Chapter Six

Music in Sri Lankan Society

As a social artifact, art plays an important role in people’s daily life-styles and reflects sociological, psychological and anthropological patterns and status of different cultures and traditions. In the same way, to some extent, sociological thoughts and other ideologies could be seen, understood and used to illustrate some of the artistic forms such as painting, dance, drama, film and so on. Considering the other art forms, the “art of listening” or music plays a significant role in people’s everyday lives. People from different socio-cultural contexts and different ideologies commonly experience music as a series of sound track of their everyday lives. The main function or the key factor behind listening to music would be the state of appreciation or sole mental satisfaction. However, on some occasions, it performs additional functions such as creating social identity. People generally encounter various types of musical experiences day by day.

Although music is utilized in different ways in everyday lives of people, the value of music depends on their usages and this usage may vary from person to person, place to place and, time to time. Thus music is thoroughly bound with people’s mind, emotions and attitudes etc. Furthermore, music is employed to indicate social status, cultural and political views of specific communities and different social groups. In addition to this fact, it can also be said that music is utilized in religious, cultural and socio-political spheres for different purposes. Hence, music could be considered as a social product as well as a social institution.

Where the long term human history is concerned, music has been used in various social contexts such as religious, educational, political, economic and other cultural purposes. Due to the usage and the popular demand for it, music has become one of the precious art forms. Further, it is a commodity that is produced, distributed and consumed just like
other 'objects' in the contemporary world when compared to the past. In contrast to the earlier times, music has been utilized in order to fulfill a variety of purposes in a large number of social and cultural contexts or spheres in the modern world besides its ultimate objective appreciation.

Where the contemporary world is concerned, music is used even in such diverse environments as automobiles, airplanes, airports, elevators, bank and ships, shopping malls, grocery shops, hospitals, museums and so on. The term \textit{MUZAK} is used to denote what is played in such locations\(^2\). Moreover, music is performed in many other life-related occasions such as birthday parties, at-home parties, weddings, sports, healings, meditations, relaxation, weight loss, attracting prosperity, and funerals as well. John A. Sloboda points out that most of such kind of occasions can be seen or happen in various places like at homes, in streets, pubs, restaurants and other public places and one can attend such occasions with or without making any appointment while some special environments like schools and other official venues where the music is tend to be somewhat restricted. And on some occasions, for example, in film music or classical and other concerts in concert halls, the listener should adjust himself/herself especially fitting the environment to listen to music\(^3\).

\textit{Kotaba} and \textit{Vannini} have pointed out that in some contexts such as automobiles, airplanes, airports, elevators, banks and ships, shopping malls, and grocery shops, the main purpose of using music is to maximize customer satisfaction and attraction, and thereby, creating a romantic and friendly environment. Furthermore, they have emphasized that when it is used this way, it works as a tool, technique and a strategy for satisfying of goals other than music listening itself\(^4\). As a result, of fulfilling aforementioned goals, music has become a valuable commodity in the current capitalist economic globe. Music has ultimately become a profitable product or a business in the present world, and as a result, some music genres have been especially produced by artists in order to accomplish their economic goals as well. The original functions and
roles of aesthetics have become shifted to some extent. Conversely, as it has been stated by North et al, development of mass media during the 20th Century has resulted in a lose aura and aesthetic value of music to some extent. Using music in mass media seems to be making negative impacts on original aura and the aesthetic quality other than the original context that is being used. The use of North Indian classical music (especially instrumental music) as background music of funerals and presenting obituary notices during the telecast times with or without visuals of the people who hold high positions in various fields such as religious, art and political arena is commonplace in Sri Lankan electronic media context can be given as a fine example.

Even though the SLBC had given the high priority to propagate North Indian music in Sri Lanka, it also made the field somewhat confusing due to the practice of performing an elegiac music composition on the funerals of the leading political figures. This practice was initiated at the funeral of the late Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake and such type of music was played by the late Musician named Edwin Samaradiwakara on that occasion. The result was that the North Indian music was degraded by the public, at least to a certain extent.

In the same way, other classical music genres have been utilized in several advertising purposes in the electronic media all over the world which has highly affected their original aesthetic quality.

Due to the high demand attached to music in a diverse range of contexts, some classical and/or other genres have been utilized under different labels and names which relate to different moods and feelings in day to day life. This trend can be seen common place in commercials. For example, sometimes classical instrumental Western music of the Baroque period (especially Bach’s compositions) and the Indian classical music are employed as healing, mediations, relaxation, weight loss, etc. It could be assumed that since the new technology, producers and artists have attempted to sell and commercialize
human feelings relating to different social contexts, modern day people have access to buy those musical genres that match their expectations. In that sense, one could say that the popular mass media and other commercial organizations have attempted to develop the logic of capitalism in music, covering many aspects of everyday life.

Appreciating musical traditions other than the aforementioned cases also varies from culture to culture, individual to individual according to their age limits, educational backgrounds, social status and religious thoughts and views and, finally, based upon the listener’s mentality. Thus, the ultimate objective of music (art), i.e., “beauty”, varies from time to time, place to place, country to country and from culture to culture. However, due to lack of a well-trained and matured listening practice, the vast majority of people often fail to appreciate classical and high browed musical traditions such as Western and Eastern classical music. In order to successfully grab the essence of such traditions, listeners should have seasoned ears and focused minds. However, based on two major factors, viz., the fact that music is a social product and that peoples' expectations may vary, different types of musical genres have emerged, ranging from high classical to modern popular light genres. Nevertheless, one could listen and appreciate all kinds of genres, whereas some of them to be ‘experienced’. For example, classical music connoisseurs tend to disregard and sometimes hate other types of genres found in popular music.

However, the demand for light flavor and popularity, the entire world tend to make and listen to popular music genres during their day to day activities. Apart from that, the majority of people use music in various social contexts in a number of ways. For the sake of the analysis, four major kinds may be identified as follows

1. Passive listening - without giving full attention (just listening alone)
2. Sensuous listening - listening to music with a greater degree of attention and focus.
3. Emotional listening - listening to music with emotions and reaction
4. Perceptive listening - As opposed to the above three listening, this requires a deliberate concentration on the music itself and a sharp awareness of what is being "musicalized".

It is clear in many cases that people probably engage in musical activities as passive, sensuous and emotional listeners, whereas researchers and other related and educated people attempt to associate those musical elements as a perceptive method of listening. They examine the relativity and the connectivity of sounds, rhythms and other basic concepts to various social as well as other contexts.

When music is considered to be a profitable commercial item in the modern world, it can be employed as a resource in day to day life of individuals to group of personalities.

6.1 Influence of recorded music on the Music culture and listening practices amongst Sri Lankan Society

The second chapter deeply focused on the history of music, existing traditions of music in Sri Lanka and, how these traditions and genres have evolved through different periods under various political, social and cultural circumstances. Correspondingly recording technology and broadcasting have changed Sri Lankan musical culture in a dramatic manner during the last few decades. It also has led to revolutionize people’s aesthetic views on music.

The typical musical tradition which exists in Sri Lanka is commonly known as folk music. These treasures vary from different stages from birth to death of people such as lullabies, play songs, work songs, religious songs (*bethi gee*), and so on. In earlier times, the main occupation of the majority of Sri Lankans was agriculture (this is valid even today) and the villagers have been exposed to folk music in their social, cultural and
religious events intertwined with their simple lifestyle. During some ceremonious occasions in the contemporary society (especially celebrating the Sinhala/Hindu New Year festival) these 'customs' are also being used as a part of the cultural heritage and to entertain the gatherings to make sure that the occasion goes on cooperatively. However, in the recent past, such kind of traditional and cultural occasions were organized by various television and radio channels to show the cultural richness as to fulfill their commercial goals.

A close observation would make it clear that the musical structures and other musical elements are rather simpler than the other folk musical traditions that exist throughout the Asian region, especially in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. However, due to the cultural influences, technological advancements and intercultural affiliations, the typical music of Sri Lanka began to transform in numerous ways.

Radio broadcasting technology was first introduced to Sri Lanka in 1924. As a result, of free economic policy which had been introduced to the country in 1977 under the new government elected, the entire system was subjected to unprecedented changes and influences. In contrast to other mediums of music, gramophone discs, cassette tapes, CDs etc. The radio broadcasting thoroughly affected the masses since it has power to address the masses.

Consequently, musical traditions and value-systems, listening habits and the life styles of people began to change in a dramatic manner. The arrival of gramophone as a listening machine in the early period, did not affect the daily lives of people as it had impacted only on the musical culture of some specific social classes, especially because it was an expensive and elite item which represented the high social status at that time. This situation could be seen not only in Sri Lanka but also in India and some other countries. With the radio broadcasting the music of gramophone influenced indirectly to the life styles of many rural villagers.
With the influx of job seekers going to the Middle East and returning, Radio cum Cassette recorder soon became influential equipment which made powerful impacts on people’s life style and, in the same way the music of Sri Lanka. This may be one of the main reasons why Sri Lankan musical culture at this time was subjected to unprecedented transformations. The radio and cassette players critically affected and influenced the typical folk musical traditions and other music styles of the country. Instead of the traditional practice of singing different types of folk songs during various stages of agricultural activities such as \textit{ploughing}, transplanting, weeding, protecting the crop against wild animals in watch huts, harvesting, and manual threshing, farmers began to listen to radios and cassette players while performing such work. This new practice became further established since the television advertisements, which promoted popular brands of radios, used the visuals of farmers listening to radios while engaging in their agricultural practices. The practice of adopting such technologies seriously affected the future of typical music, especially, the folk music in Sri Lanka leading to the break down of the fabric of the whole system of music and the taste of music in Sri Lankan community.

The introduction of radio cassettes is not the only such technological influence that affected the Sri Lankan music at that time. With the introduction of North Indian dramatic groups, headed by \textit{Baliwala} also brought a host of songs based on North Indian classical music. Since this transformation, not only the people who desired art but also general public got used to think that, the song would be the climax of music. In the same way, the majority of people also began to think that the song itself is “music”. 

When compared to the listening practices and habits of those used to high classical South and North Indian music and, Western music genres, it is clear that majority of the Sri Lankans were promoted to listen and appreciate light music genres such as songs from earlier times in mediums such as gramophone, films, dramas and radio broadcasting \textit{etc.}
The “song mentality” was properly utilized when producing films, dramas and other art forms. There were twelve to fourteen songs which were embedded in early Sinhala films based on South Indian stories and music. This trend highly affected the popularity of the films screened at the time. Accordingly, advertisements were produced with attractive songs strategically on weekly papers by film producers to bring audience to film halls. Following are examples of paper advertisement for the film *See Devi* (09th March 1951):

1. “Sinhala songs based on popular Hindustani melodies”
2. “Popular songs based on Hindi tunes could be listened in this film”

As a result, the popularity of filmy songs gradually increased it became the dominated form of music industry or the musical culture in Sri Lanka. In early days, as mentioned in Peter Manuel’s article “Popular Music in India: 1901-86”, film music was also widely spread by the radio, recordings and was overloaded at tea stalls, homes, restaurants, not only in India, but also in Sri Lankan villages as well. On the other hand, the Commercial and the External services of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation have been playing a leading role as the sole broadcaster of Indian film music throughout Asia, thus making Indian film music famous in Sri Lanka.

The literary aspect and the meanings of the majority of the early film songs were poor. Most of them consisted of vulgar idiomatic phrases, while bulk of them was illustrated over-romanticized love. However, few of the lyrics of gramophone played an important and vital role in propagating and motivating people for patriotism during 1935 to 1945.

It is clear that other Eastern (especially India) and Western countries have moved on to certain measures to record and propagate both traditional and classical music genres, in addition, to record popular songs. This practice was highly appreciated by some Sri Lankan listeners and, at the same time, it influenced them to cultivate a better music listening culture in the country to some extent. In addition, it has been reported that some
early musicians had also used those materials to learn North Indian music as per their choice. There was also a practice of recording Classical music programs to be broadcasted by the radio as a method of conservation within the premises of the radio station. Unfortunately, these productions were limited only to the Broadcasting Corporation. Some gramophone musicians occasionally recorded some North Indian ragas, but the majority were limited their productions to traditional folk and light music genres.

Fixing a reasonable price for songs may also be considered as a matter influential in securing popularity among artists to promote light music genres in the Sri Lankan music industry from its earlier times. Recruiting contemporary famous and popular musicians as well as song artists under agreements to compose only for their own recording labels in the gramophone era revealed the above mentioned fact and, the popularity of songs began to gradually increase. It is interesting to mention here that on some occasions some artists tried to release their own EP records to bring their music to audience.

It is interesting to state that the song traditions that had been blended with other art forms, such as drama, film genres etc., have been utilized to listen by music appreciating audience as light songs using the low cost recording and play back mechanisms.

The establishment of Radio Ceylon resulted in a critical reshaping of the song culture to a certain extent. However, it still depended on gramophone song records in its lime line and some programs were totally based on imitated Hindustani melodies. Lampson’s administrative report comments on the quality of such programs as follows:

“...the standard of both light and classical music program has left much to be desired. This was mainly due to the lack of trained artists and the common and undesirable habit of slavishly coping Hindustani film music.”

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A group of musicians who learnt classical music in India and, a team of officials involved in SLBC had been assigned a significant role in modeling the quality and the music of the song tradition after 1950s. Among them, W.D Amaratwe, Edwin Samaradiwakara, Ananda Samarakoon, Sunil Santa may be considered as pioneers of the said musical renaissance. They attempted to try out a new song tradition with meaningful lyrics in collaboration with some well-known poets in this era such as Sri Chandraratna Manwasingha, Mahagama Sekera, Madavala S. Rathnayake and Wimal Abhayasundara. They together invented musical compositions according to the lyrical meaning by using music elements from North Indian and other indigenous musical traditions. The term “Light Song” was especially used to distinguish between radio and other song categories. This effort was greatly appreciated by the elite and educated people at that time and they were always patronizing the national radio. However, broadcasting other classical traditions in the initial period was remarkably low. A new program titled “Dwitiya Sangrahaya” or secondary program was designed especially to encourage North Indian Classical music. Some other programmers namely Sangeet Sabha, Sangeet Manjari and Rasa Dhara were also launched on behalf of classical music fans or admirers. Not only vocal music programs but some other instrumental music programs were equally broadcasted by eminent musicians together with their students, while being greatly influential in cultivating a variety of aesthetic behavioral patterns among the Sri Lankan audience.

SLBC was offering grades to classical artists in the meantime to light song artists as “Sarala gee shren” could be assumed as an attempt to establish professional standards of Sri Lankan music. Professor Rathanjunker, when he arrived from India to audition and grade radio artists in 1952 had explained in his remarkable speech the ways in which it could be possible to construct “Sinhalese music” by using typical Sri Lankan folk melodies which had hitherto been neglected in rural villages in the country due to the growth of the Indian music as follows:
“The real Sinhalese music having a traditional background is lying neglected in the interior, in the villages of Ceylon. The Vannams, the Sivpadas, the Kavis, the Viridus, Slokas are quite an interesting stock of musical compositions which contain the germs of a great system of music which can be built upon them. Indian music of today has grown to its present standard out of simple folk songs as are now heard in Ceylon. These folk songs of Ceylon, as they are, of course, in a very primitive form. I do recommend them to notice the modern musicians and musicologist of Ceylon”17

In the same way, imitating and applying the music elements of one of the most famous musical traditions of Calcutta in India known as “Rabindra Sangeet” by the great poet Ravindranath Tagore was imitated and practiced by some of Sri Lankan patriotic musicians such as Ananda Samarakoon, Sunil Santa, Swarnaguptha Amarasingha, W.D. Makulolowa, C.de. S. Kulathilake, Layanal Ranwala. This also resulted in establishing the said situation in the country. The dream of the “National musical tradition” in the country was gradually established but, ultimately the practice ended up because of the introduction of a creative light musical tradition. On the other hand, due to the lack of properly cultivated classical musical tradition in the country, the situation became even worse and resulted in the spread of poor quality genres in Sri Lanka. Because of the great demand for the light music (especially the song culture) with its commercial benefits, majority of the musicians who had specialized in North Indian classical music (both in vocal and instrumental) entered the field of light music. In the meantime, a few others struggled to cultivate Indian classical musical tradition in Sri Lanka. They even held private tuition classes for students to learn music and managed to introduce classical music to the school curriculum while performing cultural shows in common places and cities.
In contrast to the classical and light song traditions, another music genre or a tradition of music known as “Sinhala pop music” (the term Baila was used to refer to this tradition) began to emerge together with “group songs” during 1960s. This was highly popularized among the urbanized young generation at that time. Wollie Bastian, M.S. Fernanado, Anton Rodrigo, Anton Jones, and Nihal Nelson were and are some of the famous contemporary artists.

The Commercial Service of the SLBC (establish in 1950) promoted such popular artists and gave them 15 minutes per week for their programs. These programs were rather different from the ones that were broadcasted in the National Service. They often promoted common flavor of popular music programs of pop artists with fast rhythms. Some such programs were banned by the authority because of their "low" quality.

Some issues of internal politics and the prevailing dominance of North Indian music also paved the way for banning these genres of popular music. The vast majority of people who had been trained and educated in North Indian music tended to relentlessly criticize and neglect popular music. They sometimes disagreed in considering popular music as a "genre of music" in general. Undoubtedly, this trend directly impacted on the growth and diversity of Sri Lankan music. Due to the dominance of North Indian music, the higher figures of SLBC unofficially took the responsibility for this new trend. As a result, those pop musical traditions and Sri Lankan traditional music were not given a proper recognition at the SLBC. Radio authorities sometimes tended to consider these traditions to be "poisons" which would 'kill' the spirit of the music field. The following extract taken from a research publication entitled “Big Sounds from Small People: The music Industry in Small Countries” clearly proves this fact. It is a statement made by Mr. Gerald Wickramasuriya of the Suriya Record Company:

“…They're not only against pop, they're even against our own traditional music . . . that crowd is in charge of Radio Ceylon [the SLBC's former
name] ... To that crowd, pop is poison. I recorded a song called 'Dilhani' in 1969 - it was the first genuine Sinhalese pop song. When I went to the Director of music of the Sinhalese Service he said: 'Do you want me to play that poison? ... So when it became a success, I met him again and asked: 'How do you like the success of my poison?' He had nothing to say, of course”.

The SLBC policy during the period in question also affected some other genres in the same way.

In practice, the lyrics and music notations had to be submitted to a committee (sensor board) to be considered for approval before the broadcasting. Only the approved ones were allowed to be broadcasted. However, some musically enriched traditions subsided due to the policy of the SLBC (some songs were seized by the Corporation without having a significant reason, sometimes according to rumors of other personalities. The song “Mage Rathtaran Helena” of Rohana Beddage was banned accordingly)\(^9\). However, the popular pop artists had the opportunity of broadcasting their songs via National Radio especially because of the sponsorship of the then Director General of Broadcasting Mr. Nevil Jayaweera and the Director of Commercial Service Mr. Livee Wijemanna as well as the English announcer Mr. Vijaya Korea from 1967 to 1970. Nevertheless, the other traditions were still challenged by the above mentioned genre because of the demand of radio subscribers. Thus, authorities had to make strong decisions to control their air time\(^{20}\).

As a solution, group song artists and other popular artists (the late musician R.A. Chandrasena used EP mediums in order to bring his music to general public under the names of R.C.A and later under the name of “Sri Math” (after 1973) attempted to launch their own EP albums and cassettes to propagate their music genres among masses there by resulting in a profitable business in the context of Sri Lankan music market. Later, the
EP and LP mediums were used as models to launch personal song albums of individual artists/singers and other local traditions of folk songs and traditional drums etc.

Depending on the usage of music, musical elements and lyrics, there were two types of artists. The first category was known as “Classical artists” or Sambhawya gayakain and were highly appreciated and admired whereas the other was known as “Pop artists” or Baila gayakain who were often always disregarded by the elite groups on the grounds that their music could not admired as a good practice. In general, their use of language, dress code, and style of performance were fairly different from the so-called classical artists. There was a bad practice emerging, in that the pop artists were not appreciated even when they performed meaningful songs due to prevailing stereotypes. This is visible in the present day Sri Lanka as well. The main reason behind this is that the majority of listeners in Sri Lanka were/are not willing to “ideologically transcend” the limits of classical light music genre. However, the quality and creativity, and the types of prevailing genres highly dependent on the members of a particular community.

When compared to the services provided by All India Radio to cultivate and broadcast classical and other typical musical traditions, it is clear that except the earlier periods of Radio Ceylon, era of the SLBC had not taken sufficient measures to develop classical musical traditions during the period from 1990 to-date. Where the light programs are concerned, only one hour of air time was allocated to Classical music programs on every Saturday at 10.00 to 11pm on the Swadeshiya Sevaya (or National service of SLBC), whereas other services such as Tamil and English, broadcasted variety of Classical and other programs during the rest of the week.

Introduction and the distribution of cassettes in 1977 drastically changed not only the quality and behavioral patterns of listening and aesthetics of the general public, but also the themes and rhythm styles of songs. This trend laid the foundation to propagate this song tradition further and resulted in a pathway for everyone to enter the field of music
very easily. Based on the business oriented mentality there were number of manufactures who entered the field of music. Some of them decided the themes of songs and the style of music without taking the quality into consideration when they were producing cassettes. However, it was also possible for the singers and artists to select the themes and styles freely, resulting in a situation with a reasonable independence at the SLBC. However, some cassette manufactures such as Singlanka, Tharanga, and Torana produced a variety of first-rate cassettes of the above mentioned artists who were and still are in the classical category. Such producers always promoted and stood for them whereas some manufactures produced popular songs just as a business to make money.

Ultimately, aesthetic features of song began to wane. Further the phenomenon of “song” became a commercialized object (commodity) rather than an artistic creation. Some popular “cassette artists” have even released more than 100 cassettes within a short period (within two to three years). In addition to that, by means of the new recording techniques available, some popular albums of famous singers, especially H.R.Jothipala, Milton Perera have been reproduced and released with harsh and unfitted instrumentations by such popular bands, without changing the original voice of the artist. In the meantime, as an alternative method, some albums of pioneer artists were re-launched with new instrumentations by those first grade cassette producers to cultivate a proper music impression suiting to the taste of younger generation and as a challenge to the fake music propagated by money oriented companies.

If a recorded song or a musical composition is considered as a “text” in modern literary context, the reader (the listener or the audience) tends to construct its “textual meaning” according to the given clues or signals in different contexts as mentioned in Holub:

“There is no regulative context between text and reader to establish intent; this context must be constructed by the reader from textual clues or signals”
As a result, of these practices the appreciation of music could be differentiated as per their choices depending on music and the musical elements that were employed in such compositions. The so-called practice of issuing a same song containing different instrumentations has resulted in serious divisions among the listeners or audiences. Some of them prefer to listen to the original version with acoustic instruments whereas others prefer re-arranged versions with electronic instruments.

Water Benjamin argues in his article “The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction”, the aura of aesthetic quality tends to be lost as a result of 'reproduction'. Modern recording and reproduction technologies have affected not only music but also other sorts of artifacts. Much evidence could be provided to prove this argument within the music contexts in Sri Lanka. Such practices have highly affected the musical depth of the composition, together with the traditional contextual meaning of the original composition as well as the future of the artifact.

However, musically untalented young people came to the field by means of technological "tricks" and have changed the entire culture in the recent past. These types of baseborn or unaesthetic cassettes of contemporary people (it is questionable whether one could use the word "artist" to refer to them) have seriously caught the attraction of the uneducated people. These cassettes are used by drivers and conductors of public transport system in accordance with their choice and taste, level of education and social status. This can be largely seen in rural areas of the country. It has also affected the line-of thinking of the children and younger generations. Because of the bad practice of propagating harsh rhythm based vulgar murmurings, passengers with good taste are getting used to embrace new technologies such as walkman cassettes players, I-pods, MP3 and even mobile phones capable of playing back music as a way of escaping these so-called "popularized" music while listening to their own taste.
Developing computer-based mass recording productions and home-based small scale recording productions have also resulted in creating some other musical genres such as “hip hop” and other modern genres and styles of music which were highly popular among younger generation since 1990s. This genre can be seen as one of the dominant forms in the music charts in almost all private media channels. Emphasizing beats or rhythms other than the melody is a salient feature of these song traditions. Instead of broadcasting or televising meaningful and musically enriched songs, such songs are propagated wearisomely by some media channels to fulfill their economic goals and publicity related targets.

Even though there are Indian and Western classical music education at both school and university levels in Sri Lanka today, 95% of youngsters have thoroughly embraced the tradition of light music.

Even though there can be seen a government education system under the aesthetic stream (especially in music), the priority has been given to study ‘Abhyasa ganas’ (singing practice) and students usually prepare only for music examinations. The teaching methodology of North Indian classical music education appears to be not helpful to cultivate and strengthen the aesthetic features and moods of students according to ragas. As a result, students do not pay much attention to classical music either for their further studies or for developing their aesthetic pleasure. As far as these music elements are concerned, students as well as the other light music fans try to generally think that light music (songs) is better than 'unpleasantly taught classical music'.

Further, the secondary education has basically focused on teaching the applied musical traditions. These conditions critically affect the increased demand of light music in the country. This is one reason why the contemporary reality programs such as “Superstars shows” are being telecasted on more than three or four television channels in every weekend, thus promoting the song culture further.
Since there is a good demand and the popularity for the genre of light songs, other kinds of music compositions are not given a proper place in the field of music in Sri Lanka. However, there are a number of international award winning and internationally recognized music compositions of late musician Premasiri kemadasa, and contemporary musicians like Lalanath de Siva, Dilup Gabadamudalige, Harsha Makalanda, which have only been limited to cassettes and CD media. Although they organized live performances to bring those compositions to Sri Lankan music audience, due to the high entrance charges only those belong well-to-do class are able to access them. It is interesting to notice that there was a practice of forming four types of small groups²⁵ (music clubs) to listen, propagate, educate and initiate a dialog of music (than song), and they were formed by eminent musicians in different places in the country. Such music clubs are: P4 club, Musical hour club, Music conservation club and Ceylon Music Society²⁶.

The listening behavior and the taste of appreciation are modeled by the culture of a particular society. The interference of mass media plays a key role in changing people's listening behavior and thinking patterns in numerous ways. Due to the above mentioned influences and other technological factors, 99% of the Sri Lankans are limited only to the appreciation of light songs which are compressed to three to five minutes. From earlier to present times, all recording and reproducing technologies have been used only for this purpose. In the contemporary time, the major propagators of these forms of songs are various types of FM and other private radio and TV channels. Because of the commercial benefits and the good demand for songs, the mobile network companies also promote artists to record songs according to the contemporary taste of younger generation for the purpose of “ring tones”.

Depending on the prevailing situation, many artists have attempted to record songs for light song albums, commercials, film songs, tele-dramas etc. Indeed, there is a critical discourse based on how to change this practice.
6.2 Application of Recorded Music in various contexts in Sri Lanka.

Listening to music is a different experience and people prefer different music genres to fulfill various functions by means of varying degrees of technologies. Before the invention of recording, reproduction and broadcasting technologies, music had been a thoroughly live, and time and space related experience. However, with new inventions and their developments, music now comes to the audience in different media with different formats. Accordingly, the pattern and the way people experience music has been largely transformed from one medium to another within a very short period. As a result, people define and entertain their music experiences and leisure time in different ways. Likewise, the technological developments have abridged the pattern of people's music appreciation from a collective to solo experience. As Mark Kartz has clearly pointed out\textsuperscript{27}, when one technological mechanism coexists with or supersedes another, users may respond to the difference between the two systems.

Compared to the live music programs, people have been able to enjoy music repeatedly based on their preferences even within a crowded environment by using headsets. Technology and other compatible gadgets have created such a situation.

Since music has become a 'profitable commodity' with the intervention of technology, it has changed the culture of listening in a significant ways. This has also blurred the margin between time and space.

In various contexts of Sri Lankan daily life styles, live and recorded music forms are employed in order to accomplish certain emotional expectations in numerous ways. Nevertheless, mentioned earlier, songs ranging from light songs to pop songs (including filmy, tele-drama and so on) have been given a dominant place in Sri Lanka since the earlier times, considering them as public forms of emotional expression at such occasions as birthday parties, weddings and other seasonal and religious ceremonies. Accordingly, the cost of recording and launching music albums is increasing day by day. One side
effect of this trend is the failure of the artists to concentrate on what the majority emotionally expects. Even though the income is very low, some artists continue to launch such kind of instrumental albums. Even though most of the famous songs are sold at such a low price as Rs.100/= on MP3 disks, artists abstain to create new song albums now a days.

In addition to the passive listening method mentioned above, some public places such as shopping malls, elevators, airports and banks in Sri Lanka promote instrumental music of the melodies of Sinhala, Hindi and English songs, and western fusion music as a new medium to create a calm and pleasant environment. Performing live songs along with other instrumental music is another new trend that can be seen in most shopping malls in contemporary Sri Lanka. As an unseen method, the main purpose of introducing such strategies has been to achieve commercial benefits by companies. Thus, while shopping during weekends or the festive seasons, shoppers or the consumers gather like an audience in shopping malls to listen to the music while shopping. Most of the people at the “Kandy City Center” (a newly opened shopping mall) appreciated this trend as it become a pleasing experience for them to enjoy listening to music while shopping. Views of the following two customers can be given as examples:

“These days we don’t have a chance to appreciate artistic songs via radio channels as we did when we were young. Now we can entertain even while shopping. This relaxes our hectic and stressful mentality for some time …”

“This practice creates an environment for people to gather around. At the same time, it induces us to buy something. Even though this is used as a commercial strategy, I think it is every artistic…”

However, internationally recognized airports in New Zealand, India, Africa…etc. thoroughly promote the typical musical traditions to exhibit their cultural enrichment and
identity through music. Further, some local musicians perform live music inside the terminals to promote local and other cultural diversities\textsuperscript{30}. Ultimately, the western classical and fusion music are being given the prominent place in Sri Lankan airport lobbies.

The habit of using I-pods, MP3 players and mobile phones as music players is considerably increasing as a fashion and a new form of listening. It is interesting to note here that the modern gadgets are utilized by beggars in trains and other common places in India. Example:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{beggar_with_modern_sound_equipment.png}
\caption{Beggar with a modern sound equipment}
\textit{(Picture taken at a public market place in New Delhi)}
\end{figure}

New tools for these purposes are gradually becoming available for reasonable prices. The bulk of these are Chinese brand names. Portability and convenient usage have also influenced the rapid growth of the popularity of devices. Despite these new devices, the conventional media such as radio and cassettes are still being used at homes and in vehicles. It is also interesting to note that some early listening devices, especially “Music
Juke boxes” are used in Colombo Racecourse restaurant where the access is limited to a particular community.

Different groups of younger and elder generations have utilized those new forms of music listening technologies by means of spending time when they have to kill time as in motor traffic jams. Another objective behind their use of such equipments is to get rid of monotonous songs played inside buses. Since the convenient usage of handling and storing customized play lists obtained from Internet and other sources, such listening mechanisms have been growing fast when compared to cassettes and CD technology. However, there is a culture of collecting and listening to cassettes and CDs among Sri Lankan people as well (Please refer to the online survey report which is included in the appendix to observe the purchasing patterns of cassettes or CDs).

As far as the conventional listing methods from the earlier times to the present are concerned, many people use gramophones, turntables, radiogram players, radios, cassettes players, walkman players even in the contemporary society, depending on their listing choices. Similarly, the brands of “loud speakers” are used to broadcast religious chants and worshipping every day at Buddhist and Islamic religious institutions. Some sound suppliers also use these old technologies instead of using new technologies. In most cases, not only the ordinary people such as three-wheel drivers but also the people who listen to music at homes sometimes listen music with loud volumes.

With the development of recording technologies and new ways of listening which were not available in the earlier days, people are always unconsciously objectified in the contemporary societies. This is the contemporary way of promoting music as a new medium in the Mp3 file format. As far as the mobile or land phone lines are concerned, musical recording and compositions can be configured to be heard until the receiver accepts a call. Accordingly, the telecommunication firms have supplemented their commercial goals with aesthetic values.
The users of mobile telephone technology have the opportunity to customize the intended types of music depending on their choices. Similarly, such strategies are functioning both as a new way of promoting songs in different communities and as a strategy of marketing. Some contemporary commercial institutions intervene as the sole agents of selling songs of contemporary artists to the mobile networks by paying very less percentages as royalty fee and earn higher profits.

When compared to the other countries, using and implementing recorded music in some important fields like education is very less and poor. As far as the Western music education of 1970s is concerned, SLBC has played a leading role in preparing all subject-related cassettes and other listening materials to assist students. At the same time, with the proper link with the Education Department, the Corporation also undertook music education programs in accordance with the Western Music Syllabus and broadcasted them during the same time as the course is offered in the schools. It also repeated the same set of programs during weekends.

But, there is an upward tendency of applying these technologies to record some relevant music pieces and compositions by respective authorities in collaboration with SLBC and other organizations. Two sets of audio cassettes based on the advanced level music syllabi named “Raga Sarani” have been released by the SLBC as an initial step of implementing these technologies other than popular songs. Apart from that, according to the international standards, a bulk of compact discs with nursery rhymes was issued especially for the pre-schools and primary education. This has resulted in improving the attitudes and beliefs of children in a positive manner. Some artists have launched CDs especially targeting children. Nanda Malini’s compact disk, “Sindhu Hodiya” can be mentioned here as a particular example of such materials.

One such instance is the publishing of inculcate Sinhala alphabet and some rhyming words in accordance with simple tunes. However, nobody has attempted to develop and
improve the genre of ‘children's music' though the country by using recording technology. As a result, a large number of adult songs which are not generally suitable for children have been published by various broadcasting bodies.

The modern growing tendency of facilitating recording technologies can be seen in various fields of performing art contexts such as stage dramas and other indoor and outdoor musical and dancing concerts in Sri Lanka. Because of the high fare rates of musicians and other economic circumstances, most of the contemporary stage dramas are based on recorded music tracks rather than playing live. But some ideologists as well as critics on the fields of drama and music condemn this blend as a bad practice. Likewise, some contemporary young popular musicians have also utilized that trend (the technical term for that practice is dubbing) for their music concerts as well. This is a newly introduced trend and has been made popular in the contemporary music industry by Santush Weeraman and Bhatiya Jayakody who are considered as two of the leading popular youngsters. They have been followed by other musicians in the country and their tradition of music is thoroughly based on computer based music. On the other hand, since they have used electronically generated sounds, sound effects and rhythm styles, it is difficult to perform some of their music tracks without using such technologies. Even though it gives a charming sensation as a feeling like listening to a CD album in front of the CD player without having any harsh sounds, majority of concerned people seriously condemn such practices.

But, if a musician belonging to the above mentioned so-called first category called Shasatriya gayakain(classical singers) perform such a way, the audience would not concern it as a serious issue because they think that these concerts themselves are live. A music program named “Sadu nada” is a such kind of devotional music (Bethi gee) performance which is organized by a private television channel to commemorate Load Buddha’s birth, enlightenment and passing away in May every year.
In contrast to this, organizers also try to show off such concerts as live performances with sound systems and musicians with their instruments on the stage. Apart from that, it is also interesting to mention here that some popular and catchy songs that belong to early films have been re-recorded with additional music arrangement especially making them suitable for dances. *Ridi Reyak* is one such program that is organized on 31<sup>st</sup> of December every year. The program is held in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Rupawahini Cooperation, featuring popular Sri Lankan film stars.

Unlike many other countries using music as a healing and a strategy of controlling stress in the Sri Lankan hospitals has never been promoted by the government. However, this practice is used in some private hospitals. The following is a comment of a patient who appreciated this practice:

> “Playing music in these places is highly appreciated by us. It decreases our stress and it helps us controlling the mental confusion caused by waiting on queues. In the same way, it gives a meaning to our time without wasting it while waiting for doctors. This must be applied to government hospitals also”

Some government hospitals promote certain television programs as well.

However, in using music as a therapeutic or relaxation method, the listener has to be careful about the level of volume of a given composition. In contrast, high frequencies are utilized in the therapeutic contexts, especially in the Low country folk ritual commonly known as “*Daha Ata Sanniya*” (ritual for eighteen demon gods). Because of the usage of drums and rendering related verses by keeping the same drum frequency as a pitch, loud frequencies are generated by this performance.
For varying degrees of musical volume can affect the mentality of the patients in different ways, as a common practice, people listen to classical music compositions of North Indian or Western traditions (both vocal and instrumental) as relaxation music using different mediums. Some hospitals and institutions have organized music workshops under the title of “Music therapy". However, considering the mental and physical conditions of different diseased people, most hospitals in western and Eastern countries use music to fulfill different medical achievements. The main purpose of using music in hospitals is to relax patients and to make a quiet and calm environment for them. Apart from that, such places do not use distressing or disconcert sounds such as overhead paging, sounds of arriving ambulances and painful crying of patients and small children. In the same way, music has been used as a therapy of pain relief while doing operations such as: heart bypass surgeries, hysterectomies etc. The other interesting point here is that some music therapists suggest that surgeons should to listen to music before doing surgeries to strengthen their mental and physical conditions. For these purposes, some user-friendly listening equipment such as “wireless headphones” were introduced to provide a good service. It is interesting to mention here that these headphones are facilitated with “pre-loading” capabilities and can be used for variety of purposes and contexts such as surgeries, lulling children and so on. Any person could easily use these headphones for listening purposes, using like MP3 players.

Unfortunately, many countries in the developing world are not still aware of these newly promoted techniques and methods and do not desire to implement those methods for the benefit of general public.

The latest devices mentioned above have also made it possible to use 'background music', especially in the working environments. These kinds of practices are usually performed targeting factory laborers in order to minimize monotonous mental status and to satisfy their minds during work. This helps to balance both mental and physical conditions of these workers in many ways.
The usage of recorded music in the Sri Lankan transportation services (especially in the buses operated by private sector) has a totally different practice. The vast majority of bus drivers tend to play solely rhythm based 'unmusical' songs thus forcing the travelers to listen to them. One characteristic feature of this phenomenon is that in almost every case, playing these kinds of songs entirely depends on the personal choices of the drivers. Some drivers gave their views on listening music while driving as:

1. “We seek the rhythmic beats to maintain the speed. Therefore, we play songs with easy rhythmic beats.”

2. “We play various songs while driving in order to get rid of the stress, feel a bit relieved and to reduce the monotony of our profession, while enjoying our working time.”

In general, 6/8 and 4/4 rhythms based songs are frequently entertained by them. Another important aspect of this phenomenon is that only a selected group of singers are selected by these people. It is also noteworthy that the new artists (these artists are colloquially known as “Bus Artists”) strategically use this practice in order to make their songs popular among the masses. This has become a new way of “broadcasting” or "advertising" certain albums. Neither the aesthetic quality nor the lyrics are given much priority in these songs. As a result, a single air time has not been granted by the government broadcasting corporations to these songs though certain private broadcasting channels have extensively done so. The travellers also revealed that there were many occasions where a single song had been continuously played in a cyclic manner from the beginning to the end of the journey.

Most common ways of easily playing these songs in the private buses are the use of the 'MP3 Players' and certain storage devices such as 'Flash Drivers', in addition to the cassette players. There is also a practice of connecting mobile phones (with MP3 playing capability) via the “line in socket” of MP3 players to play popular songs stored in them. Accordingly, the commercial targets of record bars have been shifted from the cassette tapes and CDs to MP3 files. Instead of using the tape recorders to record selected songs,
these centers now use the ‘Flash drivers’ as a direct way of copying MP3 files. It should to be stressed that this practice is highly illegal act of ‘musical’ piracy.

However, this practice of the bus drivers has been disgustedly condemned and criticized by the vast majority of passengers. Thus the government has taken measures to ban the practice and has introduced an alternative concept called “Bus TV” which can be used to play both songs and videos of artistic songs. This practice is admired by passengers. However, in most of the rural areas of the country the previous practice is still repeated using these "Bus TVs" especially due to the lack of proper monitoring mechanisms. It is interesting to note here that some bus drivers play Buddhist blessings throughout their journeys form the morning to evening for the purpose of invoking blessings for themselves as well the passengers. This is appreciated by a majority of the passengers.

These types of practices are very common in different types of privately owned shops both in the mornings and evenings while some of the blessing records are played throughout the day. Maintaining a pleasant mental condition and a calm environment has also been another function of these practices.

Conversely, the function of utilizing music in short distance journeys is rather different from the long distance journeys. As a common practice, these drivers deliberately spend about 45 minutes to one hour for one journey during off peak hours though normally they could be completed in about 15 to 20 minutes. This is a result of their habit of 'gathering' more and more passengers. Most bus drivers provide the passengers with an opportunity to listen to music as a strategy to make the latter unaware of the duration of the journey. However, almost all the Sri Lankan drivers tend to prefer rhythm based childish songs for the above mentioned functions (this depends on educational, aesthetic and social backgrounds).
On the other hand, rhythm based music has different functions. These genres are employed in different social contexts in different ways. People use such music which is solely based on the rhythm during their daily activities. It is noteworthy that this kind of music is used in some Sri Lankan restaurants and canteens (only in the evenings and nights) especially as a background rhythm for the process of making and mixing some special foods using the rhythm.

“Kottu” (means pieces mixed and chopped together) is typical Sri Lankan food which is famous among Sri Lankan urban people. The process of mixing and frying is done according to a rhythmic pattern (Commonly use 4/4, and 6/8 rhythms) resulting in a rhythmic noise. The same practice is used while making tea in some restaurants as well.

Recorded music is often used in order to fulfill various functional usages related to various social contexts. Accordingly, each piece has a different functional usage and a social experience beneath the aesthetic value.

Recorded music is being highly influenced by religious fields not only in Buddhist temples but also in other religious institutions such as Hindu temples in Sri Lanka. Such practices can be seen dominantly in India too. Because of the influence of the Hindu or the Islamic traditions, recorded devotional songs and other religious chants (Buddhist Parittas) are played twice a day respectively at 5.00 am to 6.00 am and 6.00 pm to 7.00 pm in almost every Sri Lankan Buddhist temple using loud speakers and cassettes. Due to the good demand, some common Buddhist Suttas have been recorded on Cassettes and CDs by Buddhist monks on the request of several cassettes companies and have published convenient advertisements emphasizing the effects of listening to such Suttas in various papers as well as electronic media. Consequently there can be seen a cassette-based religious music listening culture in almost every Sri Lankan house. In addition to that, according to the conceptual meaning of the Sinhalese popular Buddhist tradition, each and every Sinhalese radio and television channel transmits and telecasts such
Buddhist *Suttas* to avoid some evil drawbacks and also to mark the open and close of transmission every day. With the increase of media channels and utilizing various new rendering patterns of such *Suttas* according to each channel, the traditional chanting styles have been strongly impacted.

According to the above mentioned social situations and functions, one can clearly understand the involvement and correlation between the technology and recorded music in modern lifestyles.

During studies in India (Delhi), the researcher has experienced the use of music in various locations and contexts in different manners. Compared to the listening practices in Sri Lanka, the listening patterns are fairly different in Delhi. With the affordability of such equipment for a reasonable amount of money, the people tend to use compatible technologies for both audio and visual purposes. In most occasions, *Rikso* people use their mobile phones to play MP3 files while riding the *Rikso* sometimes without using headsets.

Different types of religious blessings are played the whole day aiming at religious beliefs and values. Another objective of this practice as I have noticed is the need of keeping the environment in which people live a calm and pleasant one. Some of these blessing records are used as certain “identical symbols”.

The Nepalese restaurant named “Shagun or *China Baul*” in Vijayanagar (F 16, Vijay Nagar, Opposite NDPL, utilizes the “*Om Mani Padme hum*” mantra as a thematic music and also as a way of keeping the environment calm.

The establishment of private radio channels during the 1990s has led to change the general aesthetic sensibility of people, especially of those who are living in rural areas. Even though some radio channels promote aesthetically valuable songs, some other radio
channels promote unaesthetic and meaningless songs. The introduction of certain tactics such as the radio raffle competitions, snapping to houses with gifts and keeping live interaction with their radio subscribers to promote these channels has created an area for these channels to become popularized among these communities. Listening to these channels the whole day has made negative impacts on the aesthetic sensibility of the younger generations as well. As a result, a culture of “overhearing music” has emerged replacing the culture of "listening to music". Compared to the other media, the radio channels do not seem to address the masses in a proper way. Accordingly, radio media has been able to make decisions on the nature of the contemporary aesthetic taste.

But in Sri Lanka some people practice in the same manner in different locations while majority of them listening to music in a calm manner. Technology and recorded music play an important role in these situations.

6.3 Different views on Analog and Digital Formats

Even though the vast majority of people listen to music encoded in different formats (analog and digital), they also have their own views regarding these formats. All contemporary recordings are stored in digital formats. People entertain and appreciate these songs without having any prejudices and also with the sensitive awareness regarding the technological background and such song formats. But the attitudes towards an old song which has been recorded employing the modern recording technology may be quite different and, sometimes, the traditional minded ideologies tend to seriously affect them.

Considering the result of the online survey, that was conducted in order to assess the attitudes and opinions regarding some important areas related to this research, it became clear that there were different views on a song (by the same singer) that had been recorded by using both analog and digital sound formats. 17.7% of the respondents
preferred the old version whereas 7.39% preferred the digital version. The following views put forth are:

Regarding the old version (analog format):

“Tracks of the new version are too much "electronic”.

Regarding the New version (digital format):

“Sounds are very clear and music is more sophisticated than the old version and the voices of the singers are nicer than in the earlier version”. (See the attached survey report for more information).

However, a comparative look at both formats would reveal that the difference is only related to 'quality' while the other musical features remain unchanged. According to the comments (in general), it is clear that every ideology depends on the personal preferences and is sometimes shaped by certain cultural norms and attitudes. In most cases, it becomes clear that certain misconceptions regarding technology lead to false conceptions about the field. In Sri Lankan situation, deeply rooted traditional thinking patterns have immensely led to neglect of modern technologies and their applicability. As a result, the majority of the local people are afraid of the advantages of these technologies. It is also true that this outdated ideology is shared even by the people who are actively involved in the field. On the other hand, the practice of blindly praising the past habits as the ideals has also led to narrow down the vision about the subject. It was revealed during some case studies that the people lack a proper vision about what they hear.

Nevertheless, it can be said that technology and modern techniques have contributed a lot in expansion of music among the society and gradually, with the increase in affordability and availability of cheaper and easily portable music playing gadgets, it has nearly reached every corner of the country and people are now able to enjoy anywhere, all kinds of music of their choice.

2 Ibid., 69.


7 Miller et al, *Introduction to music*, 4-10.

8 Joshi, *A Concise history of the phonograph industry in India*, 147.


10 Manuel, *Cassette Culture: Popular music and technology in North India*, 170.

11 Wallis and Malm, *Big Sounds from small People: The music industry in small countries*, 37.

12 Perera, *Ragadhari Background of Sinhala Song*, 44.


15 Ibid., 297-298.


17 Ibid., 292.

18 Wallis and Malm, *Big Sounds from small People: The music industry in small countries*, 255.


24 Walter Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 211-244.

25 Basnayake, “*Small Music Clubs*”, 11.

26 Ibid.
27 Kartz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music*, 05.


29 Gayani Karunanayake, Personal interview, December 18, 2012.

30 Hawley, *Music for air ports*.


32 Thilanga Senanayake, Personal Interview, January 10, 2012.

33 Cash, *Many uses of music in hospitals*.

34 Cash, *Many uses of music in hospitals*.

35 Gamini priyanta, Personal interview, January 05, 2013

36 Wasantha Bandara, Personal interview, January 05, 2013