

An Analytical Study of the Identity Characteristics of Sinhala Seepada Singing Style;

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Abstract:

There is a great deal of interest and investigation into the classification of folk songs in the world today. Folk musicologists use a variety of methods to accomplish this. This classification primarily uses its context, the place where folk songs are sung, and the meaning of those poems. Investigations have revealed that Sri Lanka has also been particularly interested in this classification since 1960s. To that end, they have used the meaning of folk poetry and the occasions in which it is sung. What we are trying to introduce here is a classification that can be used according to the melody of folk songs. As a result, the “Seepada” singing style can be introduced. “Seepada” can be described as having been created with unique features. This article will investigate its identification and distinctive features.

Key words; Seepada, Singing styles, Isolationism, uniform pause,

Introduction:

This topic has been selected by the researcher to reveal the identity of the Sinhala folk poems. Many people who classify Sinhala folk poetry do not care about the fairness of folk poetry and the genuine feelings of its creators. Folk poetry should be categorized by its use of musical and melodic analysis. They should be called singing styles. So far, classification of folk songs in Sri Lanka has been presented by folk writers. There are only two or three practical folk musicians among them. The majority of writers do not know the practical subject of folk poetry. That is why there are many misconceptions in the classification of folk poems. Even in modern school education, a classification

of folk poetry divided by folk literature is used. It doesn't have to be that way. What needs to happen is a classification that should be done by recognizing the spirituality and tone of the real folk poets. It is no secret that there is enough musical Analyzing in those songs to do just that. Therefore, the central goal of this study is to better identify the musical background and identity of the songs. With its specific objectives to;

- Commentary on the musical background of Sinhala folk poems.
- Expression of the art of expressing the emotional feelings of the villagers through the use of musical tones.
- Presenting facts to identify the unique characteristics of “seepada” folk singing styles.

Objective:

The purpose of this study is to explain the identity characteristics of Sinhala “Seepada” singing, which is sufficient to classify independently.

Methodology:

“Seepada” poems sung in different places of Sri Lanka will be used in the preliminary investigation of this study. Folk songs recorded from 1970 to 1980 under the direction of Mr. C.D.S. Kulathilake and conducted by the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) are used as the basic data. In addition, recordings from the Research Unit maintained by the University of the Visual and Performing Arts (UVPA) are also used. Folk poems recorded by us in various venues in Sri Lanka are also used in connection with this research. A scientific analysis of recorded folk poems is done by incorporating them into various technological devices. The main purpose of this is to provide a realistic analysis of the folk melody by performing a scientific analysis of the acoustics and colors of the use of the voice in the choir. The scientific method we use for this is currently the world accepted cent system. Alexander J Ellis presented the cent system of measurement, based on the

acoustic logarithms decimal semitone system introduced by Gaspard de Prony in the 1830s. (Benson, 2007, 166.) 1200 cents will be used here for the 12 tones we currently use. It can be illustrated in a chart below.

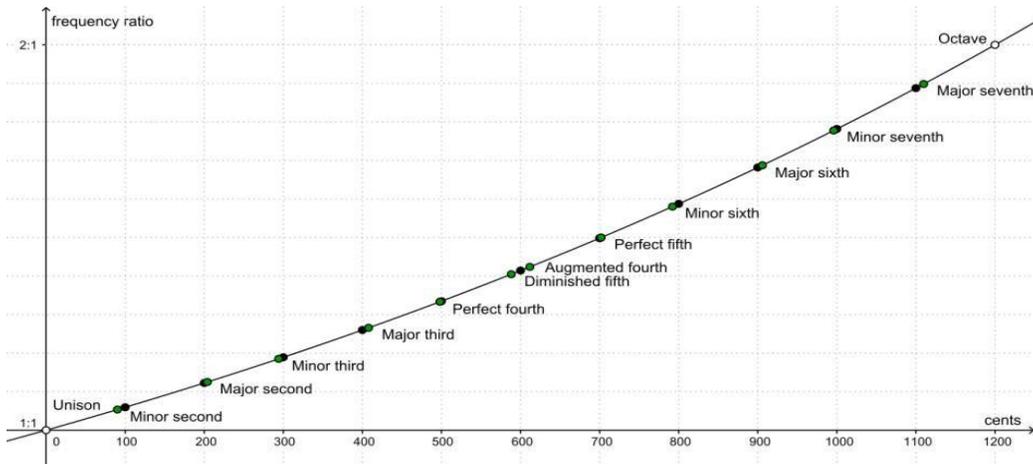


Figure – 1 Comparison of equal-tempered intervals showing the relationship between Frequency ratio and the intervals' values, in cents.

This study is done by listening to the poems and analyzing them using modern technology. It is expected to find the difference in the musical notes by substituting the following formula

$$\ln \left[\frac{f_2}{f_1} \right] = \frac{\phi}{1200} \ln 2 \quad \text{or} \quad \phi = 1200 \frac{\ln \left[\frac{f_2}{f_1} \right]}{\ln 2}$$

If $f_1 = 246$ Hz and $f_2 = 275$ Hz then the interval is 192.9279 cents.

Figure – 2 If one knows the frequencies F1 and F2 of two notes, the number of cents measuring the interval from F1 to F2 may be calculated by the above formula (similar to the definition of a decibel):

Results and Discussions:

Seepada and **Siwupada** seem to be two terms with the same meaning, but in practice, it seems to have two meanings. The Siwupada is used for poems consisting of four lines. seepada can be referred to as a folk singing style. Some believe that the Seepada and the Siwupada are the same. (Wijethunga, 1993, 35.) It must be said that when the singing styles of Seepada is used in practice, it has a different meaning. (kulathilaka. 1991, 49.)

Siwupada

Siwu is four. The *pada* mean the line. The siwupada consisted of four lines. When the dosage is written equally in all four lines, it is called a Siwupada viritha.

Ganasaki Vasam Kisi Ema Math Sama Karathahoth Sama

Eli Viram Pada Uva Siwupada Nameyi Danne”

(Soratha Thero, 1947, 30. Poem)

Seepada

Seepada singing style is one of the most popular singing styles among Sinhala folk Songs. It means a certain singing tradition. The four-line poem is used for these songs styles. Some of the poems selected for this purpose are called Seepada. They are as below *Karaththa Seepada* (Carts poems) *Pathal Seepada*, (Mining poems) *Pel Seepada*, (Poems sung from the hut temporarily created in Chena farming) *Babara Seepada* (Wasp Poems) *Paaru Seepada* (Boat poems)

Identity Characteristics of **Seepada** Singing:

Among the popular folk songs used in Sri Lanka, several features unique to the singing of the *Seepada* can be identified. Those features are not found in other poems. In this study, it was found

that the singing was deliberately done by the villagers. This may be due to the fact that they have identified this style of singing separately.

01. Singing with equal pauses (Yathi)

A common feature of this song is the uniform pause. Singing the first line is characterized by a pause in the middle of the second line and a pause at the end of the second line. It can be expressed as below.

Wel Yaayaka Gon Dennek Kaka Uni

In eka GonekValigaya Nethiva veni veni

(Two oxen in a rice field were eating; one of them ...without its tail stood swinging side by side)

Surprisingly, this is the main feature of the 186 folk poems which was used for this investigation. This style of singing can be clearly identified as the main identity of these folk poems. The other main feature is that the singing takes place in one breath until the first pause. It can be explained more in the image below.

Singing the words of the poem

= _ _ _

Pause and Yathi (यति) =

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

01. Use of space in Seepada singing

These songs take place far away from home. It could be at a mine, threshing floor, Chena farming, river, a forest. These poems are designed to suit the occasion and the need. All these matters can be summarized as below.

Poetry type	Place	Requirement	Environment	Space
Mining Poems	Workplace in the miners	Loneliness,	Night,	Empty space
Wasp Poems	Forest	Safety	Day, scary,	Empty space
Cart Poems	Road,	Communication	Day And Night	Empty space
Ferry Poems	River,	Communication	Day And Night	Empty space
Chena Farming Poems	Forest	Safety, Isolationism,	Night,	Empty space

This shows that these Poems are based on their needs. These poems are sung in a jungle, a meadow, a road, on an empty space. The basic requirements here are communication and overcoming fear. Therefore, it should not be considered as a beautiful or sweet songs. That song is full of sorrow and pain. Therein lies the bitterness of their lives. Some of the poems also retain devotion and appeal.

Voice production for the singing of *Seepada*:

Human voices for singing are divided into three main types as below;

- i. Chest Voice
- ii. Mix Voice
- iii. Nasal Voice (McKinney, 1994, 1244.)

Voices can again be divided into two categories according to the gender of the person.

- i. Female Voice
Soprano, Mezzo Soprano, Contralto,
- ii. Male Voice
Countertenor, Tenor, Baritone, Bass. (Coffin, 1960, 229.)

Seepada is a type of singing that is done using an open voice. (Tenor Voice) Tenor, the highest male vocal range, normally extending approximately from the second B below middle C to the G above; an extremely high voice, extending into the alto range, is usually termed a countertenor. It is clear that, almost all of the *Seepada* used in this research are associated with the highest voice range. Singing in the distance can be seen here as their main purpose to use their body energy to create a voice.

The use of fixed and prolonged *yathi*:

The main feature of this singing style is that it stays in the same tone for a long time. From that tone, various movements, beautiful uses, and vocal prowess are performed. The following is an example for the use of such long *yathi*.



Figure – 3 The image shows the use of a *Yathi* in a song taken by Dingiri Mudiyansele Abeykoon (65. Age) at the Kurunegala Konweve.

The initial time is one second, and four hundred and fifty-two milliseconds.



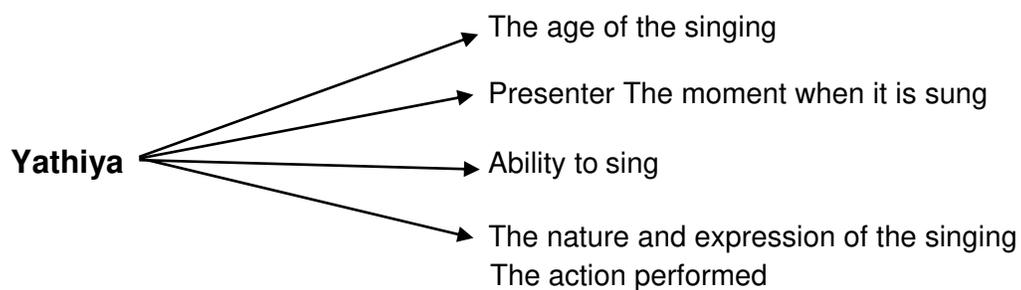
Figure – 4 The end time is 11 seconds and 166 milliseconds. (1. ms = 0.001 268 sec) The duration of the *Yathi* should be calculated as below;

11, Sec. 166 Ms

01, Sec. 452 Ms

09, Sec. 714 Ms

The duration of the **Yathi** in this song is 09 seconds 714 milliseconds. It is amazing to be able to sing continuously without using words. We have given this example to prove that the use of **Yati** in the singing of the **Seepada** is a common feature. To find out, songs were researched in different place in Sri Lanka. Those areas are Rambukka, Matale, Mathalapitiya, Monaragala, Hulangamuva, Laggala, Dambulla, Kalundeva, Pannampitiya, Kandy, Kaluthara, Galle, Mathara, Halawatha, Badulla, Kegalle, Rathnapura, Balangoda, Minneriya, Horana and Warakapola. It is clear that the **Yathi** used in these songs are different for the following reasons.



Breathing activity and ability vary according to the age of the singer. Breathing has a direct effect on maintaining the **Yathi** of the song. The '**Yathiya**' may also vary depending on the occasion in which the singing is performed. This is influenced by the fact that being a free opportunity is not a job or a basic need.

Investigation of Musical tones:

It is clear that the locations of the musical notes used in the singing of the *Seepada* are not the tonal positions we currently use. It should be investigated using the modern method of

measuring musical notes, the cent system. A cent is a unit of measurement for the ratio between two frequencies. An equally tempered semitone (the interval between two adjacent piano keys) spans 100 cents by definition. An octave—two notes that have a frequency ratio of 2:1—spans twelve semitones and therefore 1200 cents. Since a frequency raised by one cent is simply multiplied by this constant cent value, and 1200 cents doubles a frequency, the ratio of frequencies one cent apart is precisely equal to $2^{1/1200} = 1200\sqrt[1200]{2}$, the 1200th root of 2, which is approximately 1.0005777895. (Benson, 2007, 166p.) The *Seepada* used in this investigation were measured according to the above method. This ensured that the musical notes on the songs were different from the main musical notes currently in use and that they were not located at regular notes. Following is an investigation of those musical notes.

The diagram below illustrates the tone of the poem “*male male ara naamala nelaa varen,*”

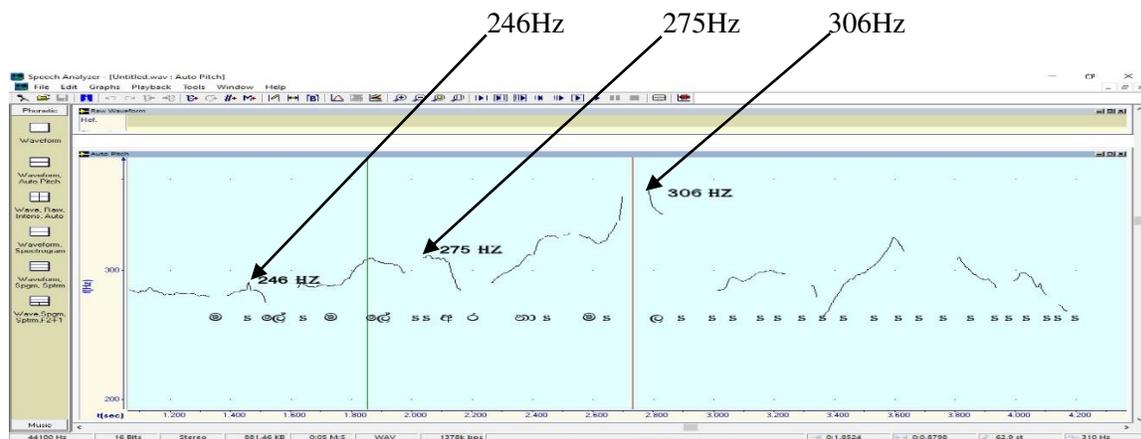


Figure – 5 This poem was sung by Mathalapitiya wedikkaragedara piloris (67 Age)

The frequency of the first letter here is 246 Hz. (Arrow No. 1) The frequency of the second part is 275 Hz . (Arrow No. 2) The frequency of the third part is 306 Hz. (Arrow No. 3) These 3 sound locations are clearly displayed in this song.

246 Hz is the frequency between the komal nishadaya (B^b) and shudda nishadaya (B) musical notes. (MIDI Note reference chart - newt.phys.unsw.edu.au/jw/notes.html) Therefore, this calculation was made based on the above musical notes.

The three sound place are as follows

1st - 246 Hz

2nd - 275 Hz

3rd - 306 Hz.

The difference between the first and second places was found. It used a world-renowned measurement formula.

$$\ln\left[\frac{f_2}{f_1}\right] = \frac{\phi}{1200} \ln 2 \quad \text{or} \quad \phi = 1200 \frac{\ln\left[\frac{f_2}{f_1}\right]}{\ln 2}$$

If $f_1 = 246$ Hz and $f_2 = 275$ Hz then the interval is 192.9279 cents.

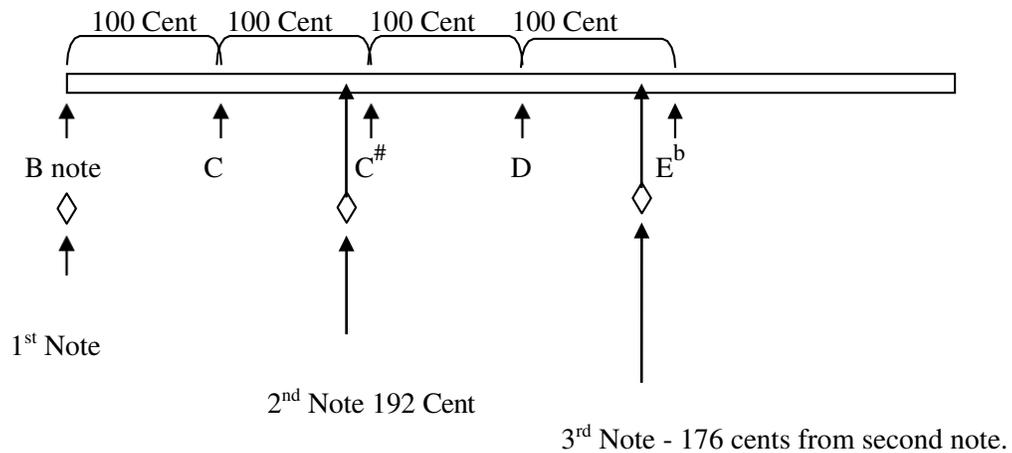
The gap between the first and second places is 192 cents.

$$\text{If } f_1 = 275 \text{ Hz and } f_2 = 306 \text{ Hz then the interval is } 184.9200 \text{ cents.}$$

[Advantages of cents](#)

The gap between the second and third places is 184 cents.

Below is a chart of currently accepted vowel positions and alignments in the world based on these data.



If $f_1 = 246$ Hz and $f_2 = 276$ Hz then the interval is 199.2119 cents.

Advantages of cents

The gap between the first and second places is 199 cents.

This shows that the musical note positions used in this *Seepada* singing are different from those accepted in the modern world.

Table with Sent measurements of tone intervals:

Name of Singer, Age and village	Poetry type	Musical Notes	
		The difference between the first and second tones	The difference between the second and third tones
Gama Gedara Ukkubanda. (65) Mathalapitiya	<i>Seepada</i> , Cart Poem	1 st 225 Hz = A 2 nd 295Hz = D 468 Cents 28 cents less than the D Note	1 st 295 Hz = D 2 nd 318Hz = D/E 129 Cents 70 cents less than the E Note
Millagahagedara Bayyaa, (54) Naagalaweve, Kibissa,	<i>Seepada</i> , Cart Poem	1 st 242 Hz = B 2 nd 329 Hz = E 531 Cents 64 cents less than the F Note	1 st 329 Hz = E 2 nd 348 Hz = F 97 Cents 98 cents more than the E Note
Koralegedara Chandana Hami, (67) Kivulpana,	<i>Seepada</i> , Mine Poem	1 st 235Hz = B ^b 2 nd 349 Hz = F 684 Cents 14 cents less than the F Note	1 st 349Hz = F 2 nd 317 Hz = E ^b -166 Cents 34 cents less than the E ^b Note
Jayakodi Arachchige Saiman Singho, (49) Palannoruva,	<i>Seepada</i> , Ferry Poem	1 st 354Hz = F 2 nd 327Hz = E -137 Cents 57 cents less than the E Note	1 st 327Hz = E 2 nd 265 Hz = C -363 Cents 30 cents less than the Middle C Note

It should be clarified that the above musical notes positions are different from the currently accepted musical notes positions in the world. It is difficult to pinpoint the location of the musical note of *Seepada* singing. At no point in this investigation was it determined of singing with the same frequency.

We were able to explain several factors that contributed to this. Those assumptions can be summarized as below.

01. Do not use musical instruments for singing.
02. Having to adjust the sound to suit different types of drums.
03. The Singing sound range is unlimited due to the use of free space.
04. Having to balance the voice while singing with environmentally friendly sounds.
05. Singing using different instruments indirectly affects their vocalizations.

It is very difficult to find musical notes other than the ones currently used for Sinhala folk poems. In order to do so, special training is required. Replacing it with the modern generation can lead to a very problematic situation. Let's believe that the above can be done to some extent by exploring the musical notes and creating musical instruments and singing with them.

Conclusion:

In this research, it was identified that "Seepada" is a style of singing in Sri Lanka. It was clear that the song itself had unique characteristics and was different from the other songs. It was discovered that folk poetry should be categorized using musical and melodic analysis and referred to as singing styles. It was an opportunity to identify the unique features of the "Seepada" folk song and to investigate the facts about it. Although literary texts refer to "Seepada" and "Siwupada" as one, it was possible to identify them as two. It was explained here that there is a yathi singing and musical tones that are unique to the "Seepada" singing itself. Seepada singing should be referred to as "Seepada" singing style as it can be identified as a singing tradition with many unique features. It can be said that it is the leading style of folk singing in Sri Lanka. The song features melodies that are typical of Sri Lankan folk singers

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