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## Musical instruments in local taxonomies: the case of sri lankan string instruments as perceived through internet sources

Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda  
University of Visual and Performing Arts in Colombo  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0552-5426>  
[chinthakameddegoda@yahoo.co.in](mailto:chinthakameddegoda@yahoo.co.in)

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## **Musical instruments in local taxonomies: the case of sri lankan string instruments as perceived through internet sources**

Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda

**Abstract:** As a mainstream Buddhist country since 300 BC Sri Lankan clergy did for a long time period not permit string instruments as Buddhist sources said listening or playing vina (lute) may cause rebirth and hinder the way to Nirvana. Nevertheless, Hindu philosophy does promote string instruments through pictures and statues of gods and goddesses. It is interesting to look at how musical instruments were categorized in Hindu and Buddhist cultures of India and Sri Lanka throughout the history until today as the guiding role of educated clergymen decreased and the globalized Internet offers other musical instruments being used or modified for many previously unknown purposes. This research aims at a historical analysis of musical instruments used in Sri Lanka seen through different perspectives such as political, religious, or mythological views. The way how they are currently presented in mostly non-institutional internet sources is included. The value system that promotes string instruments as a sign of musical development forms the background of reflections in Internet applications dealing with musical instruments. One example is the promotion of the ravanhatta, a bowed spike fiddle, which is inaccurately presented as the “first violin” of the world. Through interviews with music teachers and people who provide Internet services, the phenomenon of this multi-layered problem can be clearly addressed. In result, an alternative view on musical instruments used in Sri Lankan culture will be provided.

**Keywords:** Knowledge cultures. Online resources. Musical instruments. Sri Lanka. Ravanhatta.

### **Instrumentos musicais em taxonomias locais: o caso dos instrumentos de cordas do Sri Lanka como percebidos através de fontes da internet**

**Resumo:** Sendo um país predominantemente budista desde 300 A.C., durante muito tempo o clero do Sri Lanka não permitiu instrumentos de cordas, pois fontes budistas disseram que ouvir ou tocar vina (alaúde) poderia causar renascimento e atrapalhar o caminho para o Nirvana. No entanto, a filosofia hindu promove instrumentos de cordas através de imagens e estátuas de deuses e deusas. É interessante observar como os instrumentos musicais foram categorizados nas culturas hindu e budista da Índia e do Sri Lanka ao longo da história até hoje, à medida que diminuiu o papel orientador dos clérigos e a internet globalizada oferece outros instrumentos musicais que são utilizados ou modificados para muitos propósitos até então desconhecidos. Esta pesquisa visa uma análise histórica dos instrumentos musicais utilizados no Sri Lanka, vistos através de diferentes perspectivas, como visões políticas, religiosas ou mitológicas. Também foi incluída a maneira como eles são atualmente apresentados em fontes de Internet não institucionais. O sistema de valores que promove instrumentos de cordas como um sinal de desenvolvimento musical forma o pano de fundo de reflexões em requerimentos de internet que lidam com instrumentos musicais. Um exemplo é a promoção do ravanhatta, uma espécie de rabeca (violino), que é imprecisamente apresentado como o “primeiro violino” do mundo. Por meio de entrevistas com professores de música e pessoas que fornecem serviços de internet, a complexidade deste problema pode ser claramente abordado. Como resultado, será oferecida uma visão alternativa dos instrumentos musicais usados na cultura do Sri Lanka.

**Palavras-chave:** Culturas de conhecimento. Recursos on-line. Instrumentos musicais. Sri Lanka. Ravanhatta.

## **Instrumentos musicales en taxonomías locales: el caso de los instrumentos de cuerda srilanqueses según se perciben a través de fuentes de Internet**

**Resumen:** Como un país budista tradicional desde el año 300 a. C., el clero de Sri Lanka no permitió los instrumentos de cuerda durante mucho tiempo, ya que las fuentes budistas dijeron que escuchar o tocar vina (laúd) puede provocar el renacimiento y dificultar el camino hacia el Nirvana. Sin embargo, la filosofía hindú promueve instrumentos de cuerda a través de imágenes y el estado de los dioses y diosas. Es interesante observar cómo se clasificaron los instrumentos musicales en las culturas hindú y budista de la India y Sri Lanka a lo largo de la historia hasta el día de hoy, a medida que el papel de guía de los clérigos educados disminuía y el internet globalizado ofrece otros instrumentos musicales que se están utilizando o modificando para muchos desconocidos. Esta investigación apunta a un análisis histórico de los instrumentos musicales utilizados en Sri Lanka vistos desde diferentes perspectivas, tales como puntos de vista políticos, religiosos o mitológicos. Se incluye la forma en que se presentan actualmente en las fuentes de Internet en su mayoría no institucionales. El sistema de valores que promueve los instrumentos de cuerda como un signo del desarrollo musical constituye el fondo de las reflexiones en las aplicaciones de Internet relacionadas con los instrumentos musicales. Un ejemplo es la promoción de la ravanhatta, un violín con púas en arco, que se presenta de manera inexacta como el "primer violín" del mundo. Entrevistas con profesores de música y personas que brindan servicios de Internet, se puede abordar claramente el fenómeno de este problema de múltiples capas. Como resultado, se proporcionará una visión alternativa de los instrumentos musicales utilizados en la cultura de Sri Lanka.

**Palabras-clave:** Culturas del conocimiento. Recursos en línea. Instrumentos musicales. Sri Lanka. Ravanhatta.

## Introduction

Ethnomusicology is a discipline being categorized under social sciences and/or humanities. Beyond this, it has a reputation of being an engaged discipline that deals with ethical issues, equality among people's cultures, their rights, and their participation in the distribution of wealth in the human world. This engagement is subject to dynamic changes embedded in and expressed through discourses on the quality of its knowledge contribution.

This paper will be dedicated to the many issues coming with online contributions introducing or explaining a specific musical instrument, the *ravanhatta*. The discussion aims at showing alternatives to a self-infecting practice of re-colonizing academic writing, particularly in terms of methodology, without limiting the use of internet sources, on the contrary, through making progressively use of it.

## Background

Sri Lanka is a mainstream Buddhist country since 300 BC, according to some historical sources. Referring to the oral tradition and canons of Theravada Buddhism, the Buddhist clergy did not permit string instruments, as listening or playing the *vina* (lute) may cause rebirth and hinder the way to Nirvana. Nevertheless, Hindu philosophy does promote string instruments through pictures and statues of gods and goddesses. It is interesting to look at what are the musical instruments and how they were categorized in Hindu and Buddhist cultures in India and Sri Lanka as the guiding role of

educated clergymen decreased and the globalised internet offers manifold other or new musical instruments being used or modified for many previously unknown purposes.

This paper delivers a historical analysis of musical instruments used in Sri Lanka seen through different perspectives such as political, religious, or mythological views on musical instruments and how they are currently presented in mostly non-institutional Internet sources. String instruments in general play an important role insofar as they are widely propagated as a symbol of musical development. The value system shaping the background of this idea is also reflected in Internet applications dealing with musical instruments. One example is the promotion of the *ravanhatta*, a bowed spike fiddle, which is supposedly the 'first violin' of the world.

Through discussions with music teachers and people who provide Internet services, the phenomenon of this multi-layered problem involving various colonizing systems from early history up to modern globalizing and anthropocentric universalism can be clearly addressed. In result, alternative views on musical instruments used in Sri Lankan culture and their widely accessible online representation will be made understandable.

In Hindu religious and philosophical views, singing and playing instruments hold very important place in many ways. In the Bhakti marga<sup>1</sup> of Hinduism, dedication of everything to God and ultimate attainment of God by the devotee is the highest form of

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<sup>1</sup> Approach to salvation by way of ardent devotion to a deity.

moksha<sup>2</sup> (Hubele, 2008: 18-19). The depictions of musical instruments with deities and related stories found in religious texts and practices imply the importance of music instruments to the people of Hindu culture in many aspects. For example, the singing, playing and dancing to the God is treated as a means to generate love and passion for God.

Various art forms of Hindu god portrayals such as sculpture, paintings, reliefs, and engravings contain music instruments held by the deities symbolizing Hindu religious and philosophical views for example Goddess Saraswati is the divine patroness of Arts and Eloquence and she holds an Indian lute "Vina" symbolizing art in general (See Fig. 1). Lord Shiva, 'the destroyer', holds a *damaru* (a drum) which is played during the cosmic dissolution. The god Vishnu holds a conch and his incarnation Vishnu plays a flute.

All dance forms within the Buddhist cultural framework in Sri Lanka are based on drumming, and therefore percussive music plays an important role in the musical tradition of Sri Lanka. In the reign of King Valagamba (103 BC), the Mahayana Buddhist practices included "panchaturya" (five types of music instruments) orchestra which has not been well-regarded in Theravada Buddhist practices. The first reference about panchaturya is available in the "Vansatthappakasini" (7th century) commentary on Mahāvamsa.

Mahāvamsa (6th century AD) is the Pali chronicle that seems to provide the very first reference about turya vadana (playing of musical instruments) in Sri Lankan history. It says that on the day king Vijaya reached Sri Lanka in 543 BC there was a marriage

ceremony along with instrumental music and singing. It also mentions that singing and dance were included in the occasion of a rite held for the sake of the two demon deities (Chittaraja and Kalavela), with the patronage of King Pandukabhaya<sup>3</sup>. These information is related to non-Buddhist practices before the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Another reference to music is found in the Samantapasadika (a commentary on the Vinaya Pitaka by the monk Buddhaghosha, Takagusu & Nagai, 1930), which refers to the Talavachara turya vadana group sponsored by king Devanampiyatissa (250 BC to 210 BC) for the purpose of stimulating the warriors during military activities and make public salutations to the administrative power.

A prose mentioned the categorization of the five as atata, vitata, atatavitata, susira and ghana. According to this classification atata means a drum with one head made of skin; vitata means a drum with two skin heads; atatavitata means an instrument with strings and skin heads; susira means wind instruments and ghana means metallic instruments such as a cymbals, which produce sound by striking one against another.

In spite of such a way of pali prose, the oral tradition of traditional music and dance in Sri Lanka emphasizes a different explanation about these five terms as follows:

- Atata means an instrument which is played by hands. For example drums like panabera (yak bera), patahabera, dakki, udakki, raban and bumjadi;
- Vitata means an instrument which is played with a stick, such as tammattam and dandubera;

2 Freedom from rebirth.

3 According to Mahāvamsa, the king Pandukabhaya lived during the 5th century BC.

- Vitataatata (not atatavitata) which means an instrument played by hand and with a stick, such as dawla and maha dawla (a cylindrical drum);
- Ghana is a metallic instrument, such as a talampata, taliya, panteruwa, atminiya, kaitalam, ghantha;
- Susira means wind instruments such as horanawa (oboe), hakgediya (conch). Flute, kombu, dalahan, vaskulal.

The Sri Lankan oral tradition of music doesn't show any particular category in which string instruments can be included. Theravada Buddhism condemned Indian *vina* (lute) as an instrument which increases desire and filth in the mind and obstacles to acquire Nirvana. The Buddhist literature 'Samantapasadika' describes *vina* (lute) as a lust-provoking instrument (Takagusu &

Nagai, 1930). As a whole, the Theravada concept does not encourage sensual arts like singing, playing and dancing. The Buddhist clergy, which constituted the main literati of the country, declined to allow the performance of music and dance in general, which were treated as activities to be shunned by the monks and even by the devout laymen. Buddhism has no codification of any data pertaining to music and dancing in its worship. Even the chanting of Buddhist Sutras should strictly be non-musical, and such steps were considered necessary to maintain the purity of Buddhist discipline and orthodoxy of the temple. The *vina* was considered as the main musical instrument in India and the term *vina* was used to signify the whole chordophone family. For this reason, the Buddhist clergy in Sri Lanka might not have accepted to accommodate the *vina* or any string instrument as an instrument of panchaturya.

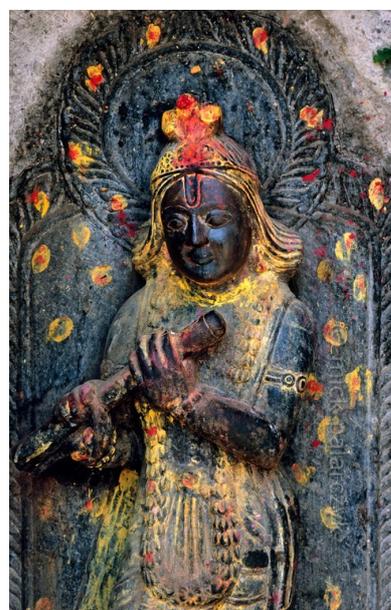


Figure 1: Left - Goddess Saraswati, Hindu Temple at Village Lele, Katmandu Valley, Nepal, playing a string instrument. Right - This statue of Krishna playing the flute can be found on Kathmandu's Pachali Ghat, along the Bagmati River. (Photos courtesy of Paul Smit and Mick Palarczyk, open source<sup>4</sup>.)

4 Open source material: - <https://paulsmit.smugmug.com/Features/Asia/Kathmandu-Valley-sculptures/>

1	Bharatamuni's Natya Shastra (200 AD) instruments are categorized into four groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tat – string</li> <li>• Avanaddha – membrane</li> <li>• Ghana – solid</li> <li>• Susira – wind</li> </ul>
2	Some musicologists in India have divided musical instruments into three classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tata</li> <li>• Vitata</li> <li>• Tatavitata</li> </ul>
3	Sangeet Damodar (15th century)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tata</li> <li>• Sushira</li> <li>• Avanaddha</li> <li>• Ghana</li> </ul>
4	Narada (Sangeeth Makaranda, 9th century)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nail</li> <li>• Blow</li> <li>• Skin</li> <li>• Metal</li> <li>• Body</li> </ul>
5	Narada (Sangeeth Makaranda, 9th century)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leather</li> <li>• String</li> <li>• Solid</li> </ul>
6	Sangeeth Sudhakar by Haripala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sushira</li> <li>• Tata</li> <li>• Vitata</li> <li>• Ghana</li> </ul>
7	.... By Kohala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sushira</li> <li>• Ghana</li> <li>• Charma</li> <li>• Tantri</li> </ul>
8	Panchaturya classification mentioned in Mahāvamsa (5th Century AD) in Sri Lanka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atata – one skin headed drum</li> <li>• Vitata – two skin headed drum</li> <li>• Atata-vitata – skin headed and stringed instrument</li> <li>• Sushira – Wind instruments</li> <li>• Ghana – Metallic instruments</li> </ul>
9	Panchaturya classification in Sri Lankan oral tradition (initiated among upcountry musicians) in Sri Lanka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atata – Drums played by hands</li> <li>• Vitata – Drums played by a stick</li> <li>• Vitatata – Drums played by one hand and a stick</li> <li>• Ghana – Metalic instruments</li> <li>• Sushira – Wind instruments</li> </ul>

Figure 2: Overview on academic and common classifications of musical instruments used in Sri Lanka (compilation by the author).

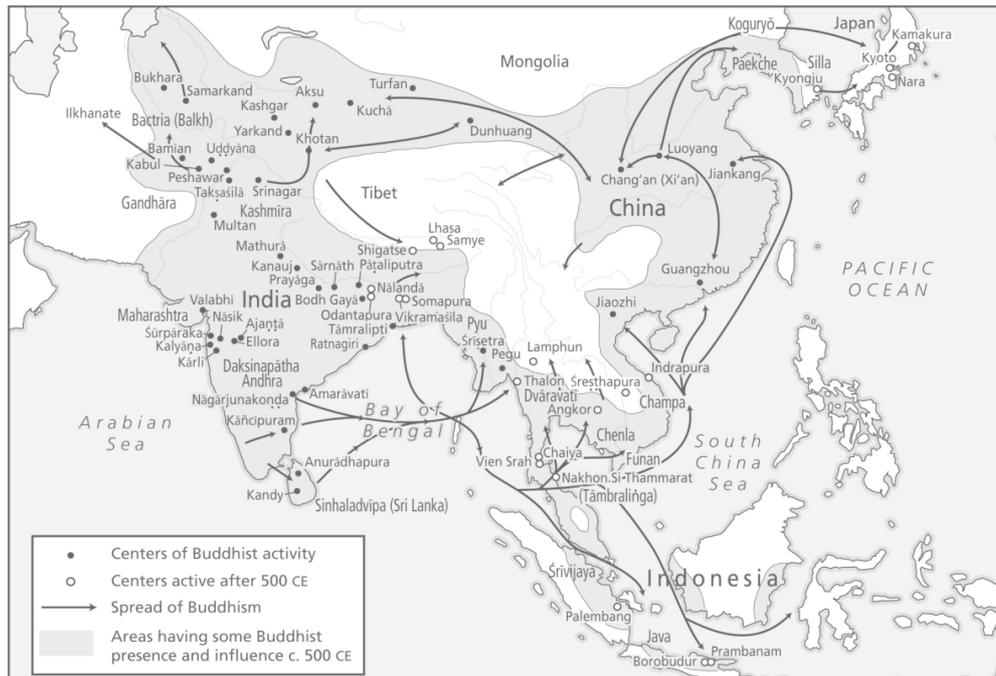


Figure 3: Map showing ways of spreading Buddhism in Asia<sup>5</sup>

Kulathilaka (1991) stated that Theravada Buddhist canons have largely influenced music preferences of Sri Lanka. The music is considered as just provoking mean of entertainment and therefore Buddhist clergy avoided music practices and preached laymen to avoid such practices as much as they can. With the gradual influence of Mahayanist in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist authority gave license for lavish festivities and ceremonies as part of the rituals, and was therefore favorable to the life-style of the kings. This was succeeded by the privilege to the kings to stabilize their political position. Sanskrit, being the language of Mahayanism, received scholarly status even in Buddhist monasteries, where Bhikkhus themselves indulged in Mahayanic festivals. Sri Lankan authors plucked up rudimentary forms from

Indian musical texts to make their literature attractive, and due to their Sanskrit learning, they had contact with the Indian literature. Accordingly, we can guess that this classification of instruments was borrowed by Sri Lankan authors from Sanskrit musical texts in India, and it was gradually developed by professional musicians according to the musical instruments which were available and permitted in the Sri Lankan society. One can infer that instrumental music, which was already present in Sri Lankan rituals and various ceremonies before and after the advent of Buddhism, has been categorized by the native scholars or learned musicians, who adapted the indological system to make it easy to classify every instrument into five units. It is assumable that the 5th categorization (Figure 2) is rather a localized

<sup>5</sup> According to Sen, Tansen (2015). The spread of Buddhism. In B. Kedar & M. Wiesner-Hanks (Eds.), *The Cambridge World History* (The Cambridge World History, pp. 447-480). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

way which has been developed through practicing musicians who knew better about the music instruments used in Sri Lanka and how they were played.

Herath and Gajaweera (2015:274) finds that murals in Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka are important source to find out some aspects of unwritten history of art and culture in Sri Lanka. They observe that only the local music instruments were depicted on the murals that were built before 19 century and the later depictions includes Western music instruments which includes stringed music instruments as well.

According to Bor (1986: 43), the first reference for the *Ravanahasta* can be found in Paumachariyu (880 AD) authored by Svayambhudeva who mentions that Ravana has created an instrument that is called in Apabramsa as *ravanhattaya* to please the Naga king Dharanendra. However, there is no further description found in that book about *ravanhatta*. Bor (1986) has done a comprehensive study on Sarangi, and he included his survey on *ravanhatta* with a few

references in Indic literature. According to him, Ramabhadrambha (early 17th century) mentions that the *ravanhatta* is played for classical music by female musicians in the court of Tanjore despite many Sanskrit authors (Vemabhupala Charitam, 1910) have devalued this instrument considering it as folk and beggars' music instrument. For the first time, Nanyadeva has mentioned *ravanhatta* as a musical bow and it were confirmed by Bartholomaeus Siegenbalg (1711) in his chapter about the music of Malabar. Bor (1986: 45) quotes Pierre Sonnerat (1782) who says, based on legends

*the Pandarons (Pandaram), a type of monk of which there are many, play to accompany themselves on a kind of violin called ravanastron. It was given this name because the giant Ravanen king of the island of Ceylon, invented it nearly five thousand years ago.*

However, there is no reference which says that the *ravanhatta*, which was played by Ravana, was a bowed instrument and what repertoire was played.



Figure 4: The author demonstrating a ravanhatta constructed by lecturers at the University of Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo. (Photo courtesy of Gisa Jähnichen, 2018).

## Discussion: Digital Media with Analog Content

There are a few websites providing some information on musical instruments emphasizing their belonging to the people living in Sri Lanka. The first reference on a music instrument that belongs to Sri Lanka is the *ravanhatta* which is mentioned in the Ramayana, the epic story supposedly written by Valmiki. Among the average population, the *ravanhatta* is considered to be the first violin and said to be played by Ravana, the mythological king who lived in Sri Lanka. It is not entirely clear when the Ramayana was actually written, by whom and where was the Lanka island that is mentioned there. Some of writings include historical information in order to prove that the *ravanhatta* is the oldest violin and its origin is Sri Lanka and Ravana's use. But, why it is important to say so and why some Sri Lankan citizens are proud to showcase this idea on internet platforms is not yet discussed.

The most influenced and influential online source about *ravanhatta* is Wikipedia.org which displays the physical structure, history and modern use of *ravanhatta*. The references given in Wikipedia has become the core online literature in this case by providing authority for the statements regarding origin and cultural belonging. Most prominently Edward Heron-Allen's book published in 1885 is referred which mentions *ravanhatta* as the ancestor of the violin. One of Wikipedian authors of *ravanhatta* ironically mentions that "Arab traders brought the *ravanastron* from India to the Near East, where it provided the basic model for the Arab rebab" though Edward writes it just opposite "some authors has

supposed that *Ravanastron* was introduced into India by Mohammedans; if this had been the case it would be most likely bear some resemblance to the Arabian and Persian instruments ..." (Edward, 1885: 39). Edward uses three written sources for gathering information i.e. Engle (1874), Sonnerat (1782), and Fetis (1869).

In 2013, a Sri Lankan newspaper called Sunday Times<sup>6</sup> released an article titled "Sri Lanka's Ravanahatha is the world's first violin" which is also available online. This article is widely copied in number of websites which are mostly nationally relevant. The sentence "Sir Christopher Ondaatje investigated the origin of the Violin and discovers it all started in Sri Lanka" is widely used to attract general public and to show up the historical legacy to Sri Lankans and prominently to the non-Sri Lankans. It is Dinesh Subasinghe who promoted *ravanhatta* in Sri Lanka by appearing in TV programs and Sri Lankan and Indian newspapers. According to the newspaper article called Indian Express<sup>7</sup>, Mr Dinesh Subasinghe introduced *ravanhatta* to the former Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa. Subsequently, the president has offered him a scholarship to study music at the A. R. Rahman's KM Music Conservatory in Chennai, India. Subasinghe has gained his popularity in Sri Lanka through Internet sources, television and radio channels and newspaper articles after releasing a music

6 Published in June 02, 2013. Available at <<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/130602/plus/sri-lankas-ravanahatha-is-the-worlds-first-violin-46908.html>>, accessed December 02, 2018.

7 Published in February 07, 2011. Available at <<http://www.newindianexpress.com/entertainment/tamil/2011/feb/07/a-musical-instrument-played-by-ravana-himself-225517.html>>, accessed December 02, 2018.

album of instrumental pieces of popular songs played on *ravanhatta*.



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## Ravanahatha

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A **ravanahatha** (variant names: *ravanhatta*, *rawanhatha*, *ravanastron*, *ravana hasta veena*) is an ancient bowed, stringed instrument, used in **India**, **Sri Lanka** and surrounding areas. It has been suggested as an ancestor of the **violin**.<sup>[1]</sup>

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### Construction [edit]



The ravanahatha's sound box may be a gourd, a halved coconut shell or hollowed-out cylinder of wood, with a membrane of stretched goat or other hide. A neck of wood or bamboo is attached, carrying between one and four or more peg-tuned strings of gut, hair or steel, strung over a bridge. Some examples may have several sympathetic strings. The bow is usually of horsehair, examples vary in length.

### History [edit]

In Indian and Sri Lankan tradition, the ravanahatha is believed to have originated among the Tamil and Hela people of Lanka during the time of the legendary king Ravana, after whom the instrument is supposedly named. According to legend, Ravana used the ravanahatha in his devotions to the Hindu God Shiva.<sup>[2]</sup> In the



Indian Ravanahatha at the Casa Museo Del Timple, Lanzarote, Spain.

## References [edit]

- ↑ Heron-Allen, Edward, *Violin-making : as it was and is, being a historical, theoretical, and practical treatise on the science and art of violin-making, for the use of violin makers and players, amateur and professional*, Ward, Lock, and Co., 1885, pp. 37-42 *Archive.org facsimile of Cornell University Press copy*​​ (accessed 29 June 2017)
- ↑ *The Island* (9 March 2008). "Sri Lankan revives Ravana's musical instrument"​​.
- ↑ Heron-Allen, Edward, *Violin-making : as it was and is, being a historical, theoretical, and practical treatise on the science and art of violin-making, for the use of violin makers and players, amateur and professional*, Ward, Lock, and Co., 1885, pp. 37-42 *Archive.org facsimile of Cornell University Press copy*​​ (accessed 29 June 2017)
- ↑ Choudhary, S.Dhar (2010). *The Origin and Evolution of Violin as a Musical Instrument and Its Contribution to the Progressive Flow of Indian Classical Music: In search of the historical roots of violin*​​. Ramakrishna Vedanta Math. ISBN 9380568061​​. Retrieved 5 September 2015.
- ↑ Balachandran, PK (7 February 2011). "A musical instrument played by Ravana Himself"​​. *New Indian Express*​​. Retrieved 1 May 2013.
- ↑ *The Sunday Times* (Sri Lanka) (8 March 2015). "Dinesh records highest sale for an instrumental"​​. Retrieved 16 July 2015.

Figure 5: Essential view of the Wikipedia page on Ravanahatha [*ravanhatta*].



Figure 6: Subasinghe with President Pajapaksa discussing the meaning of the instrument for the culture of Sri Lanka.

His music records were widely sold and, by March 2015 as an newspaper article mentions, "Dinesh Subasinghe has set a record by creating the highest selling instrumental music compact disc (CD) titled 'Rawan Naada' in Sri Lanka"<sup>8</sup>.

The recent web article "ravanhatta of bards and villains" written by Leora Pezarkar (2017) is a compilation of previous information available online. It provides incomplete bibliographical information to justify the statements. The website is about stories in India as if the author attempts to persuade the readers that *ravanhatta* is rather Indian than Sri Lankan by simply mentioning "However, there is no historical record of such an instrument ever existing in Sri Lanaka". Most of the text is about the stories of *ravanhatta* in an Indian context.

Now, considering all the misinformation, speculation, and twisting with conservative colonial classification systems coming from India and the West, the questions remaining in order to evaluate any online content regarding this topic are:

- What is said about instrumental music in Sri Lanka?
- What is said about the origin of the instrument in question?
- How is this claim supported?
- Is the visual support convincing?
- What is the main goal to have put this information in the context of a website?

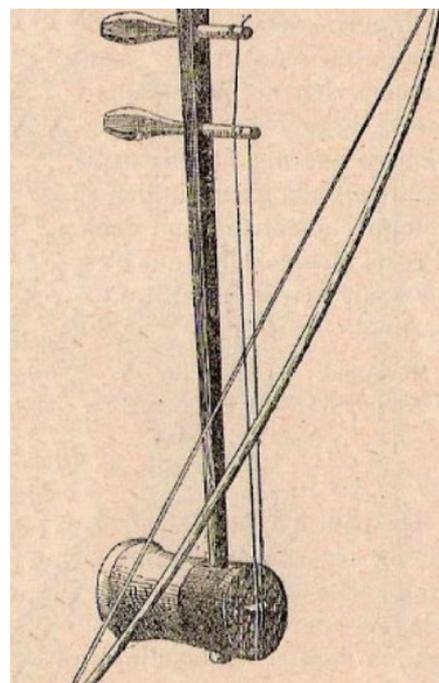


Figure 7: Illustration of the article by Pezarkar (2017)<sup>9</sup>.

## Conclusion

The main reason for inventing a history and a cultural belonging is a questionable national pride in specific achievements. The colonial period in Sri Lanka ended long time ago, however, the way how cultural features of powerful colonizers were admired and appropriated among the upper layers of the society has still an impact on dealing with a limited awareness for regional culture and nationhood.

The perception of the *ravanhatta* is a good example to show the difficulties that come with an introvert understanding of the culture within a modern nation. The following scheme on Figure 8 can illustrate the ways of thinking.

8 Published at the Sunday Times newspaper in March 08, 2015. Available at <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/150308/magazine/dinesh-records-highest-sale-for-an-instrumental-139029.html>, accessed December 02, 2018.

9 Available at <https://www.livehistoryindia.com/snapshot-histories/2017/12/20/ravanhatta---of-bards-villains>, accessed December 02, 2018.

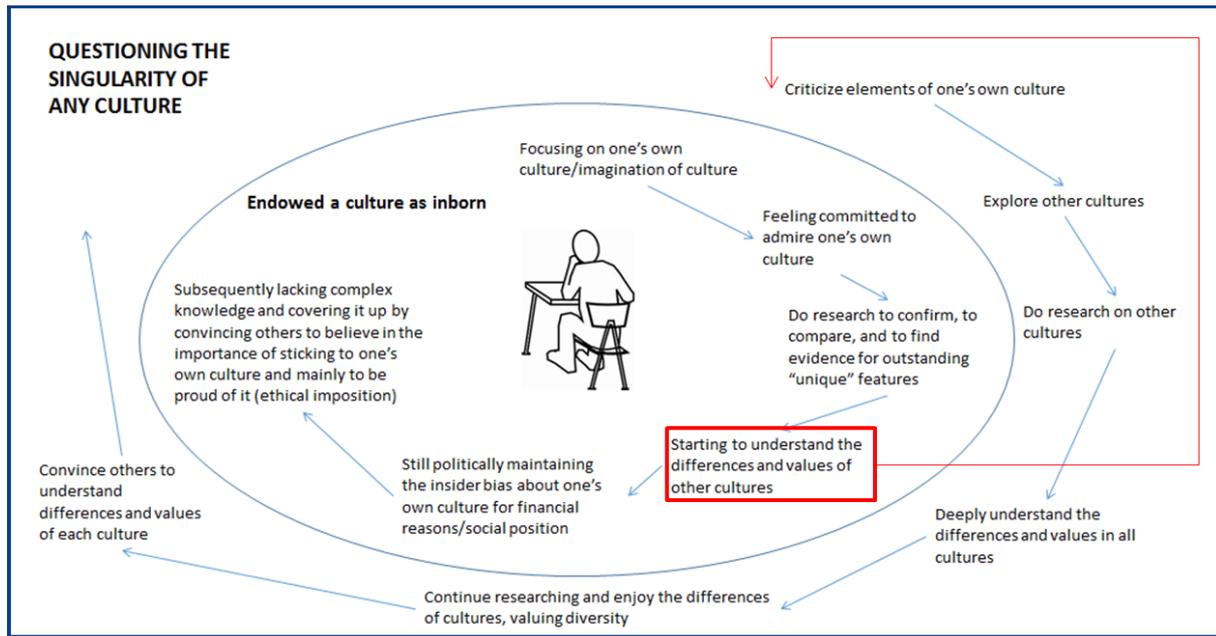


Figure 8: Scheme of perpetuating reasons for cultural nationalism and the subsequent impact on educational goals within humanities.

In the end, when the turning point of understanding differences becomes productive, the singularity of cultures must be questioned. If all cultural achievements are a result of giving them meaning in different ways, the single origin must be finally limited to some very few elements within an entity. This applies on big nations as well as on small musical instruments. The example of the *ravanhatta* shows the necessity of dynamic meanings within a large region and, in contrast, the effect of misinformation through short sighted policy making. In this context the following questions have to be raised:

- We have to explain why true facts are not popular compared to the made up stories and why scholars are obviously not “grounded” enough in order to reach out.

- Also, what do we suggest in order to make a difference in the future and by using digital media?

So far, digital media work for misinformation or perpetuation of nationalistic and also for progressive goals. On the one hand, they help to re-produce colonial thinking and self-colonizing life patterns. On the other hand, they also become evidences for these issues, so that they will be discussed. The future has to use digital media on a higher level of understanding and scholars have to be among the first in revealing the true technological forces of those media for the benefit of a better distribution of knowledge. Therefore, there is no end of thinking in a larger vision.

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