

Paper ID: IRCUWU2023-249

Preservation of traditional folk music in Sri Lanka: Conservation practices and key challenges

K. Samarasinghe✉

University of the Visual & Performing Arts, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka

✉ *kamani@vpa.ac.lk; +94714453225*

Folk music holds a significant place in the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka (SL), serving as a rich tapestry that reflects the traditions, beliefs, and diverse ethnic communities of the country. However, the preservation and conservation of these valuable musical traditions face various challenges in the modern era. The purpose of this research paper is to investigate and analyze the folk music archiving, preserving, and conservation practices in SL. The primary objective is to examine the historical background and current practices related to the preservation and promotion of folk music in SL. A qualitative case study approach was used to investigate the practices and challenges of folk music conservation in SL. Data were gathered using a literature review, semi-structured interviews, and observations. Purposive sampling was used as the sampling method. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis. The study identified conservation practices employed by organizations like the Folk Music Conservation Centre, Research and Archive Centers of Universities, National Library, Sri Lanka Broad Casting Cooperation, and individual practitioners. Notably, Devar Surya Sena, W. B. Makulloluwa, and C. de S. Kulatillake have made significant contributions to the exploration and documentation of Sri Lankan folk music. Their archival work, research initiatives, educational programs, and performances have played a crucial role in safeguarding and perpetuating traditional music forms. No proper policy for safeguarding, no maintaining inventory, no specific attention to identifying endangered musical genres, no suitable resources, lack of awareness, lack of appropriate programs to strengthen and improve the taste of folk music among the community, and poor financial support were identified as challenges.

Keywords: Conservation; Cultural heritage; Folk music; Sri Lanka