



Efforts to make music a National Totem: a cultural reading on Sunil Santha's contribution to Sri Lankan Music

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Abstract

Totemism is the unification of the human community based on an object, practice, or animal. Tribal groups imitate the characteristics of an animal and become the tribe that bears that animal's name. The Emu tribe does not hunt that Emu deer. In this way, a human group can be united based on any animal. It can also be done based on certain objects. Objects such as the Tooth Relic and the Sri Maha Bodhi Tree have been used for uniting the Buddhist community in Sri Lanka. All the people who worship the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic are Buddhists. It creates a common denominator among all Buddhists. Communities can also be unified based on certain practices. Nelson Mandela used Rugby to strengthen unity and solidarity among the indigenous black people of South Africa and descendants of the French. He was able to create the identity of a South African who loves rugby. It erased the racial identities of French and Black. That is, the identity paradigm was changed to another value. Indigenous national movements have adopted this concept in an attempt to liberate Sri Lanka from colonialism and subject it to localization. They used the three concepts named country, nation and religion to create unity. Subsequently, the National Movement known as Hela Hawla, the objective of which was indigenization, removed the word 'religion' from it and added the word 'language' instead. Attempts have been made to unite the community through the three elements. The community that can be unified under 'Sinhala language' is larger than the 'Sinhala Buddhist' community. There is also Sinhala speaking Tamil and Muslim communities in the country. He sought to create national unity using the language. The most important issue facing the Nehru's Government in India that came to power in 1952 was national integration. B.V. Keskar (1903-1984), the then Minister of Mass Media, tried to use Ragadhari music to create it. Music was taught in all schools and classical music was given place in radio. This created a national awakening among the middle class. About 10 years prior to the implementation of this in India, Sunil Santha had embarked on the same kind of project to create national unification through music in Sri Lanka. In 1942, he came up with the idea of teaching music to all students. In 1946, he composed a series of songs in accordance with the native simple rhythms. They were warmly welcomed by the people of all communities and religions in the country. Sunil's Songs helped to unite the Sri Lankans with multiple ethnic and religious identities. Sunil Santha could influence the masses through his songs broadcast on the radio which was then popularly known as Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation. His fan club included members from all communities in spite of race, religion, ethnicity or caste and they were unified under the flag of Sunil's melodious songs. This study observes how the racist political movement in Sri Lanka with immense political power worked with the intention of eliminating Sunil Santha's influence on all societies that were unified by his songs and subsequently giving rise to ethnic riots.

Keywords: Sunil Santha, Indigenous Movement, Music, Totemism, B.V. Keskar.

Introduction

“Faith in the totem. Totemism is thus both a religious and a social system. In its religious aspect, it consists of the relations of mutual respect and protection between a man and his totem; in its social aspect, it consists of the relations of the clansmen to each other and to men of other clans. In the later history of totemism these two sides, the religious and the social, tend to part company; the social system sometimes survives the religious; and, on the other hand, religion sometimes bears traces of totemism in countries where the social system based on totemism has disappeared. How in the origin of totemism these two sides were related to each other it is, in our ignorance of

that origin, impossible to say with certainty. But on the whole, the evidence points strongly to the conclusion that the two sides were originally inseparable; that, in other words, the farther we go back, the more we should find that the clansman regards himself and his totem as beings of the same species, and the less he distinguishes between conduct towards his totem and towards his fellow clansmen. For the sake of exposition, however, it is convenient to separate the two. We begin with the religious side.

Totemism as a Religion, or the Relation between a Man and his Totem.- The members of a totem clan call themselves by the name of their totem, and commonly believe themselves to be actually descended from it.

Thus the Turtle clan of the Iroquois are descended from a fat turtle, which, burdened by the weight of its shell in walking, contrived by great exertions to throw it off, and thereafter gradually developed into a man. The Bear and Wolf clans of the Iroquois are descended from bears and wolves respectively. The Crayfish clan of the Choctaws were originally crayfish and lived underground, coming up occasionally through the mud to the surface. Once a party of Choctaws smoked them out, and, treating them kindly, taught them the Choctaw language, taught them to walk on two legs, made them cut off their toenails and pluck the hair from their bodies, after which they adopted them into the tribe. But the rest of their kindred, 'the crayfish, are still living underground. The Carp clan of the Outaouaks are descended from the eggs of a carp that had been deposited by the fish on the banks of a stream and warmed by the sun³. Ojibways are descended from a dog⁴. The Crane clan of the Ojibways are descended from a pair of cranes, which after long wanderings settled on the rapids at the outlet of Lake Superior, where they were transformed by the great spirit into a man and woman⁵. The Black Shoulder clan (a Buffalo clan) of the Omahas were originally buffaloes and dwelt under the surface of the water⁶. The Osages are descended from a male snail and a female beaver. The snail burst his shell, developed arms, feet, and legs, and became a fine tall man; afterward, he married the beaver maid? The clans of the Iowas are descended from the animals from which they take their names, namely, eagle, pigeon, wolf, bear, elk, beaver, buffalo, and snake⁸. The Moquis say that long ago the Great Mother brought from the west nine clans in the form of deer, sand, water, bears, hares, tobacco plants, and reed-grass. She planted them on the spots where their villages now stand and transformed them into men, who built the present pueblos, and from whom the present clans are descended"¹

The classical anthropologist James George Frazer's (1854-1941) analysis of Totem's religious and social practice makes it clear that it guarantees the general existence of a society. He gives a long description of the practical use of the totem. Going beyond this basic knowledge of the totem, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), a French anthropologist and structuralist, provided the most important philosophical analysis of its role in shaping social structure.

"Before Claude Levi Strauss, the totemic phenomena were used by Western thinkers to show the primitiveness of native people. In "Totemism" (literally: "totemism Today") Levi Strauss is trying to uproot this perception. In the past accounts of these peoples were called "the study of uncivilized peoples", he changes the name to "the study of peoples without language" and tries to show us that the totemic thinking, that we decide which animal or object is our totem, it is not because we are irrational. They choose animals because of the binary contrasts - they need to distinguish between them and the natural world, so they put them in front of the beast. The totemic thought is also a logical thought, like Western thought.

Westerners exaggerate the characteristics of the other - but in fact, we are the same. But because Westerners want to glorify themselves, they exaggerate the characteristics of the non-Western. But Claude Levi Strauss reminds us that there are all kinds of people who, in order to establish their normalcy, produce the crazy, and produce the chasm between the normal and the insane. The same thing happens with Westerners in relation to non-Westerners.

Levi-Strauss presents research innovation in anthropological methodology - no longer the study of primitive tribes but a systemic inquiry, which examines the structure of myths in terms of the internal relations between their components. This system is common to the whole of human culture, without historical or cultural distinction. The fixed purpose of myths, and of the totemic myth, in particular, is to moderate the tension that exists between the opposites in reality. The myths, and the stories derived from it, are a means of dealing with the existential contradictions in human life. Levi-Strauss examines the distinction between nature and culture through the theory of family and community exchanges. The phenomenon of totemism, which connects an animal, concept, or plant to a communal group through social feelings of worship and identification, is not psychologically or locally explained. Strauss dismisses these explanations as a religious, primitive phenomenon, in favor of the thesis that the role of culture is to replace chance with the order in order to preserve the continuum of human society"².

It is important for a group of people to possess common attributes when becoming a community. Various animal species and myths were used in tribal societies to create this common condition. Later, religion was able to create that covenant. Levi Strauss points out that the 'Emu tribe acquires that identity by not hunting the emu'³. Buddhists in Sri Lanka attain that identity by becoming pilgrims of several places with religious significance. Buddhists have socially shaped their identities as worshipers of the Sri Maha Bodhi Tree or the Temple of the Tooth Relic. The worshipers of Sirimaha Bodhi Tree are Buddhists. Those who do not do so are not Buddhists. Thus, the concept of Rata (country or mother Land), Deya (Nation - specially Sinhalese) and Samaya (Religion - specially Buddhism) was introduced by the nationalist movement which was active during the colonial period to unite the people with homogeneous features. The pioneers of this concept were Buddhist monks and its forerunner was Sir Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933). Here, the word country included the idea of geographical boundary and thenation is depicted by Sinhalese people, the majority ethnic group. Buddhism was highlighted as the state religion of the country.

A Sinhala language specialist known as Kumaratunga Munidasa (1887-1944) could change the basic characteristics of the nationalist movement which was active since the colonial period. He introduced three concepts named Desa, Basa, Resa (country, nation and language). Language was his new addition in place of religion. Although the concept of 'country' could

unite all citizens, they were divided again with terms of division such as 'race' and 'religion'. Prominence was given to Sinhalese and Buddhists. Kumaratunga could restrict that to 'race' and the division of 'religion' was eliminated while replacing it with 'language' as a new form of unification. Kumaratunga attempted to bring everyone who spoke the Sinhala language despite their race and religion under the umbrella of 'language'.

At the time of independence from colonial rule, multi-state countries such as India and Ceylon faced the challenge of maintaining unity. During British rule, there were 565 small kingdoms (Prinsly states) in India. *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (1875-1950)* played an important role in enlisting the support of these kings to create a united India at the time of independence. *Winston Churchill (1874-1965)*, the British Prime Minister prior to India gaining independence, stated that India, post-independence would once again sink into medieval darkness. That, they would split up into smaller kingdoms. As a result, *Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964)*, came to power in 1952 and formed the strongest democratic government in post-independent India. *B.V. Keskar (1903-1984)* who was born in *MahaRashtra* and educated in *France* was appointed as the *Minister of Mass Media*. He understood the need of a certain totem to unite Indians. His choice was *Ragadhari music* to achieve his objective. He decided to teach music Raghadhari music to all Students and broadcast it over the all India national radio. Awasthy's analysis of the history of Indian radio is as follows,

"It was with the assumption of office by Dr. Keskar as Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1952 that a conscious music policy came into existence. Dr. Keskar was fortunate in being at the helm of affairs for ten years and thus able not only to put his policies into practice but also to see the results. These ten years were therefore very important from the point of view of development. After attaining independence in 1947, the country had politically stabilized itself and was preparing to embark upon its Five Year Plans for economic prosperity and progress in all walks of national life.

The first major step was the setting up of two Audition Boards for North and South Indian Music. The need for systematizing the grading and fees of artists and for associating non-officials with the assessment of merit is accepted on all hands. What was objectionable, however, was the manner in which the whole thing was done and the failure to profit from the experience of other broadcasting organizations. To begin with, the impression was given that artists had been approved for broadcast on the whims and fancies of the Programme Assistants who knew nothing about music and, therefore, what was required was a thorough cleanup of the mess. The Audition Board was itself described as the Jury and the Northern Panel was placed under the chairmanship of Pandit S. N. Ratanjankar. It was not surprising that there was an outcry against the "jury system," particularly serious at centers like Bombay and Calcutta. The jury insisted on every performing musician appearing in person

*and, apart from listening to the artist, the jury often questioned them on points of theory. Differences between the gharanas and various schools of Indian Music are well-known and accepted throughout the country and these add no doubt to the richness of the classical tradition. The "jury system," however, led to the impression among artists that a set of persons were out to foist the views of one gharana on all the others"*⁴.

Keskar's attempt was thwarted when Indians showed a penchant for listening to programs such as *BinekaGeetmala* aired by Radio Ceylon and their deep-rooted love for Indian film music. Although Keskar failed in achieving totemism using Ragadhari Music to eliminate all the societal divisions in the country, it can be observed that the unification of Hindus and Muslims happened through Ragadhari Music.

Sunil Santha, a pioneering musician in Sri Lanka had embarked on the mission of unifying Sri Lankans through music in 1943 prior to Keskar implementing that project in India in 1952. By 1943 Santha was a senior student at *Bhatkanda University* in India. The main purpose of this report is to study Santha's attempt to create unity in a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious nation through music and its subsequent downfall.

Methodology

This is a study belong to the stream of Biographical research. Biographical research is a qualitative research approach aligned to the social interpretive paradigm of research. The biographical research is concerned with the reconstruction of life histories and the constitution of meaning based on biographical narratives and documents⁵. For this study, we have referred the books written by Sunil Santha, and collected facts from the quality discussions we had with about 5 close confidantes of this musician. Meanwhile, Sunil Santa's son Lanka Santha, Wasantha Kulatunga, who is working on a film about Sunil, Sunil Sarath Perera, former chairman of the National Television and lyricist who is associated with Sunil Santha, Maximus Jayantha Anandappa who has studied about Sunil And musician Nadeeka Guruge were interviewed. Also, we studied his songs and creations as well as the radio programs he presented. Although Sunil Santha's biography has not been written yet, reports and books written about him have also been taken into consideration. The collected data is used for examining his use of music for national integration and the successes and failures of that endeavor.

Literature review: Here are 4 articles that Sunil wrote to the *Silumina* news paper while he was studying in India. Article in the *Silumina* newspaper on Sunday, February 2, 1941: "Teaching music in schools is of paramount importance to teachers", December 28, 1941 *Silumina* article "Lakdiva Hindustani Music - Some of Our Weaknesses", "Among the Lakdiva Hindustani Music published in the *Silumina* newspaper on June 7, 1942. The article "Widespread nonsense" was

published in *Silumina* on May 25, 1942. The article written on the death of the musician MG. Perera was published while studying in India. Those documents illustrate his interest in developing music as a mass medium.

His view on music as a subject to be taught in schools as a means of reconciliation and national integrity can be seen in the preface of one of his books *Heli Mihira* (1949) and *Deshiya sangeethaya* (Indigenous Music) (1953).

Sunil Samara (2001), a collection of essays written by various scholars on Sunil Santha as well as prefaces provided by other authors for Sunil's books, which is edited by *Winnie Vitarana*, has been used as a source for this study. *D.P.M Weerakkody's* article named 'The Melodies of Sunil Santha' is a good analysis of his use of music. 'Study of Sunil Santha' (2015) written by *Sunil Ariyaratna* contains a considerable amount of information on Sunil Santha's life, yet it lacks insights into this musician's personality. It should be mentioned that the book contains many inaccurate facts. The contents of Volume 2, Volumes 9 and 10, of *Handa Magazine* published by the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, and *Sunil Santha Ankaya* were referred for this study.

Dr. Ruwan Ekanayake in 2017, a preliminary study of the conference volume *Gurudevi Sunil Santha Century* (2015) and Tony Donaldson's *Sunil Santha the man who invented Sinhala Music for a modern age* (2016) lecture on the syllabic structure and tone structure of Sunil Santha's Sinhala music. Dr. Ekanayake's Lecture, *Concept Frames on Sinhala Music* and Dr. *Sunil Wijesiriwardena's* Lecture on Sunil St. May 2018 and *Ajith Kumarasiri's* Lecture on the Saint of the Eastern Music Zone Sunil Sant May in 2019 were also used for this study.

The evolution of the biography: Sunil Saintha was born on April 14, 1915, in the coastal village of Kapungoda, Pamunugama in Ja-Ela as the youngest child of a fish businessman named Badda Liyanage Don Pemiyanu and his wife Maharage Engaltina Perera. His older brother was Rokus, and his sister was Catherine. Santha's birth name was Badde Liyanage Joseph John. By the time he was three months old, his father died of snake bite. His mother also died when he was three years old. Joseph John was later adopted by his grandmother, Kurugamage Mariamadadena Perera Jayawardena who lived in Dehiyagatha area in Ja-Ela.

Sunil states about his schooldays thus,
"I first entered St. Benedict's College, Kotahena to study English, but dropped out after grade 1 for failing to pay college fees. Then my uncle took me to Galle and put me to grade 2 in St. Aloysius. That uncle too did not have enough income to pay school fees. I studied in that school only one year. Then I entered the village school in JaEla (where my other uncle was living) to learn Sinhala"⁶.

Despite hardships, Sunil Santha continued their education with courage. In 1931, he sat for the final government school examination from Dehiyagatha School and won first place in the island and bagged the "Weeraratne Prize".

Sunil could draw inspiration to become a musician from his own background. This is his own study on making his foray into the filed of music.

"Those days I used to watch uncle Juse playing the Serpina (Sunil's mother had many brothers. Maharage Anthony Perera who was a teacher at St. Benedict's College, Kotahena, Maharage Marceline Perera who was a teacher at Mt. Calvary in Kaluwella, Galle, Maharage Moses Perera who was in charge of Roman Catholic Diocese in Rakwana were highly influential characters in his life. Here, he speaks about uncle Juse, M.J. Perera aka Maharage Joseph Perera) I was not tall enough to reach the Serpina, but could closely watch how uncle was playing it. My uncle used to tell me often that 'musicians are not good people'. Despite my uncle's warning, I gradually managed to learn it. I played King Dutugemunu at school in Dutugemunu stage drama when I was 12 years old. I can recall how the teachers commended my acting skills. After that play, villagers began to call me 'Dutugemunu'. I feel that the pleasure I derived when I was playing in the banks of rivers while watching how the lotus flowers sway to the movement of wind etc is engrossed in me. I had no greater plasure than singing a song while playing a mouth organ. I placed that small mouth organ under my pillow when I sleep in the night. I often used to sing those songs by John De Silva, 'Siri Lankawe Parayin Wedi Inda Boho' and 'Janma Bhumi Venta Bhanganga- Gala Awa Muda Ranga'. Those were my favourite songs"⁷

In an interview with *Sarasaviya* newspaper in 1967, Sunil Santha stated that he used to sing *Baila* when he was a child. He also mentions another teacher who aroused Sunil's love of music at the Dehiyagatha School. She was *Rommel Warnakulasuriya*, a resident of *Katunayake*⁷.

After completing school, Sunil sat for the Teachers' Examinations to enter the teaching profession. In 1933, he went to his uncle (Marceline Perera) who worked at Mount Calvary School, Kaluwella, Galle, where he sat for the final examination as a student. He could successfully get through the examination. In 1934, he entered *Maggonna Roman Catholic Teacher Training College*. The two years that he spent there seem to have provided the impetus for Sunil's love for music.

After completing his training, he became a teacher at Mount Calvary School, Galle in 1936. The principal at that school was Mr M.M. Perera (Maharage Marceline Perera). *Senarath Wijayasundera*, who was educated at the school in 1937, wrote in 1999 an article to *Sunil Samara* compilation titled "The children's teacher" explicitly depicts what kind of a teacher Sunil Santha was.

"I think it would be a tribute to him to be reminded here of how he was able to highlight two important trends in his students.

That was during World War II. At that time, Sri Lanka was part of the Allied Powers as we were under British rule. I still remember listening to some of us who were interested in war news and listening to the information he explained to us.

The other trend was that he used to train us to sing poems and songs from time to time"⁸.

The recollections about Sunil during his tenure as a teacher at Mount Calvary School, Kaluwella, Galle as follows:

"I left the Training College and taught at Mount Calvary School in Galle for three years. At that time there was a competition called the South Ceylon Music Competition and every school in the Ruhuna Province participated in it. For three consecutive years I was able to win that trophy for our school. When I went to that school there were only five teachers. The school gained a rapid reputation due to these victories. When I resigned there were twelve teachers ... "⁷.

Sunil was able to play instruments such as the violin, guitar and accordion without the help of a teacher. He was also interested in folk music and learned folk music and Vannam singing from Urapola Kiri Banda Gurunnanse.

S.L.B. Kapukotuwa was the school inspector in Galle at the time who later became the Deputy Director of Education in the Department of Education who pioneered the incorporation of music into the school curriculum. On the instructions of Mr. Kapukotuwa, he passed the Gandharva Preliminary Examination conducted by the Ceylon Gandharva Sabha in 1938 on the subject of playing the violin (Ravikinna). He also passed the examination conducted by the Department of Education on the subject of Physical Exercise on December 1, 1938 and was eligible to teach Physical Fitness and Sports in any Sinhala school in Sri Lanka. In 1939 he resigned from the post of the teacher with the intention of pursuing music education in India.

He started studying classical and ballad music and singing as a student at Shanti Niketan in 1939. Shanti Niketan was established in 1863 and became very popular in Sri Lanka in the 1920s. Sri Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. He toured in Ceylon in October 1922, March 1930 and May 1934. During his last visit to Sri Lanka, he performed in the concert that was showed in several major cities in Sri Lanka. Tagore's visits to Ceylon caused a great deal of cultural awakening to many Sri Lankans. Among them as a woman named Maheshwara Devi who went to study dance and art, a woman named Rathi Muthuvel (wife of DB Dhanapala), Ven. Udakandawala Saranankara Thera, Ven. Heenatigala Dhammaloka Thera etc. Manju Sri, Sagara Palansuriya, Harold Kularatne, Selena Weerasinghe, Noble Paulikpulle, Hasaratne

Niels, Harry Peiris, Saranaguptha Amarasinghe, Devar Suryasena were the second generation⁹.

Sunil belongs to the third generation of cultural pioneers who went to Santiniketan from Sri Lanka to pursue studies. Sunil studied at Shanti Niketan for only one year. It is North Indian music and Vanga music. Several Sri Lankans who were at the Shanti Niketan at the time were of the opinion that Sunil's further stay at the Shanti Niketan was a waste of time. Ediriweera Sarachchandra stated this in an article published in the Rivirasa newspaper in 1981.

"Shortly after arriving at Shanti Niketan, Sunil Santha's musical skills became known to all. The teachers were very impressed with him. Ravindra music was a special subject to be studied by someone with such exceptional abilities. Although Indian classical music was included in its curriculum, the teachers who taught it were not top-notch musicians. Due to this, some of us advised him to enter Laknow College of Music without spending time by just studying Ravindramusic"¹⁰.

In 1940, Sunil entered the Maris College of Hindustani Music Lucknow, also known as the Bhatkhand University of Music. These are Sunil's recollections of that past

"I studied musicology at Bhatkhande College of Music for 4 years from 1940 and obtained the Certificate in Music from Sri Ratanjankar. I am the only Sri Lankan to have obtained such a certificate." While studying in India, I received a two-year scholarship from the Government of Sri Lanka for my studies. First I received 50 rupees per month, later it was raised to 150 rupees "¹¹.

The Government of Ceylon at that time had decided to award two scholarships to Sri Lankan students for the purpose of promoting music education. Lionel Edirisinghe was the first recipient of the Hindustani Music Scholarship. The scholarship was later awarded to Sunilun. Initially the scholarship amount was Rs.50 and later it was increased to Rs.100⁹.

While studying in India, Sunil had visited Sri Lanka on several occasions and participated in music concerts. During this time, he was involved in a Christmas music program with Devar Suryasena, a pioneer researcher on folk music in Sri Lanka. Devar Suryasena is the son of Sir James Peiris. He was a holder of law degree from the University of Cambridge, England. He also had a formal education in Western music from the Royal Academy of Music, London. He studied oriental music at Shanti Niketan and began researching folk songs in Sri Lanka. Working with him shows Sunil's passion for research and innovation.

On July 5, 1941, he sang two Hindi songs and a ballad at the Variety Oriental Concert organized by the Sinhala Association of St. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia. He also played the sitar.

He also wrote articles for newspapers at the time, revealing a number of important facts about the direction of music education in Sri Lanka. Articles named "Some of Our Weaknesses" and "Lakdiva Hindustani Music - The Jokes That Spread Between Us" published in the *Silumina* newspaper on June 7, 1942 M.G. The article written on the death of the musician M.G. Perera was published while he was studying in India.

Sunil's views on how music education should be organized to unite Sri Lanka through music and to create a culturally rich citizen are very important.

As per the music education suggested by Sunil Santha, the student becomes a fan of music since childhood. Music is currently taught only to a selected group for about one hour per week. Other students study other subjects such as art and dance. But, Sunil Santha suggested giving music education to all students two or three times a week. It creates spontaneity and makes music a common practical subject. A child who is constantly sensitive to music from an early age becomes a very perfect human being. Sunil Santha proposed a music education that would produce such results.

Injustice: At the time of his return to the country on December 24, 1944, Sunil was the most talented singer in the country. Prior to his return, Lionel Edirisinghe had returned to Sri Lanka with Sangeetha Visharada certificate and had been appointed as the Principal of the Government College of Music. At least Sunil Santha should have been offered a teaching post there. But what happened was the vice. Since he studied music in India with the government's scholarship, he met Mr. Kapukotuwa in early 1945 and requested to appoint him as a music teacher. Sadly enough, he was informed that he could only be appointed as a teacher of physical education. Then Sunil had no option but to give up the idea of becoming a government school teacher. Sunil had been a teacher of physical education prior to leaving for India to pursue music education. But by 1944 there was no one else in the country that had fulfilled his qualifications in music. The conspirators, however, were anxious not to even give him a teaching appointment. His expulsion from education has done great harm to the students of this country.

Professor Sunil Ariyaratne has described the situation faced in Sri Lanka by this unique scholar who came to Sri Lanka with a Diploma in Orchestra and Singing.

Lionel Edirisinghe is the first Sri Lankan to graduate with Sangeeth Visharad Degree. Sunil Shantha was the first Sri Lankan to have obtained Vadya Visharad (instrumental) and Gayana Visharad (singing) in first class pass. The first Sri Lankan who obtained Sangeeth Visharad Diploma (Lionel Edirisinghe) was appointed as the Chief Music Inspector of the Department of Education on his return to the country on March 19, 1944. The first instrumentalist (Sunil Santha) was born on

December 24, 1944. As soon as he returned to his country, he was reinstated in the post of Sinhala Training Teacher which he had left five years earlier. He went to meet the Deputy Director of Education, SLB Kapukotuwa. It was Kapukotuwa who advised Sunil to sit for Gandharva examination; he also pioneered the establishment of the Ceylon Gandharva Council; Kapukotuwa (Sangeetha Sanhita) was an enthusiastic supporter of music in the school curriculum. Kapukotuwa tells Sunil that there are no vacancies in the Department of Education in the field of music; Although Sunil Santha was granted a scholarship to study music in India and he subsequently passed with a Diploma and returned to mother country, he was told by the authorities that he should only be given a post of Sinhala language teacher. Sunil however, refused to accept the appointment⁹.

Sunil had already published various newspaper articles about Sri Lankan music education. Had Sunil involved in music education, a solid foundation would have been laid with regard to that. Lionel Edirisinghe is an Indian in all respects. He would never support a Sri Lankan musical tradition or educational system. It has now been revealed that Lionel Edirisinghe, who had close ties with the politicians of the time, used that power to prevent Sunil from joining the National Music Education through S.L.B. Kapukotuwa.

Sunil Shantha was a very victim of this Indian expansionism. He then went to his uncle, Father Moses Perera, who was in Rakwana.

Sunil's patriotic views were nurtured by reading nationalist writings and creations by Kumaratunga Munidasa during his stay in Rakwana. The following statement made by Sunil to *Sunday Lankadeepa* in 1950 shows that it was during that time in Rakwana that the idea of composing his first tunes and the local music came to his mind. "As I got to read the books of Mr. Kumaratunga and Mr. Tennakoon, it became clear to me that Sri Lanka needs a genre of music unique to us. He began to sing to the rhythm of the streams flowing through the mountains, adding melodies to the songs and bicycles of those gentlemen ...",¹¹

Sunil, who came to Colombo from Rakwana in 1945, began to use the name Sunil Shantha as per Sri Lankan tradition, instead of Sunil Shanthi which he used to follow the Hindustani tradition. He stayed in one of his friends named Surya Shankar Molligoda's house in Colombo whom he met at Shanthi Niketan. The house was located on Jaya Road, Bambalapitiya. He was a rich aristocrat who owned land in the Elpitiya area of Galle. The house in Bambalapitiya was called 'Sangeeth Bhavan'. Sunil, who started music classes there, also conducted classes in Ja-Ela Kanuwana and Panadura. CT Fernando of Kanuwana class and WD Albert Perera alias Amaradeva of Panadura class later studied music under Sunil (Albert Perera went to Gauss Master after receiving his basic music education from Sunil Shantha).

The first songs recorded on Ceylon Radio were by SunilSantha: Professor Winnie Vitarana, who wrote an article for the Silumina newspaper on May 19, 1981, titled 'Sunil Santha who did not die', he said,

*"DiyagodaHemathena (Hadapane), harakaseya-Ravana Heeya, Varen Heensare were the songs that were aired on the program, These are just a few of Sunil's discs created in 1946 on the radio. Examples include OluPipila, Kokilayan, RallaNagenna and Pala Bara Bakmase. The first book to be published was 'Hela Ridi Walawa'. It was published in 1947. By this time Sunil was on the climax of popularity. Sunil sang at the Second Memorial Meeting of the Princess at the Young Christian Society Hall, Fort, Colombo on March 2, 1947. It was the first time that he had sung on a local concert stage. Sunil Santha Gee, which was aired for half an hour once a month on the radio, had a huge fan base.."*¹²

Conspiracy against Sunil in Ceylon Radio

Sunil's programs have been broadcast on Ceylon Radio since 1946. By 1949, Ananda Samarakoon, Sunil Santha, Saranaguptha Amarasinghe, Devar Suryasena and Lionel Edirisinghe were the named as Agrade musicians. They were paid Rs. 90. There were fourteen 'B' grade singers and they were paid 75 rupees. Kokila Devi, Wasantha Sandanayake, Anangalal Athukorala, PLA Somapala etc. were in that grade. There were 54 singers in C grade, including SusilPremaratne, CT Fernando and W.D. Albert Perera (Amaradeva). It was noticeable that Lionel Edirisinghe's name was included in any category for which higher payment was included. The payment system was designed to make more money for those involved in classical music. During this period, the radio station had a very low payout scheme of Rs. 35 for 'Singing' section"¹³.

The Ceylon Broadcast Corporation which was functioning under the purview of Post Master General under the Department of Telecommunications became a separate Department on 01.10.1949. The Institute came under the control of a Director General. It is clear that he was involved in the work with the aim of popularizing North Indian Ragadhari music. It is clear from the past that Lionel Edirisinghe's dominance over radio music programs had spread with the establishment of the dominance of Hindustani music in radio. Sunil publicly spoke out against the situation. On 24.04.1948, a person named Crystal wrote that the popularity of Ceylon radio is diminishing due to the exclusion of Sunil Santha in one of the columns in Lankadeepa newspaper.

1952 Ratanjankar conspiracy: Although Sunil was exceptionally popular, he never sang for His Masters Voice or Columbia records. Sunil never sang under contract with those companies but casually published in various ways. He sang only on the radio. He had already been listed as an A grade singer and had embarked on creating a music culture through local

identity. The scholars and their local agents affiliated with the Indian state were well aware that if Sunil's exercise was successful, Indian dominance in the field of art would be lost. There were impromptu. In 1952, an examination was organized by M. J Perera, Sri Lanka's first Sinhala radio director. The Indian agents behind this whole process were Lionel Edirisinghe and Ediriweera Sarachchandra. Sri Ratanjankar, a schoolmate of Kesker, the then Minister of Mass Media in the Government of India, was again summoned to Sri Lanka for the classification of artists. At the same time, Ratanjankar lost his reputation and became notorious due the same kind of classification of Indian singers.

AnandaSamarakoon and Sunil Santha who opposed Ratanjankar's visit to Sri Lanka and to spread the Hindustani music publicly expressed their views of objection. However, finally, Ananda Samarakoon took part in the examination but Sunil Santha boycotted it. Sunil had heard it if he took part in the examination they would fail him or degrade him. One of his students Albert Perera became an A grade singer and C.T. Fernando failed the examination.

Sunil then lost opportunity to sing in Radio due to this conspiracy. Disheartened Sunil goes to Dehiyagatha village, started living in a shack with the poor villagers. He eked out a miserable living with his wife and children. Many newspapers and magazines carried many articles regarding the life this great musician was living by adhering to the principles. The Lankadeepa newspaper also launches a support program for Sunil Santha. Meetings and ceremonies were organized to felicitate Sunil at various places. The audience was also heated on several occasions by the opposition of the fan community who loved Sunil's music. But it is clear that there was not a single politician at the time who had the backbone to do justice to Sunil, a cruel victim of Indian expansionism. All politicians failed to do anything but allow the cultural expansionism of the Nehru's government. By this time, Sri Lankan politics was also moving away from internationalism and into nationalist politics.

Sunil Santha's Academic Intervention: Sunil Santha was one of those who engaged in music after choosing it as his field of study. His philosophy of music is tied to his own life. He gained an understanding of Western music through church and Catholic education, Bavul and Vanga from ShanthiNiketan. He also learned the value of folk music. He gained a deep understanding of Ragadhari and other Indian musical traditions from the University of Bhatkhand. An understanding of the Sinhala language and HelaVirit was gained by reading Helahawule essays. As a singer and musician, he was constantly interacting with the people and gained an understanding of the public interest and the needs of the people. The components of the physical and human rhythms of the country were identified by living in the vicinity of trees and vines and living with the villagers. From his writings on various occasions since 1941, one can identify the need for local music and whether that music should be a part of it. Sunil Santha has

been active in both education and media in creating awareness. His writings show how he sought to spread music through education and thereby create a sense of communal unity.

An article published in Silumina Newspaper on February 2, 1941, titled "Teaching Music in Schools - What Teachers Should Consider", outlines the order in which music education should be provided.

*"There is a lesson in the syllabus called music but that lesson does not seem to be included in the schedule. Students learn to sing a song only in kindergarten, but it stop altogether in advanced classes. Out of the work done in the school, the students are very fond of music lessons. The teacher should change his teaching methods daily to maintain the love, joy, attention, discipline, etc. of the students in teaching the rest of the lessons. But in music lessons it is not like that..."*¹⁴.

Through the music education suggested by Sunil Santha, the student has been a fan of music since childhood. Music is currently taught only to a selected group for about one hour per week. Other students study other subjects such as art and dance. But Sunil Santha suggests giving music education to all students two or three times a week. It creates spontaneity and makes music a common subject. There is also another scientific value here. That is, the extensive development that takes place in the individual mind. The human brain is divided into two main parts, the fast brain and the slow brain. Rapid brain control is instantaneous action and existence as an animal. The slow brain creates the discipline and culture of the individual. The impulsive commands given by the rapid brain are controlled and disciplined with the development of the slow brain. The slow brain is made up of various audio-visual signals and codes. Music helps to shape the brain for this slow brain or cognition. From an early age, a child who is constantly sensitive to music becomes a very perfect human being. He is a full-fledged citizen. Sunil Santha. proposed a music education that would produce such results.

In an article published in Lankadeepa on September 18, 1948 under the title 'Ananda Samarakoon', Sunil Santha writes:

"It is a great drawback that we lack music that is not subservient to other state or language. Even though our old folk songs have a Sinhala influence that is not sufficient. It is very important that we get our Hela rituals, which are not mixed with a foreign language, to be sung in a way that is unique to us. How proud would we be if we could create our own style of music that suits all the Sinhala music? We have already studied Hindustani, Vanga, Karna and Western music. Creating something new is not so easy. It takes a long time to get it right. Ananda Samarakoon, with the help of Vanga music, made a difference in our music accordingly. The change that needs to take place now is to gradually move our music away from the vanguard form and all other foreign music styles and divert ourselves to something different. Samarakoon also acknowledges the need

for Sinhala music tradition which is not influenced by any tradition of music. Musicians who love the country, the country and the language also acknowledge that if they do their part properly, it can be done soon"¹⁵.

This note shows that at the time of independence, Sunil Santha had a clear plan to create a musical tradition of Sri Lanka's own. He never had the intention of labelling himself as the pioneer in local music tradition. He had identified it as a collective effort. He was well aware of the attempts of the Samarakoons to compose 'HelaGayuwak' or 'Sagayuwak' (Sinhala singing or music) with the help of Vanga Gee and it seems that he was conscious of the possible support for a HelaGayaku. He was also of the opinion that a national music tradition should be composed by harmonizing different musical traditions. The other important thing is that his approach to local music is futuristic. That is, he does not rely on the search for local music in the past as something that did not exist in the past. At some point in the past he had a study of how the natives used music. This is evident from the opening of the article published in Silumina on February 2, 1941. With that understanding, he seems to have had a deep vision of creating local music that combines all world-class sources and indigenous folk rhythms. His belief that music should be composed by harmonizing cultural traditions and melodies rooted in various divisions of society, such as the educated and the ignorant, the rural urban and the peasantry, is a testament to his view of music as a common social order.

In the introduction to his songbook 'Heli Mihira' published on July 10, 1949, he wrote:

"It is true that our arts have been influenced by foreigners. But as any art grows in this country, the signs of its emergence in this country shows its development. If there is any art that does not show such personal elements, it is just a lifeless stick.

The same is true of the art of 'music'. It does not become superior until our partner (music) shows the signs of our being. As long as there is a colleague here who refers to Helaya's tastes and reflects his thoughts and desires, it will not be possible to boast 'we have a colleague' or to tell the world 'this is our music'. If there is such a thing as a country, then where in the world would that country and that thing be? What 'freedom' do you enjoy?

*We are used to listening and singing 'Hindustani music'. They used to go and study it in their country of birth. But if that comrade were to take solace and try to sow me here, this would not be a service I have done to the ground from what we have learned. It is a great disgrace to the name of the Hela who sang 'Hindustani Raga-Talaya' to the point of imprisoning our thoughts and singing, 'We too are human beings' "*¹⁶.

He notes here the need to create a local tradition inspired by other traditions in a very emotional tone. The motivation he received from the Hela Hawla can be seen in these words.

He say repeatedly stated that there is nothing wrong with drawing inspiration from other musical traditions when creating local music.

"Anything in the world cannot be prevented from entering into something external while improving. But what is added outside of that should be added to the amount. Otherwise it will turn into a salty broth. It is known that English developed due to the roof of Greek and Latin words. But I do not hear that it has done any harm to English"¹⁷.

Sunil Sant also emphasized that the new local music should be one that caters to the needs of the people. He also emphasizes that the music should not be a processor for burial.

*"The musical traditions in the world today are found in our country too. Most of them are ingrained in our people. Hindustani film music, Hindustani 'classical' music, Hindustani simple classical music, Vanga music, Western music, Baila music, etc. Our country is full of endless musical genres. I can imagine. If our hope is to produce music that can be stored in the museum to show that this is our local music, then it's better not to just think about local music. What we want is not an artifact. It is a feature that is useful in our daily lives. So it should be our job to shape the music that is always emerging, not the music that is closing in on the music system that we see in our country today. It was with that in mind that I embarked on my work on local music"*¹⁸.

He was of the opinion that the people of this country should produce a musical tradition that was embraced more than all other musical traditions. That is to say, if the local tradition is upheld by another, the local music thus created will be of no use. Songs like Sunil's Olu Pipila, Handapane, Lanka Lanka, Mihikatha Nalawala, Walakulin Basa, Varen Heensare have become ingrained in the local folklore no matter what the musical traditions are¹⁷. Sarachchandra's play 'Maname' is a good example of the subjugation of a tradition established by other traditions as a local tradition and the disappearance of even the ruins of that so-called local tradition. Maname is a stylized lyric drama. The other successful play in that arena was Sinhabahu. Thereafter, playwrights, led by Sugathapala de Silva, dismantled the so-called local drama tradition, the stylistic (nadagam) system. Within the next decade, Maname's drama failed to unite the people of the country spiritually, free from racial, religious and caste divisions. Sunil Santhe was the first person to recognize this situation with regard to music. That is why he did not believe in an expert classical tradition other than the folk music tradition.

"A part of the population in our country knows better how dangerous the atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb are. The

*term classical music is much more dangerous than that. It is now widely accepted in the world that the mere mention of an atomic water bomb is sufficient to gain or retain power. In the same way, great work was done on this part of our country by this academic term"*¹⁷.

Making music classic caused the expulsion of large number of artistes from the field of music. Music was prevented from becoming a part of public life. It blocked the space to be a nation where everyone knew music, singing and enjoyment. That academicization caused this society to become one ruled by vulgarity and stress. It is the result of the cultural class and segregation we experience today. The result of this academic and Indianization is the creation of two streams, the "classical" and the "inferior class", and the subsequent development of the 'inferior class music' stream into a general current, which today suppresses the academic stream. It can be seen that the forces used to build this academic tradition lost their foundations when they collapsed. It began with the production of cassettes and intensified with the launch of private radio stations in 1992. With the development of the micro-media, a great deal of space has arisen for the rise of the masses that have been suppressed by the academic forces. It is in this way that the musical traditions that have always existed among the common people, despite their forcible suppression, become the mainstream of this period. This is evidenced by the fact that the trajectory of the mainstream musicians such as Sunil Santha., RA Chandrasena, Clarence Wijewardene and Premasiri Khemadasa has now become the mainstream by breaking the Brahmin caste.

Conclusion

Sunil Santha focused on the subject of music, not just as a means of entertainment, but as a tool that teaches humans and can be used to keep it organized. He seems to have tried to make music a mass medium through both teaching and composing music. Accordingly, his fan base transcended Sinhala, Tamil and other religions as well as Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims. Sunil Santha owns an independent anthem that addresses a very wide fan base. Sunil's attempt is at odds with real-time political aspirations as power politics in Sri Lanka breaks that national unity and thus divides the communities to serve political purposes. As a result, his efforts conflicted with national and political practice in the Indo-Peninsular region. Accordingly, Sunil Santhawas removed from the radio and his attempt is thwarted. Thereafter, one can observe endless riots and strifes among Ceylonese communities.

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