

A STUDY OF THE WESTERN IMPACT ON SRI LANKAN SONG

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The music of Sri Lanka has been influenced to a great extent by Indian and Western cultures. Sinhalese song probably originated under the influence of Indian music. According to historians of Sri Lankan music, Indian devotional songs known as "*Bhajan*" were the main influence on Sinhala "*Gramophone songs*". Sinhalese songs were also influenced by "*Ghazals*" and Hindi melodies were copied for Sinhala film songs.

With the commencement of the Western impact on Sri Lanka, numerous elements of western musical traditions entered and transformed Sri Lankan music. With the Portuguese came the *baila*, and *kaffringha* and the influence of their rhythms and melodies is still felt in Sinhala melodies. It has been claimed that the melodies of certain Sri Lankan composers such as Sunil Santha were influenced by church music, though this has been disputed. The bands of the armed forces and the Police have been heavily influenced by the development of western music in the country. Their repertoire includes classical masterpieces of well-known musicians such as Rossini, Straus etc. However since of late Sinhala popular songs are also performed by the bands.

Meanwhile the western impact was heavily felt in songs during the late 40s and early 50s. Simple Western songs as well as "Jazz, Latin American and Rock and roll" music have influenced Sri Lankan music. Some tunes have been copied wholesale. Our song structure, musical instruments, and musical elements have been influenced by such traditions, and later, Sri Lankan musicians tried to compose songs using Western musical techniques.

The main objective of my research was to analyze how western music influenced Sinhalese songs and to examine their musicological character. The research methodology of the study includes a survey of relevant musical composition and literature. Information was also sought through interviews with artists, composers and producers who were influenced by western music.