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Sri Lankan Tamil Minority in Secondary Education: Preferences and Directions

The teaching and learning of Indian music has a long history in Sri Lanka, where it was added as a subject to the higher secondary curriculum in 1942 (Handunpathirana 2016). At present, Sri Lankan government system offers music education at primary, secondary, and university levels, with three main areas of study: Oriental music, South Indian music, and Western music. The curriculum of Oriental music seems to consist of 70 percent North Indian music components, while the rest consists of Sri Lankan and other music. The South Indian music curriculum, on the other hand, appears to consist of nearly 90 percent South Indian music components. These subjects are open for any student to choose without cultural barriers. However, previous research and statistical data indicate that Sinhalese students tend to choose North Indian music, while Tamil students prefer South Indian music (Meddegoda 2020). The students of the Tamil minority have the lowest level of interest in studying North Indian music.

This study aims to investigate the reasons behind the Tamil minority's lack of interest in North Indian music in secondary education. The study will involve higher secondary level students and educators as participants and will employ a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both qualitative interviews and questionnaire surveys to collect data. The data analysis will employ both thematic and statistical techniques, drawing on cultural theories of preference development to explore the factors that influence students' musical preferences.

The study findings will provide fresh insights into cultural and ethnic issues that might be relevant to students' musical preferences, with potential implications for music education in Sri Lanka.

Bio

Geethika Abeysekara is a music lecturer in Sri Jayawardenepura University's Fine Arts Department since January 2021. She is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in music. She earned her Master of Performing Arts degree in Vocal Music at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, India. Her doctoral work focuses on popular musical shows and their impact on music education in Sri Lanka.