

SOCIAL PROCESSES THAT SHAPED SRI LANKAN SINHALA FOLK MUSIC AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS BASED ON THE PURPOSES OF USAGE

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Abstract

Folk music is the music of the people. People have used folk songs to express different emotions. This research paper argues that the social processes that have shaped Sinhala folk music are multifaceted and have significant cultural and historical implications. By exploring the different categories of Sinhala folk music and their purposes of usage, this study aims to fill the research gap in understanding the characteristics and functions of this musical tradition, highlighting its role in preserving the cultural heritage of the Sinhalese people. Brief explanations of why these songs were used, including how lyrical characteristics and meanings are applied for grouping and naming, are included. Literature on Sri Lankan Sinhala Folk Music that has been published over the years in journals, books, research reports, web articles, and other materials was analysed using qualitative content analysis. It was found that people sing these songs mainly to express their feelings and emotions in addition to a range of other purposes such as communication, passing the time, motivating people, and entertainment. The existing classifications are made mainly considering activities or work-related aspects and meanings of lyrics demonstrating that they are influenced by social interactions. The authors suggest several methods to conserve Sri Lankan Sinhalese traditional music elaborating on the importance of ensuring such preservations.

Keywords

Characteristics of Sinhala folk songs, Occupational songs, Purpose of usage of folk songs, Sustaining and conserving folk music/songs.

Introduction

It is difficult to answer questions such as who created folk poems and music, when they were produced, and who ordered them to be composed and sung in various styles. Just as life in the villages is less complicated, folk poetry uses a simple language mostly with a simple tune. The concepts used for composing folk poetry are also simple. Folk songs have been sung based on events very close to people's lives therefore, folk songs can provide insights into the country's folklore.

There are many definitions of folk music worldwide. Freedman (2017: 134) presents the philosopher

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Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744-1803) definition of folk songs as "those created by a particular folk group, and these songs represent the true spirit of the community that produced and nourished them". The provisional definition of folk music adopted by the International Folk Music Council, according to Karpeles (1955: 6), is: "Folk Music is the Music that has been submitted through the process of oral transmission. It is a byproduct of evolution and is reliant on the continuity, variety, and selection of conditions". A musical tradition that has developed via oral transmission is what gives rise to folk music. Continuity, which connects the present to the past; variety, which results from the creative urge of the individual or group; and selection by the community, which decides the form or forms in which the music endures, are the components that shape the tradition (Lomax, 1960). Karim (2020) defined folk music as one of the fundamental elements of art and culture. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (2022), folk music is a traditional form and generally a rural music type that was primarily passed down through families and other small social groups, whereas the Columbia Encyclopedia defines it as music of anonymous composition, transmitted orally (Lagasse et al, 2000). These qualities are embedded in Sri Lankan traditional music and this study explores a selected set of Sinhala/Sinhalese folk poetry and songs.

The history of scholars looking for Sinhala folk music can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Sri Lanka. During this period, there was a growing interest among scholars and intellectuals to explore and document the cultural heritage of the Sinhalese people. Scholars like Arnold Bake, Devar Surya Sena, W. B. Makulloluwa, and C. de S. Kullatillake were notable pioneers in the field of collecting and studying Sinhala folk music. Their contributions have been significant in documenting and understanding the rich musical traditions of the Sinhalese people.

The majority of the Sri Lankan population is Sinhalese and most Sinhalese are Buddhists, as such, both Sinhala music and dance depict Buddhist influences. Many melodic systems of Sinhala folk songs are influenced by Buddhist chant melodies, particularly those of the various styles of "*Pirittha*", a type of Buddhist chant (Kulathilaka, 1976). The influence of Buddhist chants, predominantly those associated with rituals and ceremonies, can be heard in the tonal patterns, melodic contours, and rhythmic characteristics of certain folk songs. While Sinhalese folk songs are often performed by the general community and are deeply embedded in everyday life and cultural expressions, the ritualists' songs and dances are performed by specialized practitioners who undergo specific training and adhere to prescribed rituals and traditions. The repertoire of the ritualists is often distinct and separate from the folk song tradition. Long time ago, Wijesekera (1945: 281) stated that "The folk songs of the Sinhalese can still be heard among the remote villages where the pleasures of living, labour, and enjoyment are understood"; however, under the current circumstances, it is possible to note that such practices are rapidly diminishing from those contexts. Although many types of research have been conducted on folk music, very limited reviews have been conducted on Sri Lankan Sinhala folk music. As such, there exists a research gap in the study of Sinhala folk music.

This research paper argues that the social processes that have shaped Sinhala folk music are multifaceted and have significant cultural and historical implications. By exploring the different categories of Sinhala folk music lyrics and their purposes of usage, this study aims to fill the research gap in understanding the characteristics and functions of these traditions, highlighting their role in preserving the cultural heritage of the Sinhalese people.

Methods

A qualitative research approach has been used as the methodology for this study. The literature on Sri Lankan Sinhala folk music that has been published over the years in journals, books, research reports, web articles, and other materials was analyzed in this study to find explanations for the research questions: How has Sri Lankan folk music been categorized? and What are the social processes that have shaped Sinhala Folk Music identities? The secondary sources used for this literature review were selected at random. In addition, this research also investigates why and how these songs have been used including the lyrical characteristics and methods used for grouping and naming the Sinhala folk songs. The findings are reported through categories, conceptual examples or systems, and a descriptive storyline (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Qualitative Content Analysis was used as the data analysis method. Green and Thorogood (2018) explained that for conducting exploratory work content analysis is suitable for the simple reporting of common information and facts from content considered for the study. The first author retrieved the literature related to Sinhala Sri Lankan folk music as a local academic with access to resources in Sri Lanka and the second author collaborated in the process of data analysis and contributed to the process of writing this paper as an experienced academic in music education with a Sri Lankan music background.

Results and Discussion

Descriptions of Sri Lankan Sinhala Folk Songs

According to Sena (1954), the earliest folk songs of Sri Lanka are those of the Veddahs who are considered Sri Lanka's aborigines. He described further that Veddaha's songs are sung with two tones and are chanted poetry. It is believed that Sinhala folk song has evolved from Veddaha's songs; however, many Sinhalese folk songs are more advanced and not just chanted poetry (Sena, 1954). Folk songs have been an art form associated with the lives of Sinhalese since time immemorial (Beddage, 1989). Folk songs were created as a way to express emotions such as when being away from home and loved ones, pass the time (at work), motivate people (companions) by enabling them to avoid fatigue, uplift energy, and boost their morale to work effectively, keep fellow workers entertained or to communicate with others, and also to keep wild animals away from their cultivated fields, protect their crops and their harvest. A substantial amount of Sinhalese folk music is associated with the laborious processes of paddy/rice cultivation. The agricultural sector dominates Sri Lanka's economy and Sinhala villages are predominantly agrarian. The challenging task of paddy cultivation is the subject of many Sinhalese folk songs. Procedures, such as weeding, reaping, and threshing paddy, preparing the soil, planting rice seedlings or transplanting, and so forth, are depicted in folk songs.

Traditional music in Sri Lanka is divided into two major categories: *gemi gee*³ and *se gee* (Opposed to *se gee*, which's texts were written by poets and educated lyricists) (Dassenaike, 2012; Makulloluwa, 2000). Furthermore, Dassenaike (2012) divides *gemi gee* into three subcategories: *mehe gee* (occupational songs), *adahili and wishwasa* (faith/ritualistic songs), and *vinodashwadya* (games and entertainment-related songs).

3. Songs composed and sung by ordinary villagers.

Moreover, Dassenaikē (2012) divides *mehe gee* into three additional groups: *seepada* (singing style) *nelum gee* (transplanting paddy songs), and *goyam gee* (songs sung during the harvesting of paddy), and *adahili* (worship) and *wishwasa* (beliefs) into four additional groups: prose narration⁴, *yaga gee* (songs sung during folk rituals)⁵, *Pasam gee* (church-style music), *thun saranaya* (devotional songs)⁶, and *vinodashwadya* (entertainment) into five additional groups: *saudam*⁷, *jana natya gee* (songs composed and used for folk dramas and plays), *daru nelavili* (lullabies), and *onsili waram*⁸. Beddage (1989) has classified Sinhala folk songs into several categories according to the tonal patterns and those are *nelavili gee* (lullabies), *keli gee* (children's sports-related songs), *seepada*, *nelum gee* (transplanting songs), *welapum gee* (songs of lamentation), *bhakthi gee* (devotional songs), *Udarata gee* (songs from the Upcountry), *naadagam gee* (traditional drama songs), *gadya sahehi* (story/message presented in detail in poetic form, a poetic tradition)⁹, folk drama, and folk dance related *gee*.

Makulloluwa (2000) also classifies Sinhala folk songs into several categories similar to *Bethi Gee* (devotional songs), *Yaga Gee* (songs sung at folk rituals), *Mehe gee* (work-related songs), *Samaja gee* (community songs), *Keli Gee* (songs sung at folk games, and dances), *Nalu gee* (songs used by dancers or actors), *Virudu gee* (songs sung while playing the tambourine called rabana, a hand drum held in one hand and played with the other), *Rana gee* (battle songs), and *Venum Gee* (songs praising the beauty of nature). Makulloluwa (2000) enumerates the qualities of Sri Lankan folk music and according to him, common people without formal training or modern education who are not closely associated with educated people have created the lyrics, verses, and choruses of folk songs. Village songs contain people's feelings, thoughts, beliefs, folktales, history, historical events, life, careers, experiences of the day, and beliefs, amongst other things. Their composers are unknown, and folk music has been utilized by common folk and passed down orally. According to Kulathilaka (1999), folk music is the music of the people. Makulloluwa (2000) classifies Sinhala folk songs into several categories *Bethi gee* (devotional songs), *yaga gee* (songs sung during folk rituals), *mehe gee* (work-related), *samaja gee* (community), *keli gee* (songs sung at folk games, and dances), *nalu gee* (songs used by dances or actors), *virudu gee* (songs sung while playing the tambourine, called rabana, a hand drum held in one hand and played with the other), *rana gee* (battle songs), and *venum gee* (songs praising the beauty). As with most countries, Sri Lankan folk music is consistently present in the lives of the Sinhalese villagers, from birth to death during their life's journeys (Panapitiya, 2021).

The most popular singing style among the Sinhala folk is the *seepada* style (Kulathilaka, 1999). *Sivpada*, is a poetic verse consisting of four lines and a term synonymous with *seepada* but practically

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4. Rendered as invocations, invitations, and supplications (Kulatillake 1976).
 5. Yaga gee is divided into three types: Bali gee, Tovil gee, and Kankari gee (Kulatillake 1976).
 6. Devotional songs evolved from folk melodies, the most popular of which are the "Thun Saranaya" styles sung by pilgrims to Adam's Peak (Kulatillake 1976).
 7. Saudam are "salutary verses where drumming strokes and slaps attempt to mimic the melodic inflections of the voice" (Dassenaikē 2012: 44).
 8. *Onsili waram* (of Tamil origin) are "sung on makeshift swings that hang from tree branches" (Dassenaikē 2012: 44);
 9. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VX27Y-aSLJnBd-qhNOxGPrEXtIRJrx/view?usp=sharing>,

they represent two aspects (Kulathilaka, 1980, 1999).

Each of the four lines in a *sivpada* should be of the same length (Kulathilaka, 1991). According to Kulathilaka (1976), *sivpada* literally means four feet and is sung in/as a quatrain. Nonetheless, some *sivpada* contains as many as 32 *matras* (morae), a line with rhythms within those lines of three, four, or seven beats (Kulathilaka, 1991). Kulathilaka (1980) stated that most of the Sinhala traditional *kavi* are sung as *seepada* and are used to express hopes and despairs of the common folk. According to the literature, there are many types of folk songs *nelum gee* (transplanting songs), *gal/karaththa seepada* (when bullock carts were being driven), *pel seepada* (sung in temporarily built watch huts), *bambara seepada* (wild wasp honey collecting songs), *pathal seepada* (miner's songs), *paru seepada* (sung when boating/sailing) sung in *seepada* style (Kulathilaka 1980). According to Kulathilaka (1999), every folk song originated with a purpose in society, aside from purposes other than for enjoyment, and it is also used as a medium of communication.

The peasantry carries out these procedures cooperatively by helping one another (Prasangika, 2018). While they work in the fields, the farmers chant traditional melodies. Various verses, such as the *nelum gee* and *goyam gee* were sung throughout the paddy cultivation and harvesting procedures. *Nelum gee* are sung by a group of women while transplanting paddy seedlings, *kamath gee* is sung by the men while threshing paddy and *adahera* (cow calling) is also sung by men while threshing paddy and plowing paddy field. *Nelum gee* are most frequently sung in the upcountry region of Sri Lanka (Casinander, 1981; Panapitiya, 2021; Rajapakse, 2004). Despite the fact that there are many different types of folk music styles in Sri Lanka according to the literature, this research study has been limited to folk music categorized as activities or work-related songs and songs associated with social processes (*samaja gee*). Preparation of fields, planting, protecting crops (from wild animals, especially during the nighttime), harvesting, and processing (e.g., from paddy to rice) are procedures that require hard labour and it is evident that people have used folk songs to also express different emotions such as sadness, happiness, loneliness, and exhaustion related to above phases of farming, day to day lives including the transportation of crops.

Examples of selected Sinhala folk songs categorized as *Mehe Gee*

Andahera ¹⁰

Rice farmers utilized buffalos and let out a cry known as *andahera paama* when preparing paddy fields (ploughing) and threshing paddy. Only men are allowed to sing *andahera* verses. According to the style of the singing, *andahera* might take one of three forms: singing two lines of poetry with prose parts, singing a four-line poem in song form, and using solely prose parts and a variety of sounds (Kulathilaka, 1994). The usage of various tones and simultaneous vocal stops in the singing are the key features of *andahera* (Beddage, 2020; Panapitiya, 2020; Rajapakse, 2004). Since it is sung for animals, the use of different tones and pitch can be seen in this song (Panapitiya, 2020). The following footnote link demonstrates the sound of the *andahera* style¹¹

Nelum Gee

After the paddy fields are set up, the transplantation is completed. Paddy (rice seeds) sowing is used in

10. Cow Call

11. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f6q1hvqEd5D_8PVD-Vf-tiH7I5k-VGQE/view?usp=sharing

a few regions instead of transplanting. However, transplantation is a famous procedure in most places. Transplanting and plucking are done mostly by women. *Nelum Gee* are sung during the transplanting of paddy and the weeding of wild growth in the paddy fields. An example of *Nelum Gee* (transplanting songs) transcription is given below (Figure 1).

English translation:

When we were on our way to Bogambara,
thirty women were harvesting paddy;

though thirty women were harvesting,
it would have been better to see sisters working;
sister, your golden bangles give out a melodious sound;
sisters, you, who are involved in the activity
are protected by the gods.

Figure 1: Transcription of *Nelum Gee* in an English translation. Adapted from (Rajapakse 2004, 40-41).

The following link provided in the footnote is a studio-recorded *Bogamabara api nelum gee* sung by an academic staff member of the Department of Ethnomusicology, Faculty of Music, University of the Visual & Performing Arts^{12 13}

Pel Seepada (Songs sung while protecting the crop from wild animals).

There are two main ways of cultivating agricultural crops in Sri Lanka. *Goda govithena* (dry land farming called chena)¹⁴ which is the most ancient method (Chena Cultivation in Sri Lanka | Traditional Agriculture Practices of Sri Lanka., 2022), and *mada govithena* (wetland farming/cultivation in muddy soil) (Panapitiya, 2020). After cultivating, farmers use different methods to protect the crops from wild animals in these two different contexts. A temporarily built small hut (*pela*) in the paddy field (wet farming) is used by the farmers to spend the night in order to protect the crop from wild animals. On the branches of a big and tall tree, a watch hut or a treehouse is constructed for the farmer to climb up and chase away animals that come to destroy chena crops. The tree top watch-hut is built (for the safety of the farmer) and used to spot wild creatures, especially wild elephants. While watching over the fields at night, these melodies called *pel seepada* are sung. Village farmers sing *pel seepada* to stay awake at night and prevent getting weary and lonely and dispel the danger of the unknown darkness.

12. Bolukandurage Thushari, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe. 2022, 6 August, 2022

13. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FqXBL53Zcb_CCJAsxyO_Dli7370Z8xbE/view?usp=sharing

14. <https://www.dilmahconservation.org/arboretum/traditional-agriculture/chena-cultivation--466d60ba372e7be52d4c6e8573baf9bf.html>

Male Male nobanin ape ammaata
 Thopen apen den de netha ammata
 Vena de nethath dethane kiri bivvata
 Budun vadina lesa vedapan ammata¹

(Translation: Brother, brother, do not blame our mother! /We have nothing to give mother.
 /Nothing else but milk from mother. / Worship your mother the way you worship Buddha).

Ma Le - Ma le - ro ba ri n a pe - - - - - Am Ma
 7 Ta - - - - - thi ye na de ya k - - - - -
 13 Den neth A pa - Den naa Ta - - - - -
 19

Figure 2: An example of *pel seepada* transcription. Adapted from Panapitiya (2020: 53).

Goyam Gee (Songs sung during the harvesting of paddy)

Peasants take part in singing various poems known as *goyam gee* (harvesting song) while reaping the paddy crop. The following example (Figure 3) demonstrates the example of *goyam gee* transcription, phonetic Sinhala translation, and English translation.

U da ya ta pa - - - - - ya na
 Hi ru de vi ya - - - - - n ta i
 Sa wa sa ta pa - - - - - ya na
 San da de vee ya - - - - - n ta i
 Sat tha ra va ra - - - - - m de vee
 Sat tha ra de na - - - - - ta i

Vān da la - - - - - gu - ru - - - - - va ra
 A va sa ra ga - - - - - n ta i

Figure 3: An example of *Goyam Gee* transcription. Adapted from (Rajapakse 2004: 5).

Phonetic Sinhala Translation and English Translation

<p><i>Udayata paayona hiru deviyantai</i> <i>Sawasata paayana Sanda deviyantai</i> <i>Sathara warann devi sathara denaatai</i> <i>Wendalaa guruwara awasara gantai</i></p>	<p>to the sun God, who shines in the morning; to the moon God, who shines in the evening; to the four guardian Deities of the four corners; to get permission from the Teacher by worshipping</p>
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The following link provided in the footnote demonstrates the singing of *Udayata paayona hiru deviyantai goyam gee* a studio-recorded personal transcription and it is sung by a senior academic member of the Department of Ethnomusicology, Faculty of Music, University of the Visual & Performing Arts (Rajapakse, 2022)^{15 16}.


Kamath Gee (Songs sung during processing, threshing, and cleaning paddy)

The *kamath gee* performed on the threshing floors is regarded as the final form of chanting during paddy farming in the process of separating the kernels from the stems and the husks from the kernels. The singing of *kamath gee* is related to cattle. Cattle are used to separate paddy grain from their grain stems. The harvested crop is walked on by the cows/oxen, who also separate the paddy seeds. *Kamath gee* is where the singing effects and vocal productions utilized in the *andahera* singing style are performed. These melodies are intended to lead the cattle and unburden the loneliness and exhaustion of the night. Buddhist poems have an influence on the lyrics of *kamath gee* and the opening invocation sings the praise of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha (Panapitiya, 2020). The following example demonstrates a famous *kamath gee* (Figures 4 and 5).¹⁶

Budun vadithi me kamathata
Daham suvada vihideyi vata
Yodun usata thibenaa betha
Budun anin en kamathata

(Translation: The Buddha comes to this threshing floor./ Then the scent of Dhamma spreads./
At the word of the Buddha the harvest/ comes to the threshing floor.)

Figure 4: An example of the *kamath gee budun wediya me kamatha*; Source Adapted from Panapitiya



Budu n va di thee - me ka mathata - sa dan su vanda - visire I vata
yodu n u sa ta - thi bena ba tna - Bu dan a nin - ei kama thata

The Buddha visits this *kamatha*,
The scent of sandalwood spreads around;
About three miles in height
It comes to the *kamatha* with the Buddha's command

Figure 5: An example of *kamath gee* transcription of *goyam gee* and its English and Sinhala translation. Adapted from Rajapakse (2004: 8).

There are different styles of Sinhala folk songs/music related to other types of work beyond farming and agriculture, in ancient Sri Lanka and the following descriptions consider a few selected occupations.

15. Rajapakse, Mangalika. interview by Kamani Samarasinghe, 8 August, 2022.

16. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VQdJhJKulG4z7kiQEa-Gii3CZQgLSVQ9/view?usp=sharing>

Gal/Karaththa Seepada (Bullock-cart songs)

Bullock carts were a common mode of transportation for ancient Sri Lankans, especially when moving agrarian harvests and commercial products. These were extremely difficult tasks because it was quite difficult to walk alone on the narrow gravel roads with/behind fully loaded bullock carts. The men who draw the carts men (drivers) sang *gal/karaththa seepada* while driving a bullock cart to stave off boredom, and loneliness, for communication, and to exchange feelings and ideas. The following link provided in the footnote demonstrates the singing of *Thandale denna depole dakkanawa* studio recorded personal transcription^{17 18}. An example of a phonetic *karaththa seepada* transcription is given below (Figure 6).

Phonetic Sinhala Translation

Thandale denna depole dakkanawa
Katukele gale noliha wadadenawa
Haputhale kanda dakala bada danawa
Pawkala gono adapan haputhal yanawa

Figure 6: An example of karaththa seepada transcription.

The four stanzas in this verse denote the harsh life and hardships faced by the ox carter and his ox. The verse also describes the nature of the *Haputale* area in Sri Lanka which is a mountainous, misty, and cold area. Life is hard and this song depicts the bond and understanding between man, animals, and nature. The Oriental notation and Western notation of “*Thandale denna depole dakkana*” are given below (Figure 7).

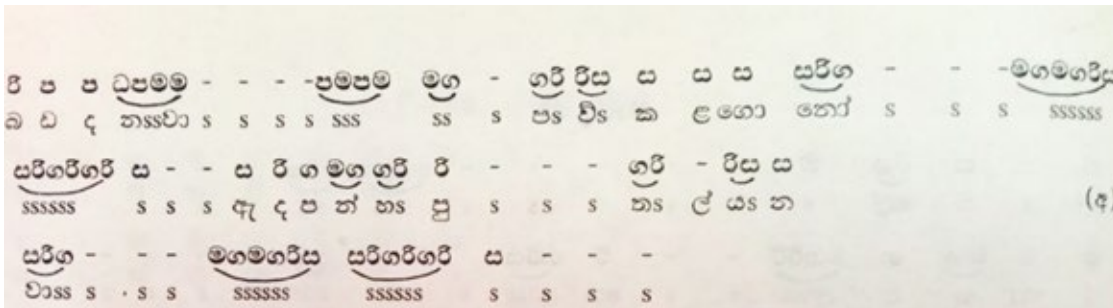
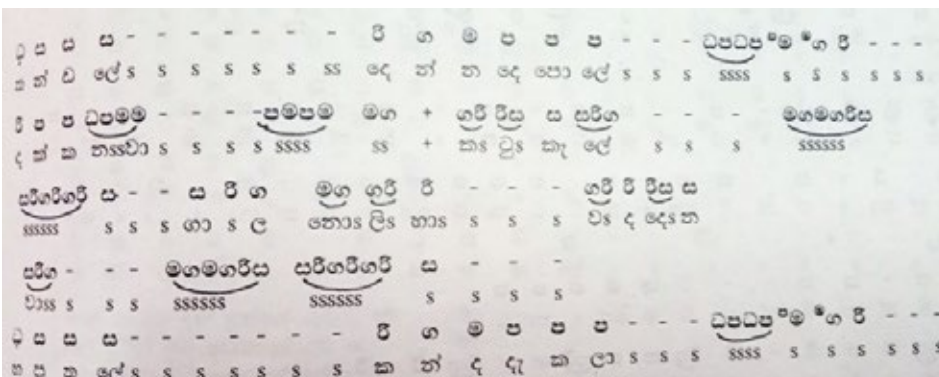


Figure 7: An example of gal/karaththa seepada transcription. Oriental music notation. Adapted from Makuloluwa (2000, 223-224) and its Western transcription.

17. Ariyaratna, Lansakkara, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe, 8 August, 2022
 18. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R_oezgOE9gZCP6uKnIzoESVn95WKiGX/view?usp=sharing

The image shows a musical score in Western notation for a Sinhalese folk song. The score consists of ten staves of music in a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are written in Sinhala below the notes. The lyrics are:

Tha n da le - dhe n na dhe po le -

- - - dha : k Ka na - - wa - - -

- - - Ka - tu - ke le - - -

- - - Gaa - la no - li - ha wa - dha dhe -

na wa - - -

Ha pu tha le - Ka n da de Ka la - - - ba

da dha na - wa - - - Pa - u - Ka la go

no - - - ae dho fa 'n ha - Pu - tha - l

ya - na wa - - -

Western Notation

***Pathal seepada* (Miner's song)**

The folk songs known as *pathal seepada* are sung by the villagers while they work in the mines. Life at the pithead is described in numerous *pathal seepada* (miners' songs), from areas (in Sri Lanka): Dumbara, Migoda, Maduragoda, Karawanella, Kahatagaha, and Pattalagedera (Amunugama, 1980). A miner sings about his labours as he continuously turns the *dabare* (windlass) to physically hoist up from the pits the bucket of mined graphite, according to Casinander's book (1981) "Miner's Folk Songs of Sri Lanka". In an effort to describe the culture of the Sinhalese graphite miners, Casinander has made an effort to analyze many of the folk songs in the context of their social setting. Zacharias P. Thundy (1983) reviewed Casinander's *Miner's Folk Songs of Sri Lanka* in 1981 and claimed that Casinander's study and interpretation of the songs were incomplete and very sketchy. The following example shows one of the most common *pathal seepada* in Sri Lanka. This is about a person doing a labour job. He is underpaid and lives in poverty. He talks about the black stone yards and the led found under mud and how the higher ranks pay lower wages to the lower ranked workers. Folk songs by miners frequently sound sad due to the dangerous and hazardous nature of the job. Just by viewing the poem, it can be said that it is a miners' poem because of the work and field described in it. The following link provided in the footnote demonstrates the singing of *Dadibidi gaga karana weda ratawati ye* as a *pathal seepada* studio recorded personal transcription^{19 20}.

19. Widanapathirana, Udayasiri, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe, 10 August, 2022
 20. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OvoaY1Jmgw-LX9Ugsl4q4QwXKor9eoBB/view?usp=sharing>

Paru seepada (Boatman's song)

Sivpada verses known as *paru seepada* are sung when performing boating activities (i.e. "boat/raft verses") on a range of different types of boats and rafts. The raftsman sang to his mistress while he punted his *paru* (raft) according to Casinander (1981). The singing of the well-known *paru seepada* called "*Male male oya namala*" can be listened to by clicking on the following link provided in the footnote^{21 22}. Sena (1954) in his article "Folk Songs of Ceylon" explained the first and second verses of this song as follows: "In this song, the boatsman is asked by his lady love to pluck for her a beautiful *Na* flower from a tree at the mouth of the river. She asks him to step lightly on the branch lest it breaks" (Sena, 1954: 13).

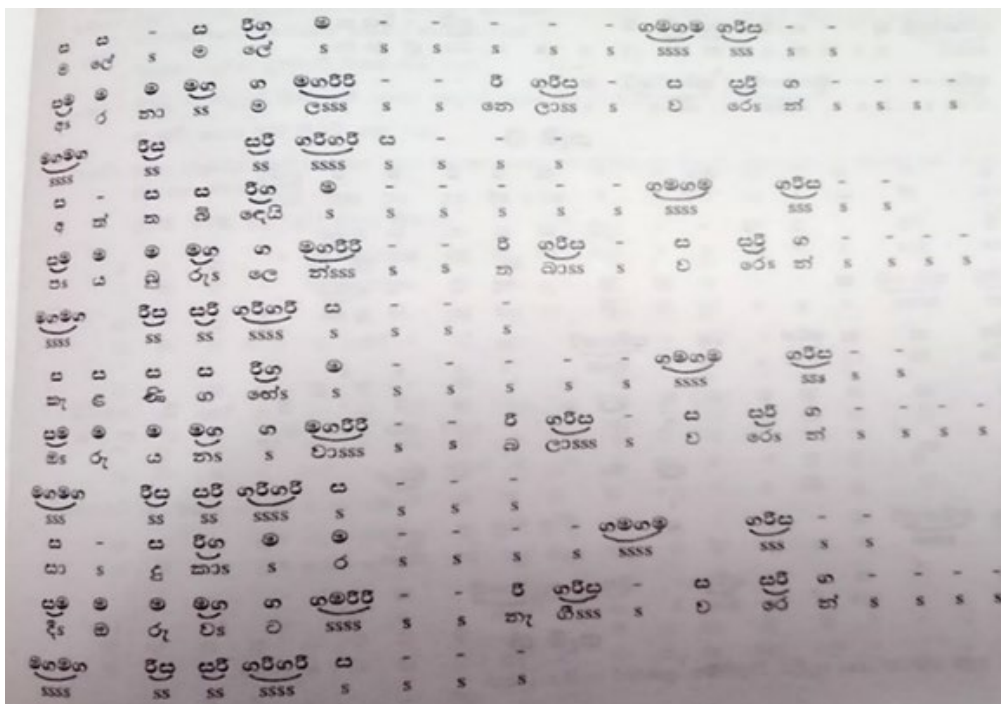


Figure 9: An example of *paru seepada* transcription. Oriental music notation. Adapted from Makulloluwa, W. B. (2000: 223).

Bambara Seepada (Wild honey collecting song)

One of the honeybee species found in Sri Lanka is the wild wasp, known as a *bambara* in Sinhala (Scientific name *Apis dorsata*). In Sri Lanka, there has been a long tradition of honey harvesting. The gathering of *bambara* honey from the huge combs built on the slopes of steep rocks is a daring feat that needs courage and skill. *Bambara Gee* are composed on a variety of subjects, including safety, personal amusement, pity for the wasps, and terror as well as the beauty of the surrounding natural environment (Depe, 2003).

The link provided in the footnote demonstrates the singing of "*Amma palla babarun atha warada ne thi*" *bambara gee* studio recorded personal transcription^{23 24}. Despite the fact that innocent wasps gather nectar drop by drop to build the hive and humans were aware that collecting honey is very sinful conduct, they still take the honey. Bees work extremely hard to survive, similarly humans collect the honey to make a living.

21. Bolukandurage Thushari, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe. 2022, 6 August, 2022
22. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uTYITbyHNDc3LRHGqziBVhGKawowxltg/view?usp=sharing>
23. Ariyaratna, Lansakkara, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe, 8 August, 2022
24. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kZ0IPD3CpJwmcFXCbn-TmXKPQAoz5hS2/view?usp=sharing>

Examples of Selected Sinhala Folk Songs used for social processes: *Samaja Gee*

In the old Sinhalese society, songs such as *Daru Nelavili* (lullabies), *Onsili Waram*, and *Keli Gee* were used for social interaction and entertainment other than occupations.

Daru Nelavili (Lullabies)

Daru nelavili gee is considered one of Sri Lanka's oldest singing styles and for generations, it has been used in Sri Lankan communities. *Nelavili gee* is the rhythmic singing coming from a beloved mother's lips²⁵. The *Nelavili gee* is the first song that every infant hears, and the mother's loving affection is recited in melodious lyrics in this style. The child is enthralled by the melody's soothing effect although s/he cannot understand its meaning. The Sinhalese village women have sung these *daru nelavili* songs to inspire their children with heartfelt affection and kindness. The following "*Doi doi doi doiya putha*" verses demonstrate how the mothers use words to express their love, kindness, and mercy.

Phonetic Sinhala Translation

Doi doi doi doiya putha - Bai bai bai baiya putha

Ube amma kothena giya - Pathana kele datara giya

Baratama dara kada gene - Enakal aa budiya puthe

Doi doi doi doiya putha - Bai bai bai baiya putha

The link provided in the footnote demonstrates the singing of "*Doi doi doi doiya putha*" *daru nelavili* studio recorded personal transcription^{26 27}.

Onsili Waram

Onsili is a folk sport played during the April Sinhala and Tamil New Year, and *onsili waram* is sung on the swing. There are a few melodic variants found in the different regions. Kulathilaka (1976: 12) describes *onsili* as "being a derivative of the Tamil *oonjal* (swing) belonging to religious traditions of singing in places of localized Hindu worship in Sri Lanka. However, the Sinhala songs are distinct both in melody and content". People sing these songs for fun and happiness, either individually or as a group. A well-dressed girl climbs onto a swing hung from the overhead branch of a tree and sits on the swing's seat; others stand behind her and push the swing forward while singing *waram* or quatrains. The link provided in the footnote demonstrates the singing of "*Ihalata yanakota papuwai danna*" *onsili waram* studio recorded personal transcription^{28 29}.

Keli Gee

Keli gee are performed while playing folk games and dances. Singing unique songs while playing games is a basic feature of Sinhalese society. They are distinguished by the names of the games, which include "*Lee Keli Gee*" (stick dance songs), "*Mewara Sellama*", "*Pana Hengeema*" (various detective

25. Rajapakse, Mangalika. interview by Kamani Samarasinghe, 8 August, 2022.

26. Bolukandurage Thushari, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe. 2022, 6 August, 2022.

27. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NeUxAkJ9JI8cvBoqdx1bUuYpLu8D7tL2/view?usp=sharing>

28. Bolukandurage Thushari, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe. 2022, 6 August, 2022

29. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bP5qrTcgfShELQTyBBwnLnO49F3C2tJL/view?usp=sharing>

games, similar to hide and seek games), "*Olinda Keliya*" (playing activity with crab's eye seeds). These are frequently sung during the April Sinhala and Tamil new year festival seasons (Kulathilaka, 1976). These are group activity-related songs.

Olinda Kelima is a popular two-sided game in which well-dressed girls engaged in a two-way recital verbal exchange in a rhythmic manner. First, the leader of one side recites *Olinda thiyenne koi koi dese* (In which countries can *Olinda* be found) and this is repeated by the participants on the same side. The opposing leader then sings *Olinda thiyenne Bangali dese* (*Olinda* is there in Bangli) and the team members repeat this line as well. The game ends when all the verses of the song have been sung. The link provided in the footnote demonstrates the singing of "*Olinda thiyenne koi koi dese*" *Olinda Keli gee* studio recorded personal transcription^{30 31}.

"*Mewara* (woman's jewelry) *sellama*" or *mewara keliya* is a folk game accompanied by singing. A game especially played by girls. This is a hide-and-seek game in which one girl hides her jewelry ornaments, for instance, an earring or bangle, in the sand and, pretends to have lost them, and asks the others if they have found them. *Sarasadisi petthi pera nelanakala walagiyado mage mewareya* (I feel like I've lost my ornaments while plucking *Petthi Pera*). The others respond: *nano numbapal numbe daruwanpal apa dutuwe nata mewaraya* (They swear that they have not seen the ornament). Finally, the owner of the ornaments skips to the music of the song and gets closer to where she has hidden the ornaments, snatches them, and declares that she has found them. The link provided in the footnote demonstrates the singing of *Sarasadisi Petthi Pera Nelakala* as a *mewara keliya* studio recorded personal transcription.^{32 33}

These folk game songs are significant because they enhance happiness and harmony among family members and neighbors. Such activities put the whole village in a good mood and improve contact, coordination, unity, cooperation, mental comfort, and consolation. Merriam (1964) states that music has a beneficial impact on people's well-being and social togetherness.

Music, according to Suttie (2015), is one way of communicating a sense of belonging, which may increase a person's sense of safety and obligation to their group. From this exploration, it is evident that singing folksongs are an integral part of people's everyday life, and components of music, culture, and society are inextricably linked.

Conclusions

Sinhala folk songs are frequently repeated across five or six tones with beautiful vocal frills (Dassenaike, 2016). Sri Lanka has a rich collection of folk songs and a good amount is songs of labour associated with various occupations, hence acquiring an occupational character and association. Many occupational folk songs in Sri Lanka are sung to relieve the monotony of the village folks' toil.

30. Bolukandurage Thushari, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe. 2022, 6 August, 2022

31. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sptsiqc0fCub0m2zDb7W3ETZcs5Fwq7Q/view?usp=sharing>

32. Bolukandurage Thushari, interview by Kamani Samarasinghe. 2022, 6 August, 2022

33. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S4GwFpeGJqvftPNKs4xipf60o0-cg5XV/view?usp=sharing>

Many villagers, whose occupations were tiring and stressful, choose to relieve their stress, loneliness, and sorrows through folk songs, which often portray their difficult and sorrowful lifestyles due to the nature of their occupations. Also, there are traditional songs sung during different social activities with different intentions as explained above. Unknown to its creators, Sri Lankan folk music has been used by common folk and verbally transmitted. A large and varied collection of folk songs, or rather folk verses, are sung by the villagers and are connected to their everyday tasks, rituals, jobs, and crafts. The majority of melodies are simple and based on local tunes that may focus on the relationship between melody and verse. It is interesting to note that the same folk song is sung with slight modifications in different regions of the country. The same lyrics could be heard sung by various singers, occasionally with a slight modification to the tune to fit the words and rhythm of the specific song or verse. This practice provides evidence of the adaptation of common folk songs in different regions and communities, incorporating adjustments as and when required. The way folk songs are performed has changed significantly because of the country's technological and economic advancements. Most of these jobs (that we have considered in this paper) do not exist anymore and people have found new ways and modern methods to get the work completed. Therefore, the usage of these folk songs is not seen or heard any more in authentic work-related contexts. Traditional folk songs/music still exist in certain Sri Lankan communities with some changes (e.g. accompaniments) and some songs have made their way to the modern popular culture as POP music with Western musical arrangements. These changes demonstrate the fact that cultural practices change and evolve responding to contextual changes. As a result, former Sri Lankan Sinhala folk songs/music are gradually diminishing in society at present. Sri Lankan Sinhala folk songs are also performed on special occasions, in original contexts (e.g. in performance environments) with accompaniments as demonstrations harming the authenticity of the original performances. It is essential to sustain Sri Lankan Sinhala folk songs/music and provide authentic educational experiences considering the notions of inter-contextualization and intra-contextualization introduced by Nethsinghe (2015) that distinguish unique features of re-performance/ re-production of music in different environments and times. This will also contribute to the conservation of these traditional folk music genres through education and communication. Jahnichen (2011: 144) suggests the use of "media technology that helps to preserve tradition, such as archive recordings and documentation" as a method of conservation. In conclusion, it is important to signify that folk music is an important component of the culture, heritage, history, and emotions, of a society in a country; therefore' it is best to conserve in order to preserve the traditions and cultures of a nation. However, this does not imply that those specific components of traditional folk music would always remain the same as those genres are continuously evolving. Further research should be conducted to identify other characteristics that can be used to classify Sri Lankan folk music using scientific methods and melodic analysis. Additional research on the level of ICT/modern technology intervention is necessary to sustain the optimization of traditional music genres which is a dire need.

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