to the procession route. On this platform, situated at the same height as Chamundeshwari on top of the elephant, Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, the current titular head of the Mysore royal family, performed puja in the presence of other family members and two religious men standing next to him. With the appearance of the elephants and Chamundeshwari, the people on the seating platforms stood up despite being repeatedly told by the police to sit down and not block the view of those further back. The excitement of the crowd was at its highest, clearly indicating the significance of the moment. Towards the culmination of the religious ritual, which lasted for nearly two minutes, the English Band played the national anthem of the Indian state. As the procession made its way along the designated route, thousands of spectators lined the streets to catch a glimpse of the majestic elephants and partake in the festive atmosphere.

## 4.3 Musical Order

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between spatial organisation and social and symbolic elements, it would be useful at this stage to consider proximity as a critical determinant. Drawing upon historical examples, Wiesenfeldt (2014) has suggested that the arrangement of musicians in a procession, like that of other groups participating in the event, is determined not only by their audibility within the overall program but also by their social standing; individuals who are farther away from the blessed sacrament or the central figure are considered to have lower prestige within (processional) society. From my observations, this determination can be identified in several ways.

The first is the spatial order described in the previous chapter, with the music and dance groups at the beginning and the police marching band in the middle, followed by the English Band and the Karnataka Band closest to Chamundeshwari and the elephants at the end.

The second is the musical order, which can be considered a structural element related to the spatial arrangement of the procession. Similar to the spatial organisation of participants, music is an indicator of prestige and hierarchy, as also indicated by Wiesenfeldt (2014:50). This includes the position within the spatial order, musical style, and choice of instruments. In the Jumbo Savari Procession, these three categories can be observed and allocated in relation to the layers of meaning, as explained in chapter 2.3.1 Festival of Gods and Kings.

The Politics and Heritage Layer associated with the representation of different cultures and shared heritage imagination of the state of Karnataka (and its districts) is visually represented by thematic displays built on top of the tableaus, complemented by the music and dance groups. This part comprises the front and longest part of the procession, where rhythmic driving music is played on drums and percussion instruments such as gongs and sticks to accompany the dancers.

For the Kings' Layer, which entailes the worship of former kings and royal traditions, the music of the police marching band, made up of the various district police marching bands of Karnataka state districts in the middle of the procession, symbolises military strength. Simultaneously, the Karnataka State Police Force is represented. The role of the English Band is important in symbolising the authority and importance of the King, whose presence is believed to prevent chaos, and thus remains essential in maintaining order and stability. Immediately following the puja of Chamundeshwari by the King, the English Band plays the Indian national anthem. This close temporal association between worship and

anthem performance connects the significance of kingship and divinity to the Indian state through music.

The Divinity Layer, characterised by collaboration between king and gods to maintain social and cosmic order and the notion of a mortal king holding divine status, is associated with the Karnataka Band. Positioned at the rear of the procession, in front of the elephants with Chamundeshwari, this Branch of the Police Band plays Carnatic music, which they have referred to as "Chamundeshwari music" in our conversations. This direct association with Mysore's deity is consistent with the concept of music as a divinity as explained in chapter 4.1.1 Music as Divinity. Given its location at the back of the procession and its proximity to Chamundeshwari, the Karnataka Band holds a significant position within the spiritual and ceremonial aspects of the event. This indicates that it occupies a high rank within the hierarchical structure of the procession.

| | **Relative Position** of Music & Performers | Music Style | Instrumentation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Politics and Heritage Layer | **Front** Music and Dance Groups, Tableaus | Rhythmic, driving Percussion | Drums, Gongs, Drumsticks |
| Kings' Layer | **Middle** Police Marching Band, English Band | Marching and Parade Music, State Anthem | Brass Instruments, Percussion |
| Divinity Layer | **Back** Karnataka Band Chamundeshwari | Carnatic Music | Carnatic (South Indian) Instruments |

Tab 1: Layer Allocation of Space and Music

In summary, the correlation between the spatial arrangement and the social dynamics of the Jumbo Savari Procession illustrates how the placement of musicians reflects not only their auditory importance but also their status within the procession. This dual aspect is reflected in both the spatial and musical organisation of the procession, with each

component revealing unique layers of meaning, as allocated in the table above.

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# 5

# Police Band Communitas

Turner's concept of communitas, as presented in the introductory chapter, provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of community and belonging. Building on the above analysis of the social and spatial arrangement of performers in the Jumbo Savari Procession, I will now look in more detail at the role of the Police Band in relation to its potential for community building. This will provide a perspective from which to evaluate how such performers may challenge or reinforce social structures within the broader context of a procession as a communal ritual.

## 5.1 From Liminal to Liminoid

Communitas emerges during the liminal stages of rituals, where traditional structures temporarily dissolve, and individuals experience altered levels of equality and community. Turner emphasises that in those liminal stages, communitas is characterised by an absence of rank, property, and status, creating a shared sense of belonging and togetherness among participants and that this state can be deeply transformative, fostering a sense of solidarity and a shared humanity that transcends ordinary social hierarchies. Turner's research on liminal periods focuses mainly on relatively small-scale traditional societies where communal rites and rituals directly involved all participants, fostering a profound sense of shared experience and transformation. He worked extensively with the Ndembu people in Zambia, where rituals intimately involved community members and created a well-defined liminal period. These smaller ritual contexts allow for strong and apparent communitas emerging during liminal phases, in which individuals temporarily set aside their structured roles in society to engage in deeply communal and egalitarian interactions. The scale and context of the Jumbo Savari Procession in Mysore, however, present a different scenario, which affects the manifestation of liminal stages in several ways.

The Jumbo Savari Procession is a massive event with thousands of participants, including spectators. This huge scale inherently dilutes the intimate communal qualities typical of the liminal phases described by Turner. In large-scale events, the personal, transformative experience of liminality can be overshadowed by the sheer logistical and organisational demands of the event. In contrast to the relatively small Ndembu tribe, the Jumbo Savari Procession involves people from more diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. This diversity could be a potential limitation to the emergence of a unified liminal experience in which participants share a common bond that transcends their differences. While the Jumbo Savari Procession is a religious, devotional and, honourable event, it is also a tourist and civic spectacle. This public and representational aspect gives importance to structure and order rather than the dissolution of structures which is characteristic of liminal stages. The procession is clearly a highly structured event, and its primary purpose is the display and not the transformation of its participants. Turner's research, particularly with the small scale Ndembu tribe, shows that people going through liminal stages actively participate in rituals that promote equality and a sense of community. They are required to step

out of their typical social roles and perform symbolic tasks as part of transformation rites. Their deep involvement is important for experiencing liminality, where individual identities are temporarily dissolved, and communal bonds are strengthened to create a sense of shared humanity or communitas. In contrast, the Jumbo Savari Procession, which attracts large crowds, does not require or enable this kind of transformative, intimate participation. Many participants, especially spectators, have more passive roles. There is no need to step outside existing social roles because even those who are actively involved, such as musicians and especially members of the Police Band, play a part that is closely aligned with their professional identities and responsibilities. Thus, most participants continue to embody and perform their social roles, whether as spectators, musicians, or dignitaries. The procession does not require or facilitate separation from these roles in the way that would typically occur in a liminal phase.

The above aspects, namely the dimensions of size and scale, diversity of participants, formal structure and spectacle, role of participants, and continuity of social roles, highlight key differences in the manifestation of liminality in large public events compared with small, community-centred rituals. In summary, while the Jumbo Savari Procession is a significant ritual, its scale, diversity, and modes of participation do not particularly foster the liminality identified by Turner in smaller, more cohesive communities, and may not allow for the deep, transformative engagement that Turner found necessary for the emergence of liminal experiences in his studies. The structured, hierarchical nature of the performing groups suggests the absence of egalitarian and unstructured relationships typical of the liminal phase of rituals, where communitas evolves. Instead, any liminal experiences that may be present during the Jumbo Savari Procession are likely to be more nuanced and less pronounced, manifesting differently among the various groups involved in the event. I did not observe any of the liminal characteristics described in Turner's concept in the Police Band or in the other individuals involved in the Jumbo Savari Procession nor did I identify them in my analysis. The absence of liminal phases as a prerequisite for communitas in the Jumbo Savari Procession does not negate the applicability of Turner's concept of communitas in understanding the Police Band's experience.

At this point, I redirect my examination towards the liminoid phenomena, as explained in chapter 1.3 Communitas. They are similar to liminal experiences but, according to (Turner 1982:33,43), occur in societies with large and diverse cultures. They are voluntary and playful, and often appear in the context of creative and artistic activities. Liminoid

phases provide a space for critique and reflection on the social order, allowing individuals to step outside their prescribed roles and explore alternative identities or social arrangements. This theoretical perspective of liminoid phases is more consistent with my data. For the Police Band, performance during the procession represents a liminoid activity in which the roles of law enforcement officers are transformed into those of performers and cultural ambassadors. This not only allows for creative expression beyond their conventional duties but also serves as a form of social commentary and community engagement. The procession becomes a space in which the police, often seen as enforcers of order, contribute to the festive spirit of the community, engaging with it in a manner that is not possible in their everyday roles. I observed a certain moment of emerging communitas during the procession, such as when the English Band branch of the Police Band played the state anthem immediately after the King's puja for Chamundeshwari. The experience of this shared emotional and spiritual moment followed by the concluding state anthem seemed to transcend their formal roles and responsibilities. This was particularly apparent in spontaneous interactions with the crowd, including myself, standing relatively close to the Police Band. Band members and spectators shared reverence and celebration, temporarily blurring formal separation between performers and observers.

## 5.2 Normative Communitas in Police Band Rehearsals

The Police Band rehearsals where I was regularly welcomed as a researcher once or twice a week during my fieldwork in 2018 and 2019 are communal engagements where, based on my observations, the conventional hierarchy within the Police Band is less pronounced, and a more creative and experimental interaction between band members is commonly possible – at least for as long as the Commandant of the Mounted Police, who was also the Commander-in-Chief of the Police Band, was absent. I noticed an interesting shift in the dynamics between band members when he entered the rehearsal area unannounced. The rehearsal was proceeding as usual, with the musicians relaxed and casually interacting, concentrating on perfecting their pieces. Conversation and ease dominated the rehearsal, creating a cooperative and informal atmosphere. However, the sudden appearance of the Commandant at the rehearsal had an immediate and noticeable effect. The band members quickly adjusted their posture and behaviour, moving from a relaxed to a more attentive and disciplined attitude. The casual

chatter stopped, and the musicians focused on their instruments and the conductor's instructions. This change in attitude demonstrated the Commandant's authoritative role and its influence on the discipline and behaviour of the band members. Such an incident illustrates the hierarchical character of the Police Band's organisational structure, and the respect and deference accorded to higher-ranking officers. Even without verbal communication, the Commandant's presence reinforced expectations of professionalism and discipline within the group, illustrating the dynamic interplay between authority and the practice environment in the preparation of the Jumbo Savari Procession. The change in behaviour was obvious on several occasions when the unexpected appearance led to a significant shift in the relaxed demeanour of all musicians, including the conductor and composer Francis, towards a much more formal and obedient manner.

The otherwise relaxed structures and the associated informal behaviour, including joking and laughter, between the members of the Karnataka and English Bands constitute a liminoid phase during rehearsals, distinct from formal public performances such as during the procession. Unlike the liminal phase which is characterised by a complete dissolution of structure, the liminoid phase during rehearsal represents a relaxation rather than a removal of formal hierarchies. This creates a supportive environment for creative and experimental interactions between band members and provides a space in which the usual constraints of their roles are dissolved, as indicated by the above-mentioned occasional jokes and fun interactions such as imitating each other's musical style expressions on instruments not normally intended for the respective style. In this relaxed atmosphere, they can experiment with each other's role in the band and make musical suggestions and contributions to the group, thus promoting equality and the development of group cohesion and identity, which are prerequisites for the development of communitas. Band members engage in a process of mutual influence and learning in which the collective goal of refining their procession performance takes precedence over individual roles defined by rank and duty. Through this creative process, band members not only share skills and knowledge but also form relationships that transcend their formal roles.

There is also a certain ritualistic quality to the Police Band rehearsals in their repetitive and structured routines, typical of liminoid phenomena in Turner's sense. They follow a predictable pattern of warm-ups, sectional rehearsals, and full-band run-throughs. This recurring structure creates a pattern in which band members become attuned, further

enhancing the sense of togetherness. Band members recognise the familiar cues, instructions and routines that characterise rehearsals and provide a sense of stability and predictability.

Within this distinct anti-structural framework, the emergence of normative communitas is driven by the interplay of the above factors, namely the relaxation of formal hierarchies and roles; a creative and playful interaction involving a continuous exchange of ideas, suggestions, and corrections; and the ritualistic and liminoid character of the rehearsal. Unlike spontaneous communitas which completely dissolves hierarchical distinctions, normative communitas here integrates communal relationships "already within the domain of structure" (Turner 1969:132). Indeed, the emergence of normative communitas during rehearsals is characterised by its integration into the existing social structure of the band, forming communal bonds within the accepted norms and routines of their rehearsal sessions. The band members are united by a shared identity as musicians and performers yet remain grounded in their roles as part of the police.

As a result, the band experience and create a form of communitas that, while still embedded in a formal framework, allows for renegotiation of roles and relationships. This renegotiation is temporary and context specific, reverting to a conventional structure during official performances. However, the sense of solidarity, equality and mutual respect developed during the rehearsals carries over into their public performances, subtly influencing how they operate as units during the procession.

The sense of collective purpose and solidarity among band members translates into a cohesive group presence during the procession, creating an enhanced quality of performance, and an emotional connection with the audience, enriching the overall corporate atmosphere of the event, and thus reinforcing its acknowledged significance. This impact on procession performance was reflected, for example, when the English Band branch of the Police Band played the state anthem. Observing the English Band during the Jumbo Savari Procession, I noted several key moments during the state anthem that illustrate the impact of normative communitas developed during rehearsals on the processional performance:

The band's performance began with a perfectly synchronised entry into the state anthem, demonstrating the cohesion and precision developed through their training during rehearsal practices. The conclusion of the anthem was equally synchronised, demonstrating their collective discipline and strong communal bonds that enhance their

musical collaboration. During the performance of the state anthem, an emotional connection of the Police Band members to the music was noticeable. Their expressive delivery suggests a deep engagement with the anthem, which I interpret as a result of the bonds and shared identity built through communitas in their rehearsals. This connection visibly resonated with the audience, enhancing the emotional quality of the moment. The band members interacted with the audience by making eye contact and adjusting their performance dynamics based on the audience's reactions. These observations reflect the communal and responsive attitudes developed in rehearsals. For example, looking around to gauge and respond to audience reactions highlighted their awareness and responsiveness – qualities that were enhanced by communitas during their rehearsals. The visual alignment of the band members, including their posture, instrument handling and positioning, as well as the balance and integration of the tonal characteristics across the group not only enhanced the quality of the performance but also visually and audibly conveyed the collective "mood" of the band to the audience. Even when minor disruptions such as a misstep in the musical arrangement or external disturbances occurred during the anthem, the band's ability to manage these issues quickly and effectively without affecting the overall performance was notable. This adaptability is indicative of mutual support and trust that characterise their interactions and qualities, which are emphasised in their rehearsal settings. As a result, the group was able to quickly regroup and continue with a minimal impact on their performance. Moments immediately following the anthem were also indicative. At the end of the anthem, the shared smiles and subtle affirmative gestures between the band members confirmed the teamwork and affinity that defines their group dynamic. These post-performance interactions express the close bonds that the band members develop during their rehearsals which carry over into their public performance.

Finally, by examining the above moments including musical entry and exit during the state anthem, emotional resonance evoked by the performance, and interactions with the audience, I identified how Turner's concepts of liminality and communitas manifest in this large-scale public setting. Rehearsals provide a liminoid space that cultivates normative communitas and enhances the synchronicity and cohesion of the band. This preparation is not only evident in the visual and acoustic quality of their performance but also enhances the overall emotional impact on the audience, including audience interaction and engagement. In addition, the band's ability to manage disruptions musically during the

procession reflects the strong communal framework established during their rehearsals. This resilience contributes to a seamless performance quality. The culmination of these efforts is most visible during the procession, when shared enjoyment and interaction between band members underscores the sense of community and achievement, as shown by the example of the national anthem. The normative communitas that emerges during the Police Band's rehearsals significantly enhances their cohesive and synchronous performance in the Jumbo Savari Procession, thereby extending the created "feel" or "atmosphere" to the audience which contributes to the overall communal experience of the procession.

# 6

# Conclusion

In summary, this ethnographic research on the Jumbo Savari Procession in Mysore offers a detailed examination of its significance by integrating the historical background and qualitative research methods. Through extensive ethnographic fieldwork, I examined and analysed the multilayered elements that shape and frame this process, including its historical origins, musical practices, social dynamics, spatial organisation, ritualistic components, and the role of the Police Band.

My research process began with extensive field visits to key institutions in Mysore responsible for the organisation of the Daśaharā Festival and the Jumbo Savari Procession, including the Commissioner of Police, the Department of Tourism, and the Mounted Police Headquarters. I contacted the musicians, guides, officials, and other key participants. This groundwork allowed for the analytical process of working with people, materials, and contexts.

The methodology, influenced by Boellstorff et al. (2012) who is providing clear descriptions of ethnographic fieldwork processes, involved a variety of data collection techniques, where participant observation, in combination with informal interviews, was central to the study, providing ethnographic insights into the procession, rehearsals of

the Police Band, and related events during the Daśaharā festival. In addition, I also explored the use and application of visual methods, as discussed by Pink (2013). Video recordings captured the procession from a variety of perspectives, as well as Police Band rehearsals. This provided me with a body of ethnographic material to work with and to discuss and evaluate my findings with the respective informants in the sense of intra-cultural feedback (Baily 1989). By incorporating videos and photographs into my research, I was able to work closely with people to discuss footage, thus providing a visually supported analysis for informed conclusions. Interviews with participants, particularly with members of the Police Band, provided valuable perspectives on their roles and experiences, while archival and media research has provided a comprehensive understanding of the historical and cultural context of the Daśaharā Festival and the Jumbo Savari Procession. Recommendations by Ghodsee (2016) on the role of theory and staying close to practice in writing provided valuable guidance this project. For data analysis, the MAXQDA software was employed to manage and navigate the dataset. Its advanced features, including coding and categorising data, were particularly helpful in analysing the interactions between musical performance, spatial arrangements, and social correlations within and related to the procession. The software's search capabilities allow for quick access to specific categories and sub-categories, enhancing the analysis of data relationships and patterns.

Ethical considerations were central to the research process. I acquired the necessary institutional permissions and took great care to maintain the integrity and best interests of all the research participants. This involved ensuring informed consent, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality when necessary, as well as transparency regarding the research aims and methods. I also reflected on my positionality as a researcher, acknowledging how my identity and background influenced my interactions and data interpretation. By being mindful of power dynamics and cultural sensitivities, I aimed to build trust and foster respectful relationships with all participants to ensure that their perspectives were accurately and ethically represented in my study. Simultaneously, my hybrid identity as an international scholar and cultural outsider was experienced as a valuable perspective that allowed for differentiated observations and interactions. This study also highlighted limitations such as time constraints and bureaucratic challenges and emphasised the importance of perseverance, patience, and adaptability in fieldwork.

The historical context of Mysore, the former capital of the Kingdom of Mysore, provided a rewarding background for this study, and played a

central role in planning the analysis of the Jumbo Savari Procession. The Royal Carnatic Orchestra, founded by Wodeyar Kings, is evidence of the patronage of music and laid the foundation for the prominent position of the modern Police Band in the procession. Tracing this lineage has provided an extended dimension to the study of the Jumbo Savari Procession, contextualising the Police Band's participation within a broader historical narrative. The two Police Band branches, the Karnataka Band and the English Band, both of which have the same tradition linked to the Mysore Kings, are highly symbolic and significant contributors to the procession.

Their significance is reflected in their spatial appearance within the procession, which – in combination with the corresponding music played at certain points or during certain activities, such as Karnataka State Anthem after the puja for Godess Chamundeshwari by the King – provides a (symbolically) structured and meaningfully layered spatial and social processional order. These layers of meaning, revealed through my analysis include the Kings' Layer, which emphasises the symbolic role and importance of the king to Indian society, as well as the ceremonial aspects that highlight the king's status and authority; the Divinity Layer, which focuses on the religious and spiritual dimensions, illustrating how the procession serves as a medium for expressing and reinforcing religious beliefs and practices; and the Politics and Heritage Layer, which addresses the procession's role in representing cultural heritage and its interplay with contemporary politics associated with the organisation of the Daśaharā Festival and the Jumbo Savari Procession.

Coherently, music can create spaces and develop structuring properties through specific music played in association with spatial formation within the procession. Moreover, different musical styles can also serve to reinforce and convey perceptions of hierarchical order that extend beyond the actual performance procession, as observed during discussions about the significance of both Carnatic and Western music in connection with the divinity between members of the two branches of the Police Band during my observations of their rehearsals. This particularly highlights the central role of the Karnataka Band in bridging the divine and earthly realms, further illuminating the spiritual significance and ordering properties of music within the ceremonial framework of the procession.

Given that the physical spaces and social interactions associated with the Jumbo Savari Procession are not confined to its specific location and duration but extend to places and activities beyond it, such as the location of the Police Band Houses, a closer examination of the community-

building aspects of the Procession proved useful. Here, a detailed analysis based on the concepts of Victor Turner's ritual theory provided further findings. Victor Turner's theoretical concepts, particularly those of liminoid phenomena and communitas, have provided essential analytical frameworks for this study. Turner's notion of liminoid features, which refers to voluntary and playful activities outside dominant social structures, has been instrumental in understanding the role of the Mysore Police Band during the Jumbo Savari Procession. This concept highlights how the band members who are typically seen as law enforcement officers are transformed into performers and cultural ambassadors. This transformation allows them to engage in creative expression and community interactions as key contributors to the procession. Turner's notion of communitas which involves a sense of unstructured community that emerges in liminoid environments was central to interpreting the social dynamics observed during the procession. Instances of emerging communitas were evident when the English branch of the police band played the Karnataka state anthem immediately after the king's puja to the goddess Chamundeshwari. This shared emotional and spiritual moment blurred the separation between performers and the audience, resulting in a temporary but profound sense of communal solidarity. The concept of normative communitas, which integrates community relations within an existing social structure, was particularly prominent in the rehearsals of the Police Band, providing a liminoid setting in which the usual hierarchical roles are relaxed, allowing for creative and experimental interactions between band members. This environment promotes a sense of equality and group cohesion, which are essential for the development of communitas, and thus enhances the synchronicity and emotional impact of their performance during the procession, reflecting the strong communal bonds formed in the liminoid phase during rehearsals.

This analysis highlights how the ritual elements of the Jumbo Savari Procession contribute to community building and reinforce cultural values by applying Turner's theoretical insights. Turner's framework has enriched the understanding of the social and ceremonial purposes of the procession and – through the example of the Mysore Police Band – has demonstrated the wider implications of ritual performance in reinforcing communal ties.

## 6.1 Future Research Directions

By focusing on the Jumbo Savari Procession, this ethnographic study provides a valuable case study and contributes to a broader understanding of the components of processions. Future research could explore various other aspects of the procession, including its economic impact, community dynamics, and contemporary relevance in Mysore. The findings of this research further suggest exploring the relationship between music, tradition, spirituality, hierarchy or other factors relevant to processional events. One such aspect could be the use of sound and music to create and enhance religious experiences in the context of processional rituals such as the Jumbo Savari Procession. The integration of sound studies with ethnomusicology, as exemplified by Guillebaud & Lavandier (2020), offers promising approaches for future research on processions. For example, the study in this edited volume on the sensory and spatial dynamics of religious environments, by Astrid Zotter provides valuable insights into the role of sound in processional contexts Guillebaud & Lavandier (2020:122-140). Zotter describes how bells and music contribute to the sacred ambience and social functions of ritual spaces in Nepalese Hindu tradition. In processions, the deliberate use of sound, such as coordinated musical performances and strategically placed sound sources, creates a dynamic auditory experience that enhances the ritual's emotional and spiritual impact. For example, the sounds of bells are not just auditory signals but are charged with meanings believed to attract the divine presence. By examining the spatial arrangement and acoustic characteristics of processional routes, future research could investigate how sound is used to create a sense of sacred space and to encourage communal participation. Such an exploration of how acoustic elements are shaped by cultural practices in different processional contexts, and can provide insights into the relationship between sound, space, and ritual practice, highlighting how acoustic elements influence participants' perceptions and experiences.

To gain a comparative perspective and insight into the broader implications of processions, researchers can use similar methodologies while addressing related research questions to examine processions in different contexts. Bollig (2017) highlights three main arguments for using intercultural comparative methods in anthropology. He emphasises that 1. comparing different cultures can help identify universal patterns of behaviour and cultural variation. This reveals similarities and differences in human behaviour, thereby enhancing our understanding of cultural phenomena. However, Bollig also highlights the challenge of staying close

to the source, suggesting that researchers must balance detailed ethnographic fieldwork with broader comparative analysis to avoid losing critical contextual information. 2. Comparative methods allow researchers to explore causal relationships between cultural practices and environmental or social contexts. Bollig argues that understanding these relationships can reveal why certain cultural phenomena occur and how they interact with other variables, such as economic conditions, political structures, social hierarchies, and religious beliefs. This analysis can be particularly useful when studying processions, as it can show how specific procession elements such as music and rituals influence social cohesion and cultural change or continuity. Bollig emphasises 3. the necessity of situating individual case studies within a broader comparative framework to enhance the depth and relevance of ethnographic analyses. This method allows researchers to contextualise their findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of cultural phenomena. He also warns of challenges such as isolating variables and overgeneralisation, suggesting that comparative methods should raise new questions and relativise universalist claims, thus contributing to a more nuanced understanding of cultural practices. Bollig also stresses the relevance of regional and cultural comparisons. Regional comparisons examine a few cultures within a limited geographical area to understand the influence of similar environmental conditions and shared history. Cultural comparisons focus on structurally equivalent elements across distant and historically unrelated cultures to identify for example common organisational patterns.

By placing the Jumbo Savari Procession in a global comparative context, its analysis through the lens of different layers (i.e. Royal, Divine, Politics and Heritage) can be compared to similar processions elsewhere. Such comparative studies can, with regard to Bollig's comparative framework, can reveal how societies use processions to reinforce social hierarchies, express religious devotion and navigate cultural politics.

For instance, in his dissertation, Ringsmut (2022) analysed the Kolá San Jon processions on the Cape Verdean islands of São Vicente and Santo Antão. This ethnographic study highlights the central role of drumming in the Kolá San Jon processions which are characterised by their linear patterns. These drumming practices are not only musical performances but also a means of reinforcing community and cultural identity among Cape Verdeans. Ringsmut's research shows how processions, influenced by migration, tourism, and cultural policies, create a dynamic ritual space through the interplay of music and movement. The findings reveal the contested politics of Kolá San Jon aesthetics shaped by different social

actors within Cape Verde's globalised cultural economy. Ringsmut's research on the Kolá San Jon processions provides a valuable comparative perspective for my dissertation on the Jumbo Savari Procession and the role of the Mysore Police Band, both of which emphasise the importance of music in creating and experiencing ritual spaces. In the Jumbo Savari Procession, the performance of the Mysore Police Band facilitate social and cultural integration. Similarly, the Kolá San Jon processions use drumming to promote shared cultural and spiritual experiences. By comparing these findings, future research could explore common themes and differences in how musical processions are experienced in different cultural settings. This comparative approach can improve the understanding of the role of music and sound in community rituals, the impact of a globalising world on traditional practices, and the ways in which processions negotiate and construct cultural identities.

In addition, future research could also explore the intersection of the Indian caste system[33] and the cultural dynamics highlighted in this study. Given the considerable influence of social hierarchies on public events in India, and on the Jumbo Savari Procession in particular, it is valuable to examine how caste identities are expressed in musical rituals, as shown by Prévôt (2008). In this regard, the Jumbo Savari Procession deserves scholarly consideration and can serve as a prime example. This exploration could include examining the representation and participation of different caste groups within the procession as well as the roles and meanings attributed to them. By incorporating caste discourse into the study of the Jumbo Savari Procession, future research could contribute to a broader understanding of how social structures intersect with public rituals and performances in South Indian society. For instance, an analysis

[33] The Indian caste system has long been a defining characteristic of Indian society, categorising people into distinct groups linked to specific occupations and social roles. Historically, this system has been hierarchical, with the Brahmins (priests and scholars) at the top, followed by Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and farmers), and Shudras (labourers and service providers). Below these four primary categories are the Dalits, previously referred to as "untouchables", who have experienced severe social discrimination. Contemporary castes are organized into thousands of sub-castes, or jatis, which further define social and occupational roles within the broader caste categories. Despite efforts to reduce caste-based inequalities through legal reforms and affirmative action policies, the caste system continues to affect social interactions, resource access, and political dynamics in contemporary India. Although the caste system often appears rigid, processes of change can still be observed. For instance, changes can occur because of religious reform movements and the emergence of new occupations, particularly in the it sector. Moreover, there is relatively high social mobility within the middle ranks of the hierarchy, while the extremes of the caste order—Brahmins and "untouchables"—remain more fixed (Scoda 2015).

of the spatial organisation and seating arrangements during the procession through the lens of caste could reveal the nuanced power dynamics and social stratification embedded in this event. Considering caste in terms of ritual concepts and Turner's notion of communitas could be a potential approach for exploring how liminoid phenomena in processions can challenge the hierarchies that exist among members of the different castes involved in the procession.

In conclusion, this ethnographic study of the Jumbo Savari Procession provides a detailed understanding of its multifaceted nature, integrating historical, social, and musical dimensions. Through extensive fieldwork and thorough analysis, this research highlights how a procession functions as a significant cultural ritual. The application of Victor Turner's concepts of liminality and communitas has been particularly insightful in interpreting the transformative and integrative experiences of participants, especially in the Mysore Police Band. By examining the interplay of music, space, and social interaction, this study underscores the role of the procession in creating a shared sense of belonging. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the impact of a procession on contemporary Indian society. Future research could further explore the role of musical elements, such as different musical genres, the impact of instrumentation, and variations in musical styles in relation to caste, gender, and economic factors within such public rituals.

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# List of Figures, Images, Tables

This PhD project examines the Jumbo Savari Procession during the Daśaharā Festival in the city of Mysore, Karnataka, India, with a particular interest in spatial organisation and social dynamics. The procession, which marks the culmination of the festival, involves the worship of the local goddess Chamundeshwari before her figure is paraded on an elephant through the streets of Mysore. Building on original fieldwork, this ethnographic research explores spatiality and social interaction within the procession. By examining musical representations and spatial indicators, this study investigates the intersection of space and social activity in light of musical performances. While the entire procession is analysed, the focus is on the Mysore Police Band, a key participant identified through fieldwork. Victor Turner's concepts of liminality, liminoid phenomena and communitas provide a theoretical lens through which the analysis of the ritualistic and performative elements of the Jumbo Savari Procession highlights the associated social dynamics.

Cover Illustration & Foto
Jörg-Henning Jüdt

Jüdt ⊕ Sound-tracking Mysore