

# HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC IN SRI LANKA: A DOMINATING MINORITY MUSIC OR AN IMPOSED MUSICAL IDEOLOGY?

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## **Abstract**

In Sri Lanka, the various groups of Tamils are jointly the largest minority group who migrated from different places of South India and in different time periods<sup>1</sup>. South Indian music is widely appreciated and learnt by both the Sinhala including by large parts of the Tamil minority spread over Sri Lanka. Although a number of Sinhala people prefer and practice North Indian music geographically, and probably culturally, they are much closer to South India than to North India. Some historical sources<sup>2</sup> report that Sinhalese are descendants of North Indians who are believed to be Aryans who migrated from Persia to the Northern part of India in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and later. Therefore, some scholarly authorities<sup>3</sup> believe that the Sinhalese 'naturally' prefer North Indian music as they also continue the suggested Aryan heritage. Nevertheless, some other sources reveal that the North Indian music was spread in Sri Lanka during the British rule with the coming of the Parsi Theatre (Bombay theatre), which largely promoted Hindustani raga-based compositions.

This paper explores selected literature and opinions of some interviewees and discusses what could be the reasons for preferences of North Indian music by the Sinhalese. The interviewees were chosen according to their professional profile and willingness to participate in this research. As a result, this paper will offer insights through analysing various opinions and statements made by a number of interviewees. The research also considered some theories which may relate to the case whether Hindustani classical music is due to these reasons a dominating minority culture or a rather self-imposed musical ideology. The latter would establish an aesthetic hierarchy, which is not reflected in the cultural reality of Sri Lanka. This is a new research scrutinizing a long-term situation of performing arts education in this country taking mainly interviews as a departing point.

**Keywords:** Hindustani music, South Indian music, Parsi theatre, Musical preferences, Cultural minorities.

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<sup>1</sup> With 'Tamils in Sri Lanka', the population speaking the Tamil language and migrated to Sri Lanka from the Tamilnadu State in India, is referred to. Usually all people who migrated from South India are commonly known to the Sinhala as Tamils though there are other migrants who may speak other popular languages in South India such as Malayalam, Telegu and Kannada. The demographic information of difference ethnicities that have been migrated to Sri Lanka are not yet thoroughly censused. So far, the census from 2012 is the last available demographic data in Sri Lanka. However, these statistics may as well be inaccurate.

<sup>2</sup> The Mahāvamśa is the first source suggesting ancestry of the Sinhalese. Later books (Malalasekara, 1928; Oldenberg, 1879; von Hinüber, 1997; Harris, 2006), mainly various editions and translations of treatises, refer to the Mahāvamśa or retell the anecdotes of the Mahāvamśa or legends without providing references regarding the ancestry of the Sinhalese.

<sup>3</sup> As described in the compilation *People of Sri Lanka*. 2017. Published by Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages. Colombo: Selacine.

## INTRODUCTION

South Indian music is widely appreciated and practiced by both the Sinhala and by large parts of the Tamil minority who are spread over Sri Lanka. In the higher education system, South Indian music is offered as a major subject in undergraduate courses at three universities i.e. University of Visual and Performing Arts as well as Eastern and Jaffna Universities. Based on the data collected for this study, there are only 12 students learning South Indian music in the department of South Indian Music at UVPA<sup>4</sup> by the year 2019. The other two universities are situated in areas, where more Tamil people in Sri Lanka live. There, the majority of students are Tamils and the offered music courses include only South Indian music at these two universities. The majority of Sri Lankan music graduates are women, who selected teaching as the occupation. Their decision was based on available vacancies. However, the music curriculum of the secondary education system<sup>5</sup> is mainly divided into Western and Eastern music. The content of Eastern music provides nearly 70% North Indian classical music and some musical pieces with North Indian background. A small rest is dedicated to Sri Lankan folk songs and some fragmented Western music theory.

Given the multi-level school system, South Indian music is taught only in Tamil-speaking schools where the North Indian music is not taught at all. The Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka usually organizes an annual All-Island School Competition of music and dance. Sinhala folk songs and dance, and North Indian vocal and instrumental music and many other events are organised in regions, provinces, and as a final event. However, South Indian Folk Dance, Classical Music and Classical Dance were not included to that turn but separately organised by the Ministry. The director of the Department for Aesthetic Education of that Ministry informed per circular letter that those events cannot be organised together since the competitors of South Indian Music and Dance come from areas populated by Tamils like North and Eastern Provinces.

Faculty	Department /Unit	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
		1 <sup>st</sup> Y		2 <sup>nd</sup> Y		3 <sup>rd</sup> Y		4 <sup>th</sup> Y	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Music	Applied Music & Mass Communication	58	169	07	04	11	02	15	08
	Ethnomusicology			03	26	05	13	03	26
	Musicology			03	24	02	10	01	05
	North Indian Classical Music			32	86	40	79	35	81
	South Indian Music			02	03	00	03	01	03
	Western Music			12	25	25	22	14	17
	Total			59	168	83	129	69	140
	227		212		209				

**Figure 1: 2019, student enrolment by year and gender (compilation by the author).**

The previous table shows the distribution of various subjects and the gender proportions in the Music Faculty of UVPA (Figure 1).

<sup>4</sup> The UVPA is more or less the centre of performing arts where most music teachers and artistes obtained their undergraduate degrees.

<sup>5</sup> The Sri Lankan educational system is similarly divided like the British educational system in the 1960ies. One can find primary, secondary, tertiary (also higher), and further levels.

## SOME CULTURAL BACKGROUND

In Sri Lanka, the Tamils are the largest minority group who migrated from South India (Pathmanathan, 2002) at different times and due to various reasons (*People of Sri Lanka*, 2017: 55-128). At present, the percentage of Tamils in Sri Lanka is not precisely counted but the demographic statistics from the year 2012 show that the Tamil-speaking population has been around 15% and the Sinhala 74% in Sri Lanka by the year of 2012 (*Department of Census and Statistics*). Most Tamil-speaking people follow the Hindu religion and its associated culture which define the Tamil as an ethnic group in Sri Lanka (People of Sri Lanka, 2017). Sinhala is basically a language that also connotes the majority ethnic group. Sinhala-speaking communities claim themselves as Sinhala nationals following as the majority Buddhism, some Christianity, and other varieties of worldviews. Nevertheless, there are also Sri Lankans who believe that they are just Sri Lankan citizens or simply Sri Lankans instead of sticking to any ethnic or religious boundaries. The intra-ethnic diversity is rather complex and needs more scholarship to identify its religious, political and cultural inter-connections and some long-lasting habitual and seemingly exclusive features.

Some historical sources<sup>6</sup> account that the Sinhalese are descendants of North Indians who are believed to be Aryans migrated from Persia to the Northern part of India in times of the distant past. The first source mentioning the lineage of Sinhala people is the Mahāvamsa (written by a Buddhist monk in the fifth century AD). It contains legends describing incidents that occurred starting with the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC including the story of Vijaya, who migrated to Sri Lanka with seven hundred of his followers from the northern part of India and settled in Sri Lanka. It is ambiguous about the exact place or associated cultural context of North India from where this legendary father was supposedly comes. Further incidents mentioned in the historic background of Sinhala communities in the later writings are further to ensure that they belong to an Indo-Aryan lineage which was believed being superior compared to people that lived earlier in this region. Older teaching literature of Sri Lankan history relates Sinhala lineages in a way that the history is mostly based on legends found in the Mahāvamsa. Some recent writings of local scholars (20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Century, *Peoples of Sri Lanka*, 2017) narrate stereotypically that the Sinhala ‘naturally’ prefer North Indian music as they simultaneously continue to believe in their Aryan heritage.

## APPROACHES

There are some other opinions gathered in selected interviews conducted in 2018 revealing why Sinhala people prefer largely North Indian music over South Indian Music. For this short research, few music scholars and practitioners who are Sinhala speaking and self-reported Sinhala people answered the question “Why North Indian music is more popular than South Indian music in Sri Lanka?”. Some of these interviewees studied North Indian music. They resided mainly in India for years. Some of the others studied in the University of Visual and Performing Arts. All of them are closely linked to the UVPA as former students and/or teachers of North Indian music. The following statements roughly represent the opinion of the musicians and the scholars who are closely attached to North Indian music practices in Sri Lanka. They were

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Sinhala chronicle, the Mahāvamsa was first compiled in the fifth century CE by Buddhist monks and updated over the centuries (Kemper, 1991). There it is described that the Sinhalese are descended from Prince Vijaya and his retinue of seven hundred followers who migrated from North India in the sixth century BCE to the island. One specific part of it, called the Dīpavamsa, which is an early chronicle whose material was worked into the Mahāvamsa, reports that Mahinda Bhikkhu, son of the Indian Buddhist King Ashoka, introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka in the third century BCE (Sykes, 2018: 41).

chosen according to their professional profile and their willingness to participate in this research.

Being myself a vocal teacher at UVPA who spent some time in North India, my personal interest in answering these questions was an important stimulus to conduct these interviews among well trained colleagues in Sri Lanka. The interviews were held together in a short time frame, but one by one. It is possibly a situational group interview in which the interviewees did not know exactly about the answers of their colleagues. Only some of them listened to other interviewees' answers. This point of not simply agreeing to each other is significantly contributing to the strength of their statements. After finishing this first part of the research, I reconfirmed some of these statements with the respective interviewees. The questions were answered in Sinhalese, which I tried to translate as they were given without choosing any specific parts.

### **SUJEEWA RANASINGHE (SENIOR LECTURER AT UVPA)**

“I think North India is religiously closed to the Sinhala. The nature of North Indian music is so close to us. It has got a soft language. The Tamil language accent is not soft compared to North Indian language (he means Hindi, remarked by the author). Therefore, the music is also not soft. We can listen to North Indian music for a long time. The third reason is the Nurti music which is deeply rooted in Sinhala people. The Sinhala music aspirants in general got the opportunity to learn about the North Indian music through Rabindranath Tagore, who visited Sri Lanka in his time. Here, he mainly presented his own songs including some North Indian classical music stuff. The Sinhala people enjoy South Indian cuisine, but music is associated with sentiments that are highly relevant. The physical things of South India can be preferred. You know the Lord Buddha was not a Tamil. The Sinhala people are very much attached to what Lord Buddha is associated with, so they also prefer North Indian culture.”

### **VOLTER MARASINGHE (EM. PROF., UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYAWARDENEPURA)**

“I think, in Sri Lanka, Tamils prefer South Indian music, while the Sinhala are not very much interested in South Indian music. South Indian music came to Sri Lanka before North Indian music. First, through Prashasti and then, Nadagam. At the beginning, the Sinhala adapted South Indian music as it was new to them. Later, the North Indian music arrived along with the Parsi theatre. North Indian music became more popular among the Sinhala than South Indian music. I think we had it in our genes, you know! Our forefathers are from North India.”

### **NISHSHANKA ABEYRATHNA (PHD., INSTRUCTOR AT UVPA)**

“I agree with what Volter Marasinghe says that we have it in our genes and not because he is one of my gurus. The Hindustani music was developed in North India after the arrival of Persians. The Indians, who lived in North India, were chased by Persians to the South and some of them might have come to this island as well. History tells us that the Sinhala are descendants of Aryans who came here from North India. However, when the Hindustani music was created, South Indians did not accept it but kept to what they already had. The Sinhala adapted and continued it. The cultures of the Sinhala and South Indian peoples are different. So, the adaptation patterns are also different. I am a lecturer of Carnatic music and I am Sinhala. There is nothing like what people say that Carnatic music is rigorous and therefore the Sinhala preferred North Indian music. It is because they disregarded the Carnatic music just by listening without studying its history and the content of its music contents.”

## **BUDDHIKA JAYATHISSA (VISITING LECTURER AT UVPA)**

“I am aware of the accent and the movement of tones. South Indians have a complex taal system which is good. The language of the North Indian music is soft, also the combination of long and short letters. I am used to watch Hindi films and songs. We used to listen to many Hindi Bollywood tunes and their Sinhala versions. That is very familiar to me.”

## **GAYANI KADIGAMWA**

### **(ALUMNI OF UVPA AND BHATKHANDI UNIVERSITY LUCKNOW)**

“Although I learned North Indian music up to a Master’s degree, I prefer modern South Indian music. I was directed to learn North Indian music (influenced) by my surroundings.”

## **ARUNDATHY RANGANATHAN**

### **(PIONEERING CARNATIC VOCALIST IN SRI LANKA, INDEPENDENT)**

“Who says that Carnatic music is not popular in Sri Lanka? Tamil people respect and learn music and dance, but they prefer only Carnatic music and Bharathanatyam. You will not find much Tamils who practice Hindustani music and dance here. Talents in South Indian dance and music are part of the dowry of a Tamil girl. You know, it is a must for a Tamil girl to gain talents in dance and music. In Sri Lankan context, the Tamils are seconded by Sinhalese in population wise. If you compare the percentage of learning music and dance, you will know that Tamils learn South Indian music and dance more than Sinhalese learn Hindustani music. I have two sons. Both of them preferred Hindustani music. When they were small, entire family went to India and visited music instrument shop. The elder sons wanted have a Sitar that was displayed in the shop. I refused, but he insisted. Then my husband purchased one for him. Then the younger son also wanted one saying that if the elder brother has one, then why not I? Finally, both of them got their instruments and continued studying them under Sinhala gurus. I did not stop them learning Hindustani music although I am a famous Carnatic vocalist in Sri Lanka. Now they are living in Australia and they are big artistes of Hindustani music. The main reason for spreading Hindustani music among Sinhalese could be that some pioneering Sinhala musicians have promoted it here. I gained a big influence on spreading Carnatic music among Sinhalese. One person can do a lot. Nowadays, there is no platform for classical performances. The new generation of Carnatic singers in Sri Lanka is suffering from good teachers and opportunities for public performances.”

## **RASHMI SANGEETHA (SENIOR LECTURER AT UVPA)**

“You can notice this in India. South Indian people prefer their music more than North Indian music and vice versa. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhala strongly believe their ancestors derive from North India and therefore they prefer North Indian music. Buddhism came from North India. The Sinhalese are usually Buddhists. Therefore, they prefer the North Indian culture as well.”

## **NISHADH HANDUN PATHIRANA**

### **(DIRECTOR FOR AESTHETIC EDUCATION, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION)**

“The Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam have been taught in secondary schools in Sri Lanka. You will find them prevalent in the provinces where Tamil people are highly populated for example Central Province, Eastern Province, and Northern Province. After I was appointed

as the Director, I initiated music competitions for Carnatic vocal and Bharatanatyam which were taught mostly in Tamil medium schools. The school competitions started in 1958 and since then Tamil music and dance were not included. For the first time, I began to organise school competition for those in 2017. I put a title for that competition as “All Island Carnatic Music and Muslim Competition” so that Sri Lankan Muslims are not bothered with the word ‘music’. However, the written circular mentions the list of music and dance items and rules and other conditions. We have not made it compulsory. The competition is well attended. People are very happy.

Carnatic music was in vogue in Ceylon even before Hindustani music was known to the people here. The biggest impact in promoting Hindustani music in Ceylon was the appearance of Rabindranath Tagore. Our people went there and came to Sri Lanka with Degree Certificates mostly from the Bhatkhande Music School. Sri Lankans liked Hindustani music because of Buddhism and biological connections to North Indian people. Hindustani music matched with Buddhist philosophy. Buddhist chanting (pirith) was a North Indian thing, sounding similar to the mood of Todi ragas. Sinhala people were digging out the soil to make reservoirs and to build Stupas using that soil. The water reservoirs were used for agriculture, mainly for paddy fields. Buddhist monks in the temples chanted pirith wishing good health and wealth to the people in any village. These pirith chanting definitely influenced the folk songs which were gradually developed by the farmers during cultivation related activities. This is how North Indian music has been deep-seeded in Sinhala genes. The Sinhala language is very much close to North Indian language roots. I would say North Indian music is our heritage.”

Some points mentioned in the interviewees’ answers were stimulating new questions. Volter Marasinghe initiated another research interest in studying the connection of the topic to Prashasti, a type of court poetry deriving from Sanskrit eulogies, and Nadagam, a kind of folk theatre being currently tight to South Indian comedies. Both phenomena were widely investigated yet not in relation to their regional meaning and culturally embedded ethnic identification. Another interesting point is the statement of Buddhika Jayathissa who mentioned the importance of Bollywood productions. This very obvious fact is often heard yet insufficiently investigated in Sri Lanka.

## DISCUSSION AND SOME QUESTIONS

Prior to the coming of Parsi theatre, the most popular music theatre type in Sri Lanka has been indeed Nadagam, to which Volter Marasinghe referred. It is seemingly based on South Indian cultural practices. The literature describes (Wijayathunga, 1962) that Nadagam declined its popularity after the coming of Parsi theatre which has been nurtured with North Indian classical, semi classical, and folk music and dance practices. After Sri Lanka was entirely invaded by the British, ships from Indian ports to Galle port frequently circulated. North Indians could visit Sri Lanka by those ships. North Indian music has been known to Sinhala people through the people who undertook their pilgrimage to the Katharagama Hindu Temple in Katharagama. Some instruments like the ektaag was brought by North Indian devotees who played Hindustani melodies during their stay in Sri Lanka that attracted listeners. Practitioners of the Nadagam theatre cherished those musicians and could learn their music to some extent (Wijayathunga, 1962: XII). The British administration had brought Malay soldiers from Malaya to Sri Lanka to train a Sri Lankan Malay Regiment known as “The Ceylon Rifle Regiment” (ibid.). A few of those invited Malay soldiers have been experts in North Indian music who taught Hindustani music to Sri Lankan Malay soldiers as well. This line of arguments has to be further investigated. However, the Sinhala Nadagam was not using any kind of North Indian music until Parsi theatre performances took place in Sri Lanka (Ariyaratna, 2004 [1986]).

Most of the music and dance practices, which were confined and popular among nobles and aristocrats in North India, became similarly popular among the upper middle-class population after the political and cultural interference of British power during the twentieth century in North India. The Parsi theatre (Bombay theatre) has been the best entertainment event for North Indian people of all the social class in vogue. The content of dialogues was lesser than the content of songs of the Parsi theatre scripts written by following mainly the Ghazal poetic structure which has been widely popular in North India since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. North Indian music was largely spread in Sri Lanka during the British rule with the coming of Parsi Theatre, which promoted Hindustani raga-based compositions. Parsi theatres were imitated by Sri Lankan experts in the field by writing scripts and songs in Sinhala language. The Sinhala version of the Parsi theatre was named as “Nurti” (Sarachchandra, 1952/1966). Eclectic features of North Indian performing arts were included in Parsi theatre performances, in which graceful and skilful song-actresses and actors had inspired the Sinhalese to adapt North Indian performing arts practices. Some of them got the opportunity to learn North Indian music through Parsi theatre musicians during their stay in Sri Lanka and a few could go to the music colleges Shanti Niketan in Bengal and Bhatkhande in Lucknow through contacts such as Rabindranath Tagore, founder of Shanti Niketan in West Bengal. These “Indian music degree holders” later became government officers for a music education network. Subsequently, they could promote North Indian music through establishing music colleges and formalizing school music syllabuses including a large part of North Indian music components into the music courses. M. G. Perera, Lionel Edirisingha, W. B. Makuloluwa, K. A. Dayaratna and many others studied Hindustani music in India and promoted this music in Sri Lanka. Consequently, they served as talented performers and educationists (Harris, 2006).

While Nurti theatre performances had been largely popular in urban Sri Lanka during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, gramophones were imported to Sri Lanka. Many Nurti songs were recorded onto 78rpm discs and sold by certain companies (Wijesundara, 2016). 90% of music records produced in Sri Lanka was based on North Indian music (Ariyaratna, 2004 [1986]; Meddegoda and Jähnichen, 2016). These records were also broadcasted via “Radio Ceylon”, the most popular mass media during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Indian subcontinent (Hansen, 2002). The music compositions had to be nearly three to three and half minutes in length fitting into the time capacity of 78 rpm records used for broadcasting. Therefore, the pieces were confined with lighter and catchier musical phrases. This might have been quite a reason to make North Indian raga-based music pieces more attractive to Sri Lankan consumers from different walks of life.

In the 1930s, Hindi films were screened (Hansen, 2018) in urban areas hence, accelerating the existing preference for North Indian music in Sri Lanka. The technology and the structure of the musical form of a “song” were further refined. Hindi films have been the extension of the Parsi theatre presented with new technology. Parallel to the North Indians’ music preferences developed from this theatre to Hindi film music, Sinhala people also continued from Nurti to Hindi film songs maintaining their Sinhala versions.

Having said this, it should be further debated whether these reasons can fully or partially sustain in an increasingly informed society that rationalises cultural roots and traditions in order to fit into coming global tasks of the arts and related structures in the country’s economy. The following table may summarize the different approaches to the topic and the reasons given by the interviewees and in relevant literature.

<b>Evidences for a popularity:</b>	<b>Why do people believe in this popularity?</b>	<b>Actual reasons for the popularity (research outcomes):</b>
Initially, Buddhist culture was developed by North Indians in the 6 <sup>th</sup> century BCE. (Sykes, 2018: 41).	North India is religiously close to Sinhala people since Buddhism came to Sri Lanka from there. This is taken to be the reason why Sinhala people prefer North Indian music.	People in early settlements of Sri Lanka adapted Buddhism and its cultural aspects. Therefore, North Indian music was preferred disregarding the fact that Buddhism had nothing to do with North Indian music and vice versa.
The lyrics of North Indian music have been composed in Braj Bhasha, Hindi and other regional languages (Wijayathunga, 1962).	Language of compositions is softer and more melodious compared to languages spoken in South India.	North Indian music became popular not because of its language, but mostly through other factors. North Indian language might have been preferred since the Sinhala were rather familiar to Hindi language as a result of consuming (enjoying) Hindi films and film songs.
The Parsi theatre became popular overriding other theatre traditions and Sinhalese folk theatres such as Nadagam, Sokari, and Kolam (Hansen, 2002; Meddegoda & Jähnichen, 2016).	North Indian melodies used in the Parsi theatre have been more attractive to the Sinhala audience compared to earlier stage music. Sinhalese are descendants of Aryans, who migrated from North India to Sri Lanka. Hence, the Sinhala have that preference in their genes.	The melodies based on Hindustani ragas became popular in the absence of better choices in urban areas. The population seeks for better entertainment possibilities.
Sinhala aspirants of North Indian music got the opportunity to learn Rabindra Sangeeth and Hindustani music in Shanti Nikethan and at the Bhatkhande Music College (Ariyaratna, 2004 [1986]).	Sinhala aspirants of Parsi theatre music got an opportunity to learn music in North India through the contacts of North Indian musicians, who visited Sri Lanka such as Rabindranath Tagore.	South Indian theatre genres, that could motivate Sinhala people to learn its music to become professionals in the respective field, were not performed in Sri Lanka. After experiencing North Indian music through the Parsi theatre, Sinhala aspirants went to Shanti Nikethan and Bhatkhande Sangeeth Vidyalaya to learn North Indian music.
The majority of school children choose North Indian music over West and South Indian music practices (Harris, 2006).	South Indian music was preferred by the Tamil-speaking minority in Sri Lanka. Rarely, Sinhala children prefer South Indian music and other music practices.	The school syllabi were compiled by the pioneer Hindustani music degree holders who became authorities in music education in Sri Lanka. Sinhala children mostly preferred North Indian music over other music practices. The number of Sinhala children is much higher than others.
The majority of university students prefers North Indian music over West and South Indian musical practices (Figure 1 of this article).	Most South Indians reside in North and East, where two universities offer South Indian music for higher education.	Since students learned North Indian music in schools, they take North Indian music as a major subject in higher education.
A majority of popular songs rather incorporated North Indian musical elements than those of South India (Meddegoda, N., 2019).	Musicians already dealing with popular music prefer North Indian music and are ready to deliver productions on demand by the audience or by producers.	North Indian music was/is familiar to Sinhalese audiences through listening to Hindi film songs and accordingly inspired Sinhalese songs. Most musicians involved in the process of producing popular songs have been learning North Indian music.

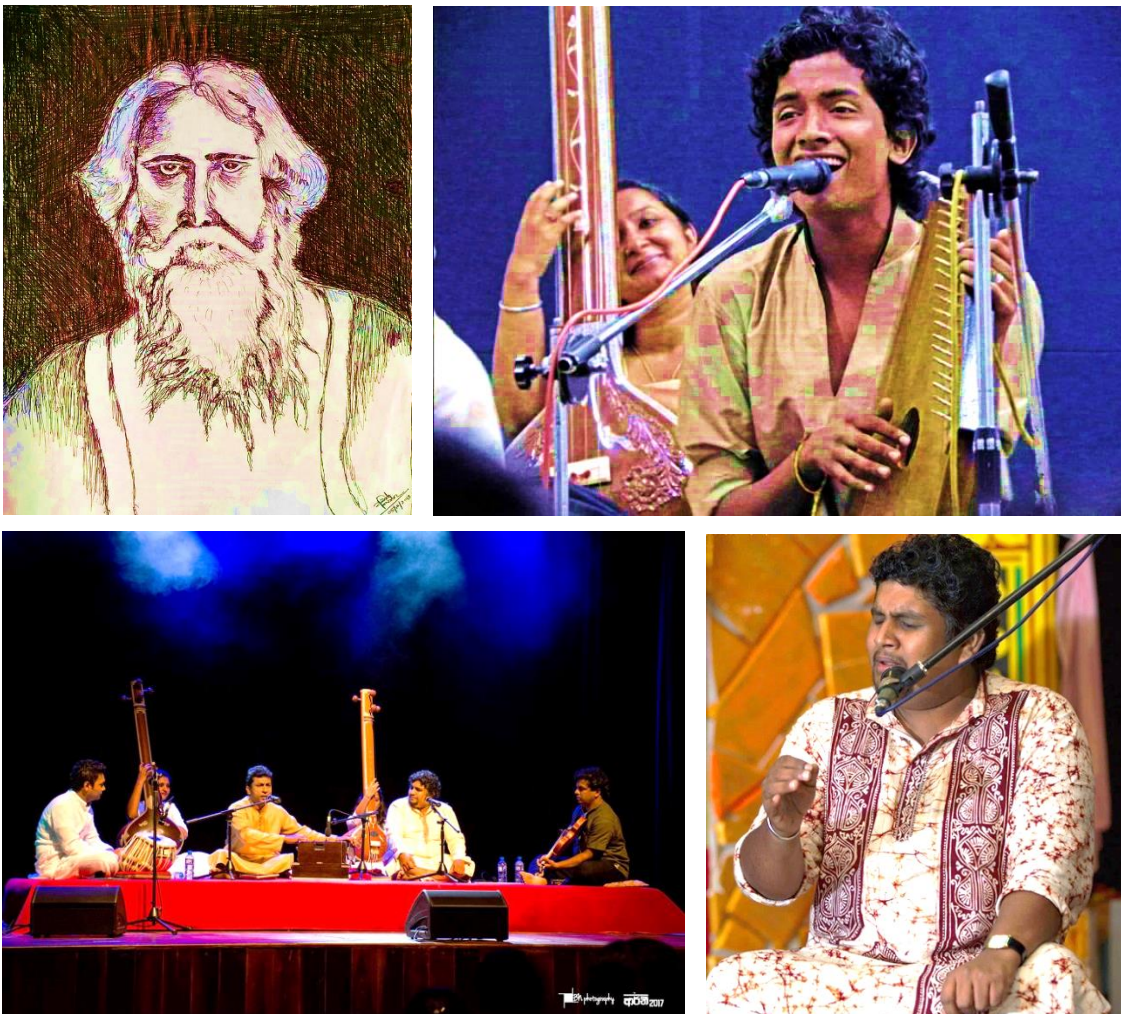
**Figure 2: Table of evidences for a popularity, stating why people believe in this popularity, and finally what are the actual reasons for the popularity of North Indian music practices (overview by the author).**



## FINAL THOUGHTS

The historical situation of South Asia contributed widely to the dominance of North Indian music far beyond North India. However, this situation also affected the relationship within regions of South Asia and was used for political divisions and cultural impositions. The preference of North Indian music expresses not only the admiration for a classic set of performing arts (Figure 3a), but was also associated with social and ethnic differences nurturing bias and prejudice in long term (Sykes, 2017). Authoritative scripts, religious devotion, and the implied tendency of being exclusive within the nation contributed to this general picture.

It seems to be a challenge to sustain this preference while questioning existing bias and wrong interpretations of historical developments. The imposing of a cultural ideology has to be widely understood and deconstructed. People being involved in the teaching or practice of any kind of North Indian music need an additional awareness of these facts that have to be repeatedly discussed. They may have to resist further declining tendencies among musicians and audiences (Figure 3b) of North Indian music in society and at the same time propagating an increasing diversity in music practices.



**Figure 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d:** (3a, left) A drawing of Rabindranath Tagore (1881-1941) by Asith Chanushka Atapattu made in 2013; (3b, right) The picture of a young Sri Lankan singer of Hindustani music, taken by Pasan Ranaweera at the Indian Cultural Centre in Colombo, 2015. (3c, left below) Lecturers of UVPA performing on stage, 2017. (3d, right below) Asith Chanushka Atapattu singing on stage, 2019 (photos by courtesy of the author/photographer).

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