

INFLUENCE OF *NURTI* MUSIC ON SRI LANKAN MUSIC CULTURE

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Diverse musical traditions and elements have fostered the history of Sri Lankan music culture. One such traditional art form is *Nurti*, which was influenced by musical dramas that originated in Bombay during the last decades of the 19th century. *Nurti* captivated Sri Lankan audiences with its melodramatic style, featuring plots based on myths and imagination, as well as new dramatic techniques, stage designs, costumes, and songs with melodies rooted in Hindustani music. C. Don Bastian was the dramatist who staged the play called '*Rolina*' (a story of a heroic princess who saves her prince's life) in 1877, following the melodramatic style. Soon after this, these plays became known as *Nurti* among Sri Lankans and gained popularity with local audiences. *Nurti* could be seen as the first milestone that led to the taste for Hindustani Ragadhari music launched among Sri Lankan listeners. It also introduced the first structured song form to Sinhala music, basically the *Sthai* and *Antara* structure. *Nurti* melodies were soon incorporated into the hitherto national music tradition. The objective of this study is to analyze the promotion of the *Nurti* tradition in Sri Lanka and its effects on the sphere of Sri Lankan music in light of the perspectives of Buddhist Nationalism. In this abstract, we argue how the social, cultural, and historical contexts of musical practice in Sri Lanka may lead to the growth of some perceptions through the *Nurti* art form by analyzing various opinions and statements about the meaning of musical behavior. This study aims to provide a more detailed picture of the cultural relationships that are nurtured and practiced in Sri Lankan music and to support the development of academically driven music criticism in Sri Lanka. Qualitative musical analysis has been used as the primary approach for this study. Data was collected through academic sources, grey literature, open-ended interviews, participant observations, and auto-ethnography.

Keywords: *Nurti*, music, Sri Lanka, Buddhist nationalism