

A Study on the Decline of the West Indian influence on Sinhalese Music

A Comparative Study on the Music in ‘kavi nalu’ and ‘nruthya nātaka’

ABSTRACT

The bond between India and Sri Lanka runs back to ages. The bond with North India were for the betterment of the country whereas relationships with South India were both advantageous and disadvantageous. Relationships with South India were of different forms such as invasions, migrations, kinships and state relationships. These relationships caused changes in the culture. This could be explained through architecture, sculpture, the expansion of Hinduism and literature. Information regarding music instruments used at that time can be unraveled by sculpture and literary texts. It is stated that, music was used in Sri Lanka since the reign of King Vijaya, where the origin of the Sinhalese is documented. Moreover, literary texts belonging to the Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Dambadeniya, Kurunegala, Gampola and Kotte eras prove that music was used during those periods. That was seen until the Kandyan kingdom. Therefore, it is clear that music in Sri Lanka has had the impact of South India. This music which gradually evolved, became the popular music tradition of Sri Lanka. This can be proved by the then ‘Sindhu, Prashasthi’ (songs of appreciation sung to the king), and ‘Vannam’ (a variety of songs sung in ‘Vannam’ dancing) and presently the ‘Kavinalu’. Later in the late 19th century, drama teams of North India arrived in Sri Lanka and the former became less popular, with the Hindustani ‘nruthya nātaka’ music becoming the popular music tradition. Accordingly, there are 2 research problems. One is to study the research on the social, cultural and political aspects at that time. The second is to study the contemporary prose and poetry texts, paintings, sculpture and carvings, and collect information related to music in such creations. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a certain type of music in the early ages in Sri Lanka, and that became the popular tradition with the influence of South India. Upon the arrival of Hindustani drama teams in Sri Lanka, the former lost its popularity and Hindustani music became the popular tradition in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: South Indian music, Hindustani music, decline