

Identifying the role of sitar in Sri Lankan “*Bodu Bethi Gee*” genre

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The main objective of this study is to identify the specific use of the sitar in Sri Lankan Buddhist devotional songs known as *Bodu Bethi gee*. During the 1970s to 90s, most composers active in this genre used special sitar techniques in their musical pieces to create a distinctive flavor, deep affection, and devotion, which ultimately added a Sri Lankan kind-of-identity to these repertoires. Though several researchers have examined the role of the sitar in Sri Lankan *Sarala gee* (light songs), none so far has examined its role in *Bodu Bethi gee*. In methodological terms, the present study is based on fieldwork, analysis of audio-visual documentation, and formal and informal interviews and discussions with music composers, sitar players, and local instrument makers in Sri Lanka. It pays attention to specific interventions in the instrument construction (shape of the bridge), the playing techniques, the way of harmonizing the sitar with the other instruments, an analytical survey of selected music scores, and an in-depth examination of the structure of a selected example.

Keywords: *Bodu bethi gee*, Sitar, Sri Lankan music industry, Music compositions, Sitar techniques