

## **The Utilization of Raag Bhairavi in symbolizing Buddhist Philosophical Ideas: an Investigation based on Sinhala old Film Songs**

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### **Abstract**

The use of ragadhari music in early Sri Lankan Sinhala songs emerged as a significant trend, with notable influence from North Indian classical traditions. Among the various ragas, Bhairavi raga became a prominent melodic framework adopted in Sinhala music. This study aims to examine the application of Bhairavi raga in Sinhala film songs that incorporate Buddhist philosophical concepts. A qualitative approach was employed, with data collected primarily from secondary sources and analyzed using content analysis. The sample includes nine Sinhala film songs produced between 1948 and 1962, all of which contain lyrics reflecting Buddhist philosophical themes. The melodies of these songs were composed based on distinct features of Bhairavi raga. The findings indicate that the use of Bhairavi in this context mirrors its traditional role in Indian devotional music, highlighting a parallel between the two musical cultures. This adaptation represents a unique cultural synthesis, where Indian melodic structures are integrated with Sri Lankan Buddhist lyrical content.

**Key Words:** Raag Bhairavi, North Indian Classical Music, Buddhist Philosophical Concepts, Sinhala Song Melodies, Sinhala Film Songs

### **1. Introduction**

Considering the Sri Lankan music context, in early phase of the era of making Sinhala songs, Indian melodies were used to make song melodies (Perera, 1999) and North Indian Ragas were mostly utilized as a trend to make the song melodies. The purpose of using a raga, which is considered a classical form framed by a number of rules, as a source for making a melody for a song, which is considered a simpler and more applied creation. However, when the lyrics of the songs are framed around a specific theme (that utility may or may not be intentional), it is possible to build cultural meanings between the relevant theme and the melody by identifying the various trends in using the north Indian raga as the basic melody of those songs. These meanings are built by the community involved in the particular creation or by a community outside it. Accordingly, those ideas are cultural expressions that range from individual thinking to multi-person thinking.

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Culture is defined through various interpretations, such as the way of life, the active cultivation of human thought, etc.(Wiliams, 1976). Accordingly, the way of human life, which has been modernized through the teachings taught by the Buddha and the various cultural elements added to it over time, together with the whole, is known as Buddhist culture.

Music plays an important role in the process of production and reproduction of national culture and national identity. From birth to death, music is a part of every stage of a person's life. People from diverse cultures, with distinct customs, habits, and worldviews can connect via music(Ramdani, 2017). The art of making Songs, considered a micro-expression of literature and music(Ariyaratne, 2018a), is a central component that reveals the identities and changes of the cultural environment in which it originates. The adoption of Buddhist cultural concepts in making the lyrics of Sinhala songs was an important movement in Sri Lankan Song history. There is a long history of the emergence of poetic works with themes related to Buddhist culture and the adoption of Buddhist themes for modern songs can be traced back to the early period of Sinhala songs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries(Abhayasundare, 2006).

In Indian music, raga functions as the basis of melody and as a substitute for the western scale(Popley, 1921; Gangoli, 1935; Pudaruth, 2016).It is a melodic idea and musical entity in which the number and the order of notes, their relative duration and the intonation is defined(Mahajan, 1989). Literary, "the notes, which are, convey certain definite emotions or ideas must be carefully selected from the twenty- two intervals of the shruti scale and then grouped to form a mode, a raga" (Danielou, 1949, p. 115). The essential feature of a raga is its power of evoking an emotion that takes hold of the listeners. Being capable of a raga to evoke an emotion that affects those who listen is its fundamental quality(Popley, 1921; Danielou, 1949).

Although much attention is paid to maintaining the purity of the raga in classical songs, it is not taken into account much in applied music such as song music. As a result, when ragas are used to create song melodies, the purity of the raga is not apparent in the corresponding melodies; nonetheless, it contributes to the songs' beauty and is crucial for the promotion of Indian music. This argument is particularly pertinent when discussing film songs (Chakraborty, et al., 2009).

## **Research Objectives**

From this paper, it is expected to identify how the Raga Bhairavi, a famous north Indian melody was utilized in making the melodies of early film songs that depicted Buddhist philosophical concepts

and to identify which socio-cultural reasons for the adoption of the melodic format of raga Bhairavi to symbolize Buddhist philosophical ideas in early Sinhala film songs.

## **Problem of the Study**

The problem to explore is how Raag Bhairavi, with its classical structure and emotive qualities, significantly influenced the composition of Sinhala film songs, particularly in the context of depicting Buddhist philosophical ideas. This raises questions about the integration of traditional Indian musical elements into making the melodies of Sri Lankan film songs, and how these influences were adapted to reflect and enhance the portrayal of Buddhist philosophical themes in Sinhala cinema.

## **Literature Review**

Although extensive research has been conducted on the influence of North Indian music on Sinhala musical traditions, there remains a significant gap in scholarly literature specifically addressing the use of North Indian ragas particularly Bhairavi raga in Sinhala film songs that incorporate Buddhist philosophical concepts. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the adaptation of Bhairavi, a prominent raga in Indian classical music often associated with devotional expression, within the context of Sinhala film music grounded in Buddhist cultural themes. Perera (1999) and Ranatunga (2013) provide foundational analyses of North Indian musical influences on Sinhala songs and early music education, while Abhayasundara (2001) explores the origins and diffusion of Bhairavi raga. Amaradeva's autobiography (1989) and Kumara(2015)'s study highlight the impact of North Indian classical training on Sinhala composers. Although scholars such as Ariyaratne(2017), Herath(1995), and Field (2017) examine Sinhala film song traditions, focused research on this particular intersection remains underdeveloped.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This study is conducted under the qualitative approach. A sample of nine songs were used to this study, which covers the era between the years of 1948-1962. The sample was selected under the purposive- judgmental sampling method. To understand the Buddhist philosophical ideas depicted by the sampled songs, their lyrics were analyzed, while understanding to its utilization of Rag Bhairavi, the melodic structure of those songs were analyzed. Content Analysis was the method for both analysis of music and lyrics. To understand the socio-cultural context of adopting the melody of raag Bhairavi to the film song, which depicts Buddhist philosophical ideas, the theory of cultural

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relativism was used.

## Sample of the study

**Table 1:** *List of Sampled Songs*

|    | <b>Song</b>  | <b>Film and<br/>Year</b>       | <b>Lyrics</b>             | <b>Melody and<br/>Music</b>                                 | <b>Artist/s</b>                   |
|----|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 01 | Pav Sadati<br>Tanhave  | Kapati<br>Araksakaya<br>(1948) | Jeewanll<br>Nandanakirti  | C.N. Pandurangan  | Rukmanie Devi/<br>Kristy de mal   |
| 02 | Pem Sihina<br>Loke Maya  | Matabhedaya<br>(1955)          | A. J. De. Soyza           | R.A. Chandrasena  | Mohideen<br>Beg/Rukmanie Devi     |
| 03 | Me loke<br>Navatana Ve   | Podi Puta<br>(1955)            | Sirisena<br>Wimalaveera   | T. F. Latif/<br>imitated melody<br>from Amar (1954)<br>film | Sisira Senaratne                  |
| 04 | Lo Ambalame<br>WN 598 (78<br>rpm)                                      | Jeevitha<br>Satana<br>(1957)   | D.T. Fernando             | S.S. Veda<br>imitated melody                                | Jikki                             |
| 05 | Budhdhan<br>Saranam<br>Gachchami<br>(BhrungaBhru<br>nga Mal)<br>WN 616 | Anjali<br>1958                 | Karunaratne<br>Abeysekara | S. Vedachalam<br>/Anjali (1957<br>Hindi Film)               | Mohideen Beg and<br>Choir         |
| 06 | Me Sasarehi<br>Samada  | Sunitha<br>(1958)              | W. Wilfred<br>Silva       | T. R. Papa  | Mohideen Beg                      |
| 07 | Sadu Piye<br>Bhagava   | Salli Malli<br>Salli<br>1958   | A. J. de. Soyza           | P. S. Divakar   | Mohideen Beg and<br>Latha Walpola |
| 08 | Sita Mage<br>Paruna  | Sundara<br>Birinda             | W. Wilfred<br>Silva       | T. R. Papa  | Lata Walpola                      |

1960

|    |                        |                         |                                     |                |                        |                          |
|----|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 09 | Buddha<br>Diwakarayano | Ranmutu<br>Duwa<br>1962 | Sri<br>ChandraratneM<br>anavasinghe | W.D. Amaradewa | W.D.<br>Nanda<br>Choir | Amaradewa,<br>Malini and |
|----|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|

**Source:** Compiled by author

### 3. Data Analysis

#### Buddhist Philosophical Ideas reflected in sampled songs

**Table 2:** *Analysis of the Buddhist philosophical concepts depicted from the lyrical content of sampled songs*

| Name of the Song                                       | Buddhist<br>Philosophical<br>Concepts<br>depicted by the<br>song | The Content of Lyrics of the songs   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>1. Paw Sādati<br/>Tanhāvē</b><br>(Ariyaratne, 2008) | Pāpa(Sin)<br>Tanhā(Greed)  | The lyrics of the 'Paw Sādati' song emphasizes Buddhist philosophical concepts of Papa (sin) and Tanhā (greed). The idea presented in the first part of the song is that the concept of sin is created based on greed.   |
| <b>2. Pem<br/>SihinaLōkēMāyā</b><br>(Ariyaratne, 2008) | Samsāra,<br>Existence, Soul,<br>Impermanence<br>of Life          | This song contains Buddhist philosophical terms such as 'samsāra', 'existence' and 'soul'. The ideas of 'samsāra' and 'existence' are often used in comments on love between men and women. Terms such as 'samsārikaprēma', 'prēma that seeks existence (Bhava) for existence', etc. are commonly used in Sinhala-speaking society to express the value of love. |

In Sri Lankan Buddhist context, a well-known and popular simile of the impermanence of life is the 'existence of a flower'. The meaning of the flower

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offering verse which is commonly used in the context of Sri Lankan culture, 'Pupphanmilāyātiyathāidammē- The flowers are merged in the reality of the world', is similar to the idea that 'Sandhyāyawēparavenamalakimējīvitē', which is used here, and reflects the Buddhist philosophical concept of impermanence.

3. **MēlōkeNavātanaVē** (Ariyaratne, 2008)
- Existence, Desire for Existence, Samsara, and Impermanence
- The lyrics of this song contains Buddhist philosophical concepts of existence, desire for existence, samsara, and impermanence.
- The lyricist, who shows that the human world is not permanent, introduces it as a temporary abode. The poet, who expresses the idea that "a being who comes to the world empty-handed leaves the world alone" through his lyrical composition, points out the futility of desiring temporary life. The term "desire for existence" recalls the concept of "craving for existence," which is the second of the threefold classification of craving in the 'Dhamma Chakka Pavattana Sutta (Tanissaro, 1993)'. It is interpreted as "the desire to be reborn in existence again and again."
4. **Lō Ambalamē** (Ariyaratne, 2008a)
- Impermanence of Life, Impermanence of the world, Suffering of Samsara, Order of the world, The permanence of Death and Suffering
- This song expresses Buddhist philosophical concepts about life. Concepts such as the impermanence of the world, the suffering of samsāra, the order of the world, and the permanence of death are presented through the lyrics.
- The metaphors and similes used by the lyricist to convey the concept of impermanence are often used in Buddhist cultural contexts to remind us of impermanence.
- Examples:

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- Stanza 1: *Lō Ambalamē Indalā Yanavā- Niti Pāra Soyā Āgantukayā-* “The stranger wanders in the world, seeking the right path”
- Stanza 2: *Pini Bindu Vage Bindila Yanavā-* “Breaking like a dewdrop”

The concept of suffering in the song is presented in the verse

- Stanza 1: *Gini Della naginnāsohonapurā- dukkandanagīākāsepurā-* ‘Fire burns across the grave – the mountain of suffering rises across the sky’.

This is how the suffering of death is expressed in the concept of suffering taught in Buddhism. Death is presented in another place in the song.

- Stanza 1: *Maranēta ādāyāyuthuyi-* ‘When death is calling, we must go’

At some point, ideas about the suffering of samsara are also presented.

- Stanza 1: *Sansāra Duken Mirikīmatamā- Lōkehisobādahamēniyamā-* Being squeezed by samsara’s suffering is the rule of nature in the world

## 5. Budhdhan

### Saranam

### Gachchāmi

(Ariyaratne, 2008a)

Greed,  
Delusion, and  
Impermanence

: concepts of greed, delusion, and impermanence are evident in the last part of this song.

- Stanza 1- ‘The lamp is lit in the house again

The flowers of the forest fly away

The travelers are deluded by greed

Feel the fruit of the Dharma’

## 6. Mē Sasarēhi

Suffering,

The lyrics of this song present the central proposition of

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|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Samadā</b><br>(Ariyaratne, 2008a)                    | Karmic<br>Consequences   | the suffering that exists in samsara. The first line of the song, which is “Mē Sasarēhi Semadā Dukā Mai Pirilā- This Samsara is full of suffering”, etc., illustrates this. Another philosophical concept presented here is the idea that suffering exists in the world and that human beings are fundamentally isolated within it. In addition, at one point in the song, ideas about karmic consequences are also presented.  |
| <b>7. Sādu Piye<br/>Bhagavā</b><br>(Ariyaratne, 2008a)  | Anger,<br>Delusion,<br>Pancha Pāpa,<br>Sīla, Samādhi,<br>Samsāra | The concepts of 'anger and delusion', which are discussed as the root of evil in Buddhism, as well as concepts commonly discussed in Buddhism such as 'Pancha Pāpa, sīla, samādhi, samsāra', are also reflected in the lyrics of this song.   |
| <b>8. Sita Māge<br/>Pērunā</b><br>(Ariyaratne, 2008a)   | Impermanence<br>of Life, Sin                                     | The popular metaphor of the impermanence of life, the flower, is also included in this lyric.<br>‘Like a flower, it withers, even in a happy life’<br>In addition, a couplet emphasizes the concept of sin.<br>‘I do not love what I have, whose sin is it?<br>What sin have I committed?’<br>This idea of sin is not directly related to the evil that comes from Buddhist philosophical discussions, and is more in line with the discussion of the consequences of past actions. |
| <b>9. Buddha<br/>Diwākarayānō</b><br>(Ariyaratne, 2018) | Pāramitā,<br>Nirvāna,<br>Karunā, Mettā                           | Several terms related to the Buddhist philosophical context presented in the lyrics of this song can be identified.<br>Examples of these terms include ‘Pāramitā Bala, Nivan Labādi, Karunā Sītala Metdhārā’. These terms can be seen as mixed expressions of popular Theravada and Mahayana concepts.  |

## **The nature of the Raag Bhiravi**

In order to identify the utility of a raga concept for a particular song's melody, it is difficult to analyze the content of that melody completely. This is because of the complexity of the raga concept and the fact that there is no mandatory rule that the melody must be used in the same way for the relevant song. However, the utility of ragadari music for the melody of a particular song can be evaluated to some extent by matching it with the scholarly ideas about that raga.

The melody of Bhairavi is considered as an iconic melody in Indian Music. It uses all the flat notes along with all seven notes. Madhyama (F) note is the main note of this raga and Sadja (C) is considered as the second main note (Bhatkhande, 2011; Dutta, 2024). The melodic combination of Bhairavi is much close to Phrygian Mode in Western Classical Music. Beside those seven notes, its unique and diverse usage of using all the other notes create a unique identity that can make Bhairavi as a special musical melody in Indian Music. Bhairavi has several versions. A version called Sindhu Bhairavi has the rishab enhanced to its shuddha shade while maintaining all of the parent Bhairavi's characteristics. These days, both rishabs and dhavats are used when singing Sindhu Bhairavi. Other variations are Jangla Bhairavi, Kasuri Bhairavi, and like that (Chakraborty, et al., 2009).

## **Characteristics of the utilization of Raag Bhiravi as a musical melody for sampled songs**

### **A. Pav Sādati Tanhāvē**

The characteristics of the Bhairavi raga can be clearly identified in the melody at the beginning part (Adlib Part) of this song.

**S---Rg,Rg----, SRgm---Gm<sup>P</sup>m----Pmg-----gmr----Srgr---S-----**

**Papēsssssssss, Sādanāssssssssss, Tanhāsssvēss,patulēsssgililāssss**

The above notation shows that how the notes and main combinations of raga Bhairavi were used to make the melody of Paw sadati song. As an example, the general melody for the Sthai (Hindi: chorus) part of the song is as follows.

**Srm--mm, Pnd Pmgg Rgmgr--r, grS-----**

Here, the note combinations commonly used in the Bhairavi raga are interspersed. In addition, the use of the natural E note, the natural B note, and the use of the contrasting notes relevant to the Bhairavi raga are used.

| Sthai    |          |          |           |           |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|          |          |          |           |           |          |          |          |          |          | S        | R        |
|          |          |          |           |           |          |          |          |          |          | Pa       | w        |
| M        | -        | M        | M         | P         | <u>N</u> | <u>D</u> | P        | M        | <u>G</u> | <u>G</u> | R        |
| Sā       | s        | da       | ti        | ta        | n        | hā       | s        | vē       | s        | pa       | ta       |
| <u>G</u> | M        | <u>G</u> | <u>R</u>  | -         | <u>R</u> | <u>G</u> | <u>R</u> | S        | -        | P        | <u>D</u> |
| lī       | s        | ve       | sī        | s         | la       | ja       | na       | yā       | s        | mā       | s        |
| <u>Ś</u> | -        | <u>N</u> | <u>Ś</u>  | <u>G</u>  | <u>Ā</u> | <u>N</u> | D        | <u>N</u> | -        | P        | M        |
| tā       | s        | ma       | gē        | s         | ki       | pī       | s        | lā       | s        | se       | na       |
| P        | <u>N</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>PN</u> | <u>ŚĀ</u> | <u>Ś</u> | (N)      | <u>D</u> | P        | -        | P        | P        |
| sī       | s        | ma       | nēs       | ss        | ma       | har      | dē       | s        | s        | contd..  |          |

**Figure 1:** Notation of the SthaiPart of 'Paw sadati' song

**B. Pem SihinaLōkēMāyā**

This song also uses the notes related to the Bhairavi raga. In the chorus section, the omission of the Rishabh note (D) can be seen as a main feature in the ascent of Bhairavi. In addition, many of the Sangatis (Hindi: basic note combinations) related to that raga are also included in this melody.

| Sthai    |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |   |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---|
|          |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          | S        | G |
|          |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          | Pe       | m |
| P        | P        | -        | <u>D</u> | M        | P         | <u>G</u> | M        | M        | P        | P        | - |
| si       | hī       | s        | na       | lō       | s         | kē       | s        | mā       | s        | yā       | s |
| P        | <u>N</u> | <u>D</u> | P        | M        | P         | -        | M        | <u>G</u> | P        | M        | - |
| sā       | s        | s        | ra       | yē       | s         | s        | hi       | pā       | s        | vī       | s |
| M        | -        | M        | -        | -        | <u>PD</u> | M        | P        | P        | <u>N</u> | <u>D</u> | P |
| sī       | s        | s        | ma       | +        | prēs      | mē       | s        | se       | pa       | tā       | s |
| <u>R</u> | -        | -        | M        | <u>G</u> | -         | -        | <u>R</u> | S        | S        | S        | - |
| wās      | s        | s        | da       | tā       | s         | s        | ma       | ās       | s        | le       | s |

**Figure 2:** Notation of the Sthai Part of 'Pem Sihina Lōkē' Song

**C. Mēlōke Navātana Vē**

| Sthai     |           |    |  |          |    |          |  |          |          |          |          |
|-----------|-----------|----|--|----------|----|----------|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|           |           |    |  |          |    |          |  |          |          | S        | -        |
|           |           |    |  |          |    |          |  |          |          | Me       | s        |
| S         | P         | P  |  | P        | P  | -        |  | <u>D</u> | P        | M        | <u>G</u> |
| lō        | s         | ke |  | na       | vā | s        |  | te       | na       | vē       | s        |
| <u>GP</u> | <u>MP</u> | M  |  | <u>G</u> | S  | <u>R</u> |  | S        | <u>D</u> | <u>N</u> | S        |
| nai       | ss        | me |  | hī       | vā | s        |  | sē       | s        | bit      | s        |

**Figure 3:** Notation of the Sthai Part of 'Mēlōke Navātana Vē' song

In the opening adlib of this song, shows the basic melodic structure of Raag Bhairavi.

Example:

S-----SS, SR-----N, S-----, PPP-----Pnd-----P-----,

***Mēsssslōke, Navātena, vēssssss, dedinai, mehivāsēssssss***

The pure form of Bhairavi raga can be clearly identified in the chorus and verse parts (Figure 3 and 4).

| Sthai  |    |     |          |     |    |    |          |    |         |    |    |
|--------|----|-----|----------|-----|----|----|----------|----|---------|----|----|
|        |    |     |          |     |    |    | (D) D    |    |         |    |    |
|        |    |     |          |     |    |    | Bha va   |    |         |    |    |
| D - M  |    |     | D - N    |     |    |    | N Ṙ Ś Ś |    |         |    |    |
| ā      | s  | shā | s        | vē  | s  | pe | ta       | lī | s       | e  | yi |
| Ś Ṙ Ś |    |     | N NṘ ŚN |     |    |    | D P -    |    |         |    |    |
| bha    | va | po  | di       | bes | ss | dē | s        | s  | s       | he | ra |
| Ś Ġ Ġ  |    |     | Ṙ Ġ -   |     |    |    | - - -    |    |         |    |    |
| dū     | s  | da  | ru       | mē  | s  | s  | s        | s  | s       | he | ra |
| Ġ Ġ Ṙ |    |     | Ś Ś -    |     |    |    | - - -    |    |         |    |    |
| dū     | s  | da  | ru       | mē  | s  | s  | s        | s  | cont... |    |    |

**Figure 4:** Notation of the Antara Part of 'Mēlōke Navātena Vē' song

**D. Lō Ambalamē**

This melody is a mixed form of the Bhairavi raga. In addition to the usage of of the Bhairavi raga, the notes of Suddha Rishab(Natural D) and Suddha Nishad (Natural B) notes, which are used as vivadi (guest) notes in the Bhairavi raga, are also used in this melody (Figure 5).

| Sthai   |   |    |           |    |   |      |               |     |   |    |    |
|---------|---|----|-----------|----|---|------|---------------|-----|---|----|----|
|         |   |    |           |    |   |      | S G           |     |   |    |    |
|         |   |    |           |    |   |      | Lō s          |     |   |    |    |
| P - P D |   |    | P - D Ś   |    |   |      | (N) - P ND    |     |   |    |    |
| a       | m | ba | la        | mē | s | i(n) | da            | lā  | s | ya | na |
| M - M G |   |    | M - PD PM |    |   |      | G - S R       |     |   |    |    |
| pā      | s | ra | so        | yā | s | ās   | ss            | gan | s | tu | ka |
|         |   |    |           |    |   |      | yā s contd... |     |   |    |    |

**Figure 5:** Notation of the Sthai Part of Lo Ambalame song

**E. Budhdhan Saranam Gachchāmi (Bhrunga Bhrunga Mal)**

Of this song, the basic melody of the Bhairavi raga can be identified after the chorus section of the song begins. The suddha Rishab (D) and suddha Dhaiwat (A) tones are also used in the verse section

of the song (Figure 6).

| Sthai |      |    |      |    |    |      |    |     |    |     |    |     |     |     |   |   |
|-------|------|----|------|----|----|------|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|---|---|
| S     | -    | R  | (G)  | -  | R  | S    | N  | D   | N  | S   | R  | (G) | -   | R   | - |   |
| Bru   | s    | ga | brun | s  | ga | kun  | s  | ja  | na | mal | s  | gā  | s   | vā  | s |   |
| S     | R    | M  | -    | M  | P  | N    | D  | -   | M  | G   | R  | -   | G   | R   | S | - |
| sa    | ra   | sā | s    | kī | s  | vō   | s  | gu  | na | mai | s  | te  | ru  | van | s |   |
| +     | SG   | P  | -    | P  | -  | P    | P  | +   | PD | N   | Ś  | P   | N   | D   | P |   |
| +     | nadi | yē | s    | hī | s  | re   | li | +   | ōs | lū  | s  | mā  | s   | nel | s |   |
| P     | G    | R  | G    | Ś  | R  | N    | Ś  | D   | M  | N   | D  | M   | G   | R   | S |   |
| cha   | na   | ka | cha  | na | na | chan | s  | cha | na | na  | na | ha  | nda | kin | s |   |

**Figure 6:** Notation of the Sthai Part of Budhdhan Saranam Gachchāmi song

**F. Me Sasarehi Semada**

The introductory adlib consists with the main features of raga bhairavi. Below notation shows, that the prominence of Madhyamanote and usage of both suddha and komalrishabhs can be seen in this melody as they are considered as characteristics of bhairaviraga (Figure 7).

|                    |  |                    |  |                    |  |                   |
|--------------------|--|--------------------|--|--------------------|--|-------------------|
|                    |  |                    |  |                    |  | + S -             |
|                    |  |                    |  |                    |  | sMes              |
| SMM - M -          |  | GRG - G -          |  | R - R GR -         |  | SSS - - S         |
| <u>sasare shis</u> |  | <u>semada sdus</u> |  | <u>kasma yipis</u> |  | <u>ri sla sss</u> |

**Figure 7:** Notation of the Sthai Part of BudhdhanSaranamGachchami song

**G. Sadu Piye Bhagava**

| Sthai |   |    |    |    |   |     |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |   |
|-------|---|----|----|----|---|-----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| D     | S | S  | S  | S  | - | S   | R  | G  | M | M  | M  | G  | P  | M  | - |
| Sā    | s | du | pi | yē | s | bha | ga | vā | s | bu | du | ra | ju | nē | s |
| G     | - | G  | R  | G  | - | S   | R  | M  | - | -  | -  | G  | R  | S  | N |
| sā    | s | du | pi | yē | s | bha | ga | vā | s | s  | s  | s  | s  | s  | s |
| S     | - | R  | M  | G  | - | R   | -  | S  | - | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | - |
| sā    | s | du | pi | yē | s | bha | ga | vā | s | s  | s  | s  | s  | s  | s |

**Figure 8:** Notation of the Sthai Part of Sadu Piye Bhagava song

In the beginning of this song, suddharishabh note (D) is used as a vivadi note. As illustrated in the notation section below, it can be seen that the basic sangatis related to the Bhairavi raga are used



According to above facts, below chart shows the rough analysis of the usage of the raag bhairavi to create the melodic body of the sampled songs. By analyzing the melodic content of sampled songs, it easily can be identified that the music composers of these songs had a broad idea about the implication of Raag Bhairavi as a distinctive melodic source for these Songs.

**Table 2: Preliminary Analysis of the Use of Notes from Raag Bhairavi in the Sampled Songs**  
(Compiled by author)

| <b>Criteria</b> |   | <b>Songs</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------|---|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                 |   | A            | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| <b>1.</b>       | Implication of the notes of Bhiravi Scale<br>(Phrygian Mode)                    | ✓            | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <b>2.</b>       | Usage of Swar Sangatis (Note combinations)<br>which are unique to Raag Bhairavi |              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2.1             | Pūrvānga  | ◆            | ★ | ◆ | ◆ | ✓ | ◆ | ✓ | ◆ | ◆ |
| 2.2             | Uttarānga   | ✓            | ◆ | ◆ | ◆ | ✓ | ◆ | ◆ | ◆ | ◆ |
| <b>3.</b>       | Special Utilization of Notes  |              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3.1             | Implication of Komal Rishabh (Db)   | ✓            | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ◆ | ✓ | ◆ |
| 3.2             | Implication of Suddha Rishabh (D)   | ★            | ✖ | ◆ | ✖ | ◆ | ◆ | ✓ | ◆ | ◆ |
| 3.3             | Implication of Komal Gandhar (Eb)   | ✓            | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ◆ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.4             | Implication of Suddha Gandhar (E)   | ✖            | ✖ | ✖ | ◆ | ✖ | ✖ | ✖ | ✖ | ✖ |
| 3.5             | Implication of Komal Dhaivat (A)  | ✓            | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.6             | Implication of Suddha Dhaivat (Ab)  | ★            | ★ | ★ | ✖ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ✖ | ✖ |
| 3.7             | Implication of Komal Nishad (Bb)  | ◆            | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✖ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.8             | Implication of Suddha Nishad (B)  | ◆            | ★ | ✖ | ✖ | ✖ | ✖ | ✖ | ✖ | ★ |
| <b>4.</b>       | Skipping Rishab (D) in Pūrvānga (in<br>Ascending)                               | ★            | ◆ | ★ | ◆ | ✖ | ★ | ★ | ✖ | ◆ |
| <b>5.</b>       | Skipping Pancham (G) in Uttarānga (in<br>Ascending)                             | ◆            | ◆ | ◆ | ◆ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ✖ | ★ |
| <b>6.</b>       | Prominence of Madhyama (F) note   | ◆            | ✓ | ◆ | ✓ | ◆ | ✓ | ◆ | ◆ | ◆ |
|                 |   | <b>Rare</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ★ |
|                 |   | <b>Often</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ✓ |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Moderately | ◆ |
| Not Used   | ✖ |

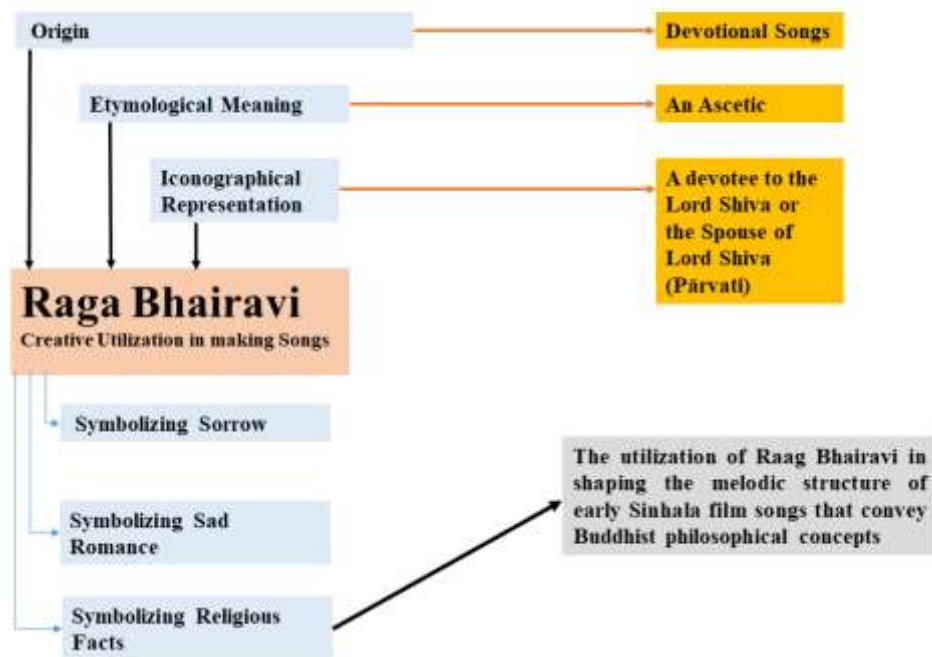
## Discussion

### The Iconography of Raag Bhairavi and other related cultural facts

The Bhairavi raga is a distinctive melody that can be identified in Hindustani music (Bhatkhande, 2011; Dutta, 2024). As mentioned by Popley (1921) the devotional songs are the originated source of raga Bhairavi. According to him, the meaning of the term of Bhairavi is 'an ascetic' (Popley, 1921). In old iconographical illustrations of Raag Bhairavi such as Raga Mala Paintings, it has been represented as a devotee to Lord Shiva (Abhayasundara, 2001; Bhairavi, n.d.; Gangoly, 1935). According to the 'Rasa' theory, Bhairavi symbolizes Viyōga Shringāra Rasa (detachment), Karuna Rasa (Sorrow) and Bhakti Rasa (devotion) (Bhatkhande, 2011). As pointed out by some professionals and scholars like Bade Gulam Ali Khan and O.C. Gangoli this melody was derived from an aboriginal melody (Dutta, 2024; Gangoly, 1935). However, as the cultural anthropological point of view, it is fair to say that these ideas are derived from human imagination and life experiences.



**Figure 11:** Raag Bhairavi, <https://www.memeraki.com/blogs/posts/ragamala-series>



**Figure 12:** Cultural Ideas related to the origin of Raag Bhairavi and its Creative usage of sinhala song making (Compiled by author)

### The Cultural Function of Using Raag Bhairavi as an Ideal Melody

The use of Bhairavi raga in the composition of early film songs that conveyed Buddhist philosophical concepts reflects a broader trend rooted in contemporary composers' perceptions of Sri Lankan Buddhist cultural identity and the historical cultural ties between India and Sri Lanka.

According to the ancient chronicle Mahavamsa, Sri Lankan civilization is believed to have begun with the arrival of Prince Vijaya, who was of North Indian origin (Geiger, 1912). It is also important to consider the information provided by the Mahavamsa that the Buddha was born in North India and that Vijaya was related to the bloodline of the Buddha (Geiger, 1912; Adhikaram, 1969). Sri Lanka first inherited 'cultural Buddhism' due to Venerable Maha Mahinda, who is considered the son of the Indian emperor Dharmasoka, who came to Sri Lanka in the third century BC.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these legends became foundational elements in the emergence of Aryan nationalist ideas. These ideas were closely tied to the Buddhist revival movement, which developed as a reaction by the Sinhala Buddhist population against British colonial rule and capitalist influence (Harris, 2006; Devotta, 2007; Field, 2017; Meddegoda,

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2020). Overall, due to all these facts, it can be recognized that there is a close connection between Sri Lankan Cultural Buddhism and Indian and Sri Lankan cultural relations.

John de Silva, a renowned Nurti playwright, states in his play *Sirisangabo Charitta* (1903) that North Indian music was present in Sri Lanka from ancient times and that the melodies and rhythms of Sinhala poetry in Sri Lanka were created using North Indian ragas and tunes (Ariyaratne, 2008b). Field suggests that this idea is related to de Silva's *Arya-Sinhala Nationalism* (Field, 2017). The musical foundation of the Nurti dramas that gained popularity in the late nineteenth century was North Indian Ragadhari music (Abhayasundara, 2001; Perera B., 1999). Scholars suggest that the widespread public interest in these performances was largely driven by the aural appeal of their melodic content. A significant development occurred with the visit of Rabindranath Tagore to Sri Lanka in the early twentieth century, which inspired Sri Lankan artists to travel to India to study North Indian music (Coperahewa, 2012). Upon their return, these artists incorporated Ragadhari elements into their creative work. As a result, North Indian Ragadhari melodies began to feature prominently in the production of Sinhala gramophone and radio songs (Abhayasundara, 2001). In addition to the composition of original pieces, the adaptation and imitation of Ragadhari melodies from Indian songs also became a recognizable trend during this period.

An examination of Sinhala songs reveals that the Bhairavi raga has served as a common melodic foundation across a wide range of musical forms, including Nurti songs, gramophone recordings, radio operas, and Sarala Gee (Lite Radio) songs. Notably, Bhairavi has been frequently employed in compositions with religious themes, reflecting its deep cultural and emotional resonance. The use of Bheravi raga in early Sinhala film songs that incorporate Buddhist philosophical concepts—an area that forms the central focus of this study appears to align with this broader musical and cultural trend.

As stated previously, both traditional and academic viewpoints consider the Bhairavi raga to be of religious origin, with its iconographic representation and historical development linked to the devotional sphere. Within this context, Bhairavi has come to be understood as a suitable melody to serve and convey religious sentiments. Its widespread use in Indian devotional music underscores the culture and spirituality woven into the psyche of Indian composers.

Some of these songs employ original melodies, while others adopt imitative ones, both drawing on characteristics of the Bhairavi raga. The incorporation of Bhairavi to express philosophical themes rooted in Sri Lankan Buddhist culture parallels its traditional use in Indian devotional music. This

adaptation signifies a unique cultural event.

## **Conclusion**

Bhairavi Raga is a very popular raga in North Indian Ragadhari music. The origin and iconographic representation of this raga developed in a religious context. This raga has been used as a melodic source for many Indian devotional songs. Buddhist philosophical concepts have been embedded in the lyrics of the early Sinhala film songs used in this study. The way in which Bhairavi Raga has been used for the music creation of these songs, which contain Buddhist philosophical concepts, and the cultural context of such use were understood here. Accordingly, various characteristics of Bhairavi Raga, a popular melody series, have been embedded in the melodies of these song compositions. It is noteworthy that some of these selected melodies have been imitated from Indian songs. Accordingly, it can be recognized that, in parallel with Hinduism and theism in India, the Bhairavi raga has been used for songs that incorporate Buddhist philosophical concepts in Sri Lanka as well.

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