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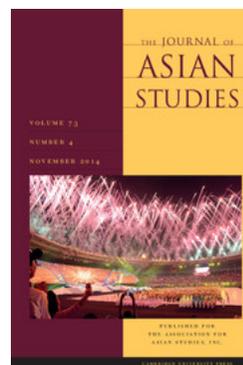Garrett M. Field (2014). Music for Inner Domains: Sinhala Song and the *Arya* and *Hela* Schools of Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Sri Lanka. The Journal of Asian Studies, 73, pp 1043-1058 doi:10.1017/S0021911814001028

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Music for Inner Domains: Sinhala Song and the *Arya* and *Hela* Schools of Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Sri Lanka

GARRETT M. FIELD

In this article, I juxtapose the ways the "father of modern Sinhala drama," John De Silva, and the Sinhala language reformer, Munidasa Cumaratunga, utilized music for different nationalist projects. First, I explore how De Silva created musicals that articulated Arya-Sinhala nationalism to support the Buddhist Revival. Second, I investigate how Cumaratunga, who spearheaded the Hela-Sinhala movement, asserted that genuine Sinhala song should be rid of North Indian influence but full of lyrics composed in "pure" Sinhala. The purpose of this comparison is to critique Partha Chatterjee's notion of the inner domain. Chatterjee focused on Bengali cultural nationalism and its complex relation to Western hegemony. He considered Bengal, the metropolis of the British Raj, to be representative of colonized nations. This article reveals that elsewhere in South Asia—Sri Lanka—one cultural movement sought to define the nation not in relation to the West but in opposition to North India.

"BY MY READING, ANTICOLONIAL nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power," writes Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993, 6). Before persons form anticolonial political movements, native intellectuals carve out unique spaces that Chatterjee designates the "inner domain." The inner domain is a realm of authentic culture that native intellectuals imagine to remain untouched by colonialism. One of the main contributions of Chatterjee's theory is the way it assigns a new starting place—cultural reform—for conventional histories of colonial-era nationalism, histories that customarily begin with narratives about anticolonial movements and battle with the imperial power.

I accept the premise of the "inner domain" but disagree with the emphasis Chatterjee (1993, 6) places on intellectuals of colonized nations who create inner domains in relation to Western hegemony. Chatterjee is focused on Bengali cultural nationalism and its complex interaction with Western culture. But he considers Bengal, the metropolis of the British Raj, to be representative of colonized nations. This article reveals that elsewhere in South Asia—Sri Lanka (then, Ceylon)—one cultural movement sought to define the nation not in relation to the West but in opposition to North India.

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The "father of modern Sinhala drama," John De Silva (1857–1922), and the Sinhala language reformer, Munidasa Cumaratunga (1887–1944), constructed different inner domains of Sinhalese culture. I compare what they believed to be authentic Sinhala music, beliefs informed by their contrasting nationalist projects. My central assertions are that De Silva created an inner domain of song with Buddhism and North Indian classical music at the core and the West threatening from outside, and that Cumaratunga created an inner domain of song with a pure Sinhala language at the heart and North India threatening from outside.

THE BUDDHIST REVIVAL AND THE ARYA-SINHALA IDENTITY

Historians of Sri Lanka have revealed how the Sinhalese "Buddhist Revival" became stronger in the mid-nineteenth century with the help of the first Sinhalese Buddhist periodical (1854), printing press (1855), and newspapers (1860, 1862).[1] Print culture created a public space in which Sinhalese Buddhists could respond to the Christian missionaries' attacks on their religion. The revival grew more persistent with the support of urban entrepreneurs who established voluntary organizations to propagate Buddhism.

Also contributing to the revival's success was the Buddhist monastic community who adopted a more public and activist role. In the 1870s, Ven. Migettuwatte Gunananda (1823–90) organized societies, established a printing press, toured the island disseminating his message, and confronted Christian missionaries in publicly staged debates (Dharmadasa 1993, 97). Ven. Hikkaduwe Sumangala (1827–1911) helped set up a printing press and authored polemical works that rebutted the Christian missionaries' criticisms of the Buddhist religion.

In the late nineteenth century, the revival further expanded because of two international organizations: Henry Steele Olcott's Buddhist Theosophical Society and Anagarika Dharmapala's Maha Bodhi Society. Members of Olcott's Theosophical Society built a Buddhist educational system that rivaled the missionary system in Sri Lanka (Dharmadasa 1993, 108–9). Dharmapala's Maha Bodhi Society strove to propagate the Buddhist religion and reestablish Bodh Gaya in North India as a center for Buddhist pilgrims. (Bodh Gaya is where the Buddha is said to have achieved nirvana.)

Dharmapala and his colleagues championed a form of ethnic identification called the "Arya-Sinhala" identity. "-Sinhala" refers to the Sinhalese people, but the word "Arya" was a new appendage to designate the ethnic group. The "Arya" identity appealed to the urban Buddhist intelligentsia for a few reasons. First, they believed Prince Vijaya, the putative father of the Sinhalese race, immigrated from a region in North India referred to in Sanskrit texts as the *aryavarta*. Second, the word *arya* in the Pali language (the sacred language of Theravada Buddhism) connoted meanings like noble, worthy, and honorable. In Buddhist texts, *arya* was an adjective used to glorify central concepts in the Buddha's teachings like the four noble truths, the *caturariya sacca*, and the noble eightfold path, the *ariya atthangika magga* (Dharmadasa 1993, 144–45). Revivalists promoted

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[1]On the Buddhist revival, see Obeyesekere (1970); Malagoda (1976); Bond (1988); Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988, 202–40); Dharmadasa (1993, 87–114); Roberts (1997); Arangala (2004, 56–100); and Blackburn (2010, 199).

the Arya-Sinhala identity in early journals like *Aryaya* (The Aryan, 1909) and *Arya Sinhala vamsaya* (The Aryan-Sinhalese lineage, 1912).

Although the Buddhist revivalists did not focus much on empowering the Sinhala language, they did champion a more Sanskrit-influenced Sinhala language that was an "essential yet subordinate corollary" of the Arya-Sinhala identity (Dharmadasa 1993, 151). They felt inclined to adopt a written language that mixed in Sanskrit—a register known as *miśra* Sinhala—because they believed that the Sinhala language had derived from Sanskrit. At this time, linguist Abraham Mendis Gunasekara wrote in his *A Comprehensive Grammar of the Sinhalese Language* that "almost the entire vocabulary of Sanskrit words is used in Sinhalese composition" (Gunasekara [1891] 1962, 381).

FROM PARSI THEATER TO NURTHI

In 1877, as the revivalists championed this Arya-Sinhala identity, a Parsi theater troupe from Bombay named the Hindustan Dramatic Company brought a new form of theater to Sri Lanka as well as the North Indian musical system of *rāga* and *tāla* (Ariyaratne 1983, 52).[2] The Parsi theater troupe presented two Urdu-language dramas with stories narrated with poetry, dance, and music. One was *Indar Sabha*, considered the very first Urdu-language drama. In 1882, another troupe, K. M. Baliwala's Elphinstone Dramatic Company, presented *Indar Sabha* along with at least seven new musical dramas. Parsi theater troupes from Bombay returned to Sri Lanka six more times between 1889 and 1913 (Ariyaratne 1983, 55, 59).

Parsi theater producers had created a form of entertainment that appealed to a wide spectrum of urban audiences across the Indian subcontinent (Hansen 1991, 80). What captivated audiences in Sri Lanka was not just the lavish stage designs, shiny costumes, and new curtain technology, but also the songs with catchy North Indian melodies. Parsi theater melodies, in fact, contributed to the genesis of a new form of Sinhalese theater. Playwrights began to create Sinhala-language scripts set to melodies from the Parsi theater. Their musicals were called *nurthi* from the Sanskrit word for drama, *nritya*.

Nurthi musicals show the confluence of the Parsi theater with the Buddhist revival and its promotion of the Arya-Sinhala identity. The first *nurthi* playwright, C. Don Bastian (1852–1921), would publish the first daily Sinhala newspaper, *Dinapata pravurti* (The daily news) (1895) and establish a voluntary Buddhist organization named Gannabhivruddhi (Development of Wisdom) (Dharmadasa 1993, 127). After seeing the Parsi theater of the Hindustan Dramatic Company, Bastian wrote and staged the first *nurthi* musical, *Rolina* (1877), a tale of a heroic princess who saves her husband's life (Ariyaratne 1983, 59; Patiraja 2007, 51–56).

JOHN DE SILVA'S MUSICALS FOR ARYA-SINHALA BUDDHISTS

The Buddhist revival was the dominant theme in the *nurthi* musicals of playwright John De Silva. De Silva was determined to use theater to resuscitate Sinhala Buddhist

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[2]The word "Parsi" refers to the Zoroastrian community in North India.

culture, which he thought was rapidly disintegrating under the onslaught of colonialism (Dissanayake 2009, 69). He was a lawyer by profession and would frequent Bastian's *nurthi* musicals. Like Bastian, De Silva set his lyrics to Parsi theater melodies.[3]

In 1902, De Silva established the Arya Subodha Drama Society to harness theater for the Buddhist revival. To this end, his musical *Śrī Vikrama Rājasinghe* (The Great King Vikrama Rajasinghe, 1906) valorized the life of the last Buddhist king prior to British colonization of the island. In the preface to the musical, De Silva explained that he had established the drama society to loosen the grip of Western lifestyles on the Sinhalese and reunite them with their Arya-Sinhala Buddhist heritage. Other objectives De Silva held for the drama society were to put on display traditional Sinhalese customs and costumes; attack poor character traits; foster love for the Sinhala language; and refamiliarize the Sinhalese people with Sinhala music, which was quickly disappearing (Dissanayake 2009, 67).

De Silva, however, did not mean Sinhalese folk music that was disappearing because of rapid urbanization. He wanted to reacquaint the Sinhalese people with North Indian classical music. A preface he wrote for his musical *Sirisangabō Charitaya* (The Character of Sirisangabo, 1903) will shed some light on his preference for Indian classical music:

> There is evidence that Indian classical music existed in ancient Lanka during the times of our Sinhalese kings. Consider where Sinhalese poets of the past took their poetic meters. A careful analysis shows that Sinhalese poetic meters originally belonged to the system of rāga and tāla found in North Indian classical music. Take the famous Sinhala *samudraghōśā* meter [quatrains, each line with eighteen syllabic instants].... When you read texts on North Indian classical music you find that musicians performed the tāla *khyala* with the rāga *pilu*. Our *samudraghōśā* meter has the same structure of *khyala* [a rhythmic cycle with four eighteen-beat sections]. Since the poetic meter of our ancient poets is structurally similar to this tāla we can surmise that Sinhalese people had a sound knowledge of Indian classical music.[4] (De Silva 1903 in Ariyaratne 1992a, 119)

De Silva believed that the eighteen syllabic instants found in the local *samudraghōśā* poetic meter derived from an eighteen-beat North Indian rhythmic cycle and hypothesized that other Sinhala poetic meters originated in the tradition of North Indian classical music. Believing this to be true, he justified his own use of North Indian classical music as an authentic expression of the Arya-Sinhala cultural ethos.

Later in his career, De Silva frowned upon *nurthi* songwriters who imitated Parsi theater melodies (Ariyaratne 1992b, 15). He came to believe that *nurthi* songs should be original creations that drew on Indian classical music. In 1903, De Silva brought to Sri Lanka Visvanath Lawjee, a musician from Western India, to compose the music for

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[3]The influence of Parsi theater melodies on *nurthi* is demonstrated by the fact that nine songs found in six different *nurthi* musicals in the 1880s were imitations of the melody from the most popular *Indar Sabha* song, "Rajahumayi Kavmaka." One such musical featured five different song-lyrics set to this tune (Ariyaratne 1983, 56–58).

[4]All translations are by the author unless indicated otherwise.

Sirisangabō Charitaya. Lawjee would go on to compose the music of De Silva's most famous *nurthi* musicals. De Silva staged these musicals between 1903 and 1909 (Ariyaratne 1992a, 20). After De Silva explained the scene to Lawjee in English, Lawjee would compose suitable melodies based on North Indian *rāgas*. De Silva would then compose Sinhala words to match the rhythms and contours of Lawjee's melodies.[5]

De Silva felt his musicals were progressive because his tunes were originals and not Parsi theater imitations. In the preface to his *nurthi* musical *Sirisangabō Charitaya*, he proudly introduced Lawjee as the composer of original music (Ariyaratne 1992a, 119). In De Silva's twelfth musical, *Valagambā Charitaya* (The Character of Valagamba, 1906), he criticized Sinhalese songwriters who carelessly set Sinhala words to imitated Parsi theater melodies:

> Narrator – Actress, where are you headed?
> Actress – I'm going to sing songs to earn my wages.
> Narrator – Are there people in Lanka tricked by music?
> [Are there people who are willing to pay to hear your songs?]
> Actress – Right now there are. These days, audiences consider beautiful any sweet Hindustani or Gujarati melody fed with frivolous Sinhala words.
> Narrator – Are our [Sinhalese] people that foolish?
> Actress – They cannot appreciate the meaning of the words and so they please their ears with sweet melodies.
> Narrator – This hinders the development of our people. Our ancient Sinhalese authors of drama did not use music like today. They wrote poetry that illuminated the mind.
> Actress – Why then do songwriters use such Hindi and Gujarati melodies today?
> Narrator – To enhance the plot for the Sinhalese people who do not care to relish good language in song lyrics. (De Silva 1906 in Ariyaratne 1992b, 104–5)

A Song from the Great Chronicle

Leaders of the Buddhist Revival and champions of the Arya-Sinhala identity cited the fifth-century Pali-language *Mahāvaṃsa* (Great chronicle) to prove that the Sinhalese had descended from the prince Vijaya and his retinue. The chronicle tells the story of how Vijaya and his retinue arrived by boat to Sri Lanka from North India in the fifth century BCE. De Silva's musical *Sirisangabō Charitaya* was based on an episode found in the thirty-sixth chapter of the *Mahāvaṃsa*. Here, three friends named Sirisanghabo, Sanghatissa, and Gothabaya travel to the royal city of Anuradhapura to serve the Sinhalese king. De Silva and Lawjee's song "Dannō Budungē" (Abiders of the Buddha's Dharma) described each man's reaction as they walked through the entrance and beheld the city:[6]

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[5]Sunil Ariyaratne interview, July 15, 2011.
[6]This song text is cited in Ariyaratne (1992a, 126–27).

Sānghatīssā: dannō budungē śrī dharmaskandhā pēvī rakiti soňda sīlanibandā klēśa nasnā bhīkshū ättēya bō sē rahatun nivasanā pāya prakāsē	Sānghatīssā: Behold in this mansion-like town many monks adhering to the precepts, destroying their defilements, and abiding by Buddha's dharma teachings
Sānghabō: būlō matē mē devlō pāvā sē Pēnā mepura muni śāsana vāsē erdiyen yannāvū nek rahatungē Sevanälleni hiru raśmiya bhangē	Sānghabō: Like heaven on earth! The shade of the many bhikkhus who travel by air destroy hot sun rays
Gōthābhaya: mānel nelum hā ōlu puṣpādī Ättē pokunuvala bō jala pādī Sērū pantī pantī pīnati bō sē Anurādha nagaraya dän penē ossē	Gōthābhaya: I see flocks of ducks wading in deep ponds, where stems of lotus and lily flowers rise to the top

De Silva aimed to praise the sacred qualities of the ancient capital city of Anuradhapura. He describes Anuradhapura as a heaven ("Like heaven on earth!"), an idea Sinhalese authors frequently used in classical Sinhala poetry (Sekera 1984, 7). In the heavenly city, monks travel through the air and cast a cooling shade on the people below. De Silva may have meant to suggest that the compassion of the monks cools down the fear laypeople feel in the worldly existence rebirth after rebirth (Sekera 1984, 8). The song lyrics of "Dannō Budungē" were in tune with the Arya-Sinhala preference for *miśra* Sinhala because they feature a plethora of Sanskrit words mixed with Sinhala. One scholar contends that the literary value of "Dannō Budungē" resided in De Silva's sensitive blend of Sanskrit (ex: *śrī dharmaskandhā, būlō, riddhi, jala*) with Sinhala lexicon (Sekera 1984, 7).

In the first half of this article, I have shown how De Silva's dramatizations of Sinhalese Buddhist narratives sought to create what Chatterjee termed an "inner domain of sovereignty" (1993, 6). It was an inner domain pervaded by the aims of the Buddhist revival and the Arya-Sinhala affirmation that the roots of the Sinhalese nation were in North India, the *Mahāvaṃsa* chronicle, and *miśra* Sinhala. In the next section, I discuss the ways in which Munidasa Cumaratunga constructed an alternative identity that was hostile towards North India, based on linguistic purism, and opposed to the Arya-Sinhala interpretation of the *Mahāvaṃsa*.

THE PURIST LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY OF MUNIDASA CUMARATUNGA

By the early twentieth century, native elites throughout South Asia had begun to consider their language as a spiritually unifying marker of cultural identity. As early as 1891, Maratha nationalist B. G. Tilak campaigned to redraw boundaries of an independent India along linguistic lines. In 1920, Mahatma Gandhi acceded his support to create linguistic provinces for an independent India (R. King 2008, 317). Linguistic politics united the community but violently divided self from other. Although Hindi and Urdu are structurally the same, when South Asia's postcolonial era erupted with the 1947 partition of India, the Devanagari script for Hindi and the Persian script

for Urdu helped justify the creation of separate Hindu (India) and Muslim (Pakistan) nations (C. King 1994).[7]

The modern history of linguistic politics in Sri Lanka begins with Munidasa Cumaratunga. Between 1922 and 1944, Cumaratunga sought to do for the Sinhala language what the revivalists had attempted to accomplish for the Buddhist religion. Cumaratunga believed that reforming, uplifting, and fostering loyalty for the Sinhala language would help bring independence to the Sri Lankan nation.[8]

Unlike De Silva, who valorized the importance of Sinhalese Buddhism, Cumaratunga championed linguistic purism, the use of native language, and the rejection of non-native lexical items. E. Annamalai (1979, 36) writes that linguistic purism is caused by the "redefinition of power relations when the social order is undergoing change." In Cumaratunga's case, one can add that linguistic purism can influence societal change. His purist project to remove Sanskrit and Pali influence from the Sinhala language was an integral aspect of his efforts to construct a new school of cultural nationalism that challenged the dominance of the Arya-Sinhala camp.

In 1922, Cumaratunga resigned from his position as an inspector of Anglo-Vernacular schools for the Department of Education. Between 1922 and 1942, he reconstructed classical works of Sinhala verse and prose. The Department of Education approved these texts, twenty-eight in total, to be used for public examinations at the time (Coperahewa 2011, 865).

To reconstruct texts, Cumaratunga compared all the extant manuscripts of a work and rewrote lines to achieve what he believed to be the original, authentic, and "pure" version. His work reconstructing texts gave him expertise in morphology, syntax, parsing, lexical choice, phraseology, and orthography of authors and manuscript scribes. This expertise would help him later fashion a "pure" Sinhala linguistic register—one rid of Sanskrit and Pali, but also Portuguese, Tamil, and English loanwords, as well as Sinhala colloquialisms (Dissanayake 1989, 191; Kulasuriya 2004, 83). During the period he reconstructed Sinhala texts, he also campaigned for Sinhalese politicians to speak in their mother tongue (rather than English), attempted to standardize Sinhala grammar, and advocated that Sinhala grammar should be taught with the rigor in which English teachers taught English to Sri Lankans (M. Cumaratunga [1934] 2006, 7–9).

The purist ideologies Cumaratunga brought to the study of Sinhala literature are evident in the introduction he wrote for his commentary on the twelfth- or eleventh-century work known as the *Muvadevdāvata* (Account of the Makhādeva Jātaka):

> Although there are many poems composed in Sinhala, Sinhalese people consider
> the most important to be *Sasadāvata* [Account of the Sasa Jātaka], *Kavsiḷumiṇa*

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[7]Many language crusades followed, including the Bengali Language Movement of 1952, fasts-until-death for a separate Telugu state in 1951–52, Sinhalese mob attacks in retaliation against Tamil resistance to the 1956 Sinhala Only language act, Fateh Singh's fast-until-death in 1960 for a Punjabi-speaking state, agitations that divided the Bombay State along linguistic lines into Gujarat and Maharashtra, and Tamil riots in 1965 to protest against Hindi as the official language of India.

[8]On Cumaratunga, see Ahubudu (1957); Dissanayake (1989); Dharmadasa (1993, 2007); Coperahewa (1999, 2010, 2011); G. Cumaratunga (2004); and Weerasinghe (1994). For a complete bibliography of Cumaratunga's works, see Ariyadasa (1988).

> [Crest-gem of poetry], and *Muvadevdāvata* [Account of the Makhādeva Jātaka]. Sinhalese poets composed these works before the [twelfth-century treatise on Sinhala grammar known as the] *Sidatsaṅgarāva* and therefore did not employ the "five transpositions." Further, these poets did not use rhyme in two or three places in the lines of quatrains… [so] the poetic diction is chaste. Also errors of ignorant scribes have also corrupted these works. Their errors have impeded literary appreciation…. Scholars [like myself] who reconstruct these texts can easily tell which errors are because of a lapse or inadvertence. We have considered it appropriate, in the interest of young scholars, to produce a pure text of this poem as best we can.(M. Cumaratunga [1922] 1991, 1)

In this excerpt, Cumaratunga listed three factors that he believed determined whether poetic diction was corrupt. First, it was corrupt if the linguistic register had been subject to the "five transpositions"—five types of diachronic linguistic change (modification in vowels, letters, words, case, and verbal conjugation) described in the twelfth-century treatise on Sinhala grammar, the *Sidatsaṅgarāva*. It was also corrupt if there was an excessive use of *eli väṭa*, a poetic technique whereby the final syllable in each line of the quatrain ended with a like-phoneme. Finally, it was corrupt if there were "errors resulting from the lapses of ignorant scribes," which referred to linguistic confusions, omissions, and additions, such as confusing similar letters, misinterpretation of contractions, errors in translating words of general resemblance, wrong word combination or punctuation, or substitutions of synonyms (Kulasuriya 1994, 33).

George Thomas outlines an eight-stage process that language reformers often use to "purify" languages. "Recognition of need" and "identification of targets" are the first two stages (Thomas 1991, 84). One can say that Cumaratunga both recognizes the need to purify the language found in various manuscripts of the *Muvadevdāvata* and identifies fixable targets to produce a "pure text" of the poem.

One can see later stages in the purification process in an article Cumaratunga authored that sparked a literary debate that came to be known as the *Kukavi Vādaya* or "The Poetasters Debate." The debate was published in the journal *Swadēśiya mitraya* (The national friend) from June 1925 through December 1927.

> Out of the entire corpus of Sinhala poetry, the three works *Muvadevdāvata*, *Sasadāvata*, and *Kavsiḷumiṇa* are the flowers at the summit. The soft words in *Muvadevdāvata* are charming but its author had plundered meanings from the great Sanskrit poets. We do not, therefore, bestow great respect on this work. [On the other hand,] in the *Sasadāvata* there are several places influenced by Sanskrit verse, yet these instances have only shadows of the Sanskrit words, not the exact copies. Shadows appear but the poetic diction is not corrupt. As it is said: [Sanskrit] "The poet imitates the shadow of another poet's meanings. The poetaster takes the meanings. The thief takes the words."[9] (Cumaratunga 1925, cited in Weerasekera 1938, i)

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[9]The origin of this Sanskrit verse is unknown (Vitharana 2004, 348 n3).

Cumaratunga's language ideologies were contrary to the Arya-Sinhala preference for *miśra* Sinhala. Cumaratunga believed that a poetic diction heavy in unmodified Sanskrit loanwords "corrupted" pure Sinhala. He praised the three works mentioned in the first excerpt of this section. Yet here he placed the *Sasadāvata* on a higher literary plane than the *Muvadevdāvata* because the *Sasadāvata* contained many Sanskrit "shadows" or *tadbhavas*. *Tadbhavas* are modified Sanskrit cognates that retain a Sinhala flavor. They are different from *tatsamas*, unmodified Sanskrit loanwords that Cumaratunga believed corrupted Sinhala.

Cumaratunga then alleged that Toṭagāmuve Śrī Rāhula (1408–91) did not deserve the title of "poet" because his masterwork the *Kāvyaśēkhara* was heavy in Sanskrit *tatsamas*:

> The scholar who catches thieves with their stolen goods are criticized for having a crooked mouth…. Most Sinhalese scholars consider the *Kāvyaśēkhara* [Crown of poetry] more distinguished than other classical poems. This belief is seriously incorrect. According to the Sanskrit phrase above the author of the *Kāvyaśēkhara* does not deserve the title of "poet." (Cumaratunga 1925, cited in Weerasekera 1938, 1)

Challenging the worth of this text was controversial. The Sinhalese intelligentsia held Śrī Rāhula's works in the utmost esteem. They even called him the "God of Six Languages." Prominent Sinhalese intellectuals who contributed to "The Poetasters Debate" responded passionately to defend Śrī Rāhula and used Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhala, and English examples of poetry to raise questions about poetic authenticity.

When Cumaratunga wrote in the excerpt above, "The scholar who catches thieves with their stolen goods are criticized for having a crooked mouth," he was referring to himself as the "scholar who catches thieves," and Toṭagāmuve Śrī Rāhula, author of *Kāvyaśēkhara*, as the thief. The "stolen goods" are the Sanskrit *tatsamas* Śrī Rāhula used in *Kāvyaśēkhara*. Cumaratunga was criticized for having a "crooked mouth" because he idiosyncratically filled his writings with the *ä-kāraya*, the third letter of the Sinhala alphabet, which makes a "crooked" vowel sound like the "a" in "cat" pronounced in an American accent.

Cumaratunga believed that the *ä-kāraya* was the "purest" indigenous letter in the Sinhala language since it does not exist in practically any other South Asian language. He revered the poet Guruḷugōmi's twelfth-century *Amāvatura*, a poetic narrative of incidents in the Buddha's life, because Guruḷugōmi heavily used the *ä-kāraya* letter and favored Sanskrit *tadbhavas* over *tatsamas*, which gave his poetic diction a distinctive *heḷa* or "pure" Sinhala flavor (Coperahewa 2010, 71).[10] Cumaratunga and his followers suffixed the *ä-kāraya* letter onto nouns to convey the genitive case, verbs for past participles, and prepositions to create emphatic and predication markers (G. Cumaratunga 2004, 444–47).

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[10]For extracts from the *Amāvatura* that illustrate Guruḷugōmi's use of the *ä-karaya* letter, see Coperahewa (2010, 72).

THE HEḶA HAVULA'S ATTEMPT TO DECONSTRUCT THE TERM *ARYA*

In 1941, Cumaratunga established the Heḷa Havula (Pure Sinhala Fraternity). It was an organization that aimed to promote the Sinhala language and reform its modern grammar according to the linguistic register found in Sinhala literature created between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. Cumaratunga and his colleagues in the Heḷa Havula conceived of an alternative identity to the Arya-Sinhala model. One of Cumaratunga's closest Heḷa Havula colleagues was the poet Rapiyel Tennakoon.[11] He deconstructed the Arya-Sinhala identity in an article he published in *The Helio* in 1941 entitled "The Hidden History of the Helese":

> What a shame for us Helese, to have a section of our own countrymen who believe that they are the descendents [*sic*] of a gang of barbarian's robbers [Prince Vijaya and his retinue] from the Lata country! According to the Island-chronicles [such as the *Mahāvaṃsa*] the leader of this gang of robbers was a grandson of a highway robber who lived in a cave in the great forest region then known as 'lata vanaya' in South Guzarat [*sic*].… Their ships, dispersed by the storm, lost their way in the open sea. Some of them, including the one in which the leader of the gang was on board, reached the island of the Helese. The crew, worn out by hunger and thirst, landed on the shore behind the jungle district, well known all over the ancient commercial world by the [ancient] name of [Sri Lanka,] Tommanna. (Tennakoon 1941, 77)

Here Tennakoon challenged the heroic portrayals of Prince Vijaya championed by the Arya-Sinhala revivalists. Tennakoon disgraced Vijaya as a leader of a gang of barbarous robbers, rejected the belief that the Sinhalese were descendants of Vijaya, and suggested that the Sinhalese (the "Helese") were already on the island when Vijaya and his retinue arrived. Tennakoon attempted to deconstruct the Arya-Sinhala identity by critically tracing the term "Arya" in scholarly discourse:

> According to our modern writers, these Vadakkayas [Harassers] were the first Aryan settlers of the Helese island. I do not know what they mean by the word 'Aryan.' The Buddhist literature says that 'Aryans" are those who had attained to the noble eight-fold path. But we cannot believe that our modern writers mean the same sin-proof holy beings by the recently coined word *Aryan*.
>   The scholars who wanted to mention all the groups of the northern band of the fair-skinned human race in the world as a single family used the word *Aryan*, which is a word coined very recently in a German mint without taking into consideration that the very same name existed in ancient Indian literature to express quite a different meaning. But soon they saw that the word *Aryan* did not give a wider sense than that given by the ancient word 'ariya.' As the scope they wanted to cover by the meaning of the word *Aryan* grew wider they felt the want of a new word for the purpose. Then the scholars began to use the newly

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[11]On Rapiyel Tennakoon's poetry and contribution to the Heḷa Havula, see Field (2012).

coined compound word *Indo-Aryan*. This new treatment made the patient more ill instead of curing him, for ancient "Aryans" were especially Indians. Then the scholars coined another compound word "Indo–Germanic" to give a still wider sense than that given by the former one. But the meaning they wanted to express by that word began to spread beyond its circle. (Tennakoon 1941, 77–78)

"German mint" most likely referred to Max Müller's popularization of the concept of the "Arya" race. This idea fed into German linguist Wilhelm Geiger's widely praised linguistic studies (1897, 1899) that established the Sinhala language's Indo-Aryan roots. Geiger's linguistic categorization of *Indo-Aryan* further established the belief that the origins of the Sinhalese were North Indian, a belief shared by the Arya-Sinhala nationalists but fought against by the members of the Heḷa Havula.

CUMARATUNGA'S *HEḶA MĪYÄSIYA*

In 1942, Cumaratunga published *Heḷa mīyäsiya* (Sinhala music). He intended to publish three additional volumes that treated rhythm and Sinhalese percussion instruments, but passed away in 1944 at the age of fifty-three. *Heḷa mīyäsiya* was a violin self-study manual, as well as a treatise that created theoretical foundations for a national system of music based on the singing of Sinhala poetry, and a collection of patriotic lyrics Cumaratunga wrote in purist Sinhala.

Thomas (1991, 149) delineates two types of linguistic purism. "Offensive purism" attempts to force a radical departure from traditional usage. "Defensive purism" strives to stop the use of undesirable development. Cumaratunga's post-1939 diction, which commenced with his publication of the *Subasa* (Good language) journal and was in full form in *Heḷa mīyäsiya*, was of the "offensive" type. It radically departed from common usage in the way it removed unmodified Sanskrit, Pali, English, Tamil, and Portuguese loanwords; employed the *ä-kāraya*; and introduced idiosyncratic purist replacements.

Thomas (1991, 93) defines "replacement" as the provision of an acceptable alternative to undesirable linguistic elements. Replacement is the sixth stage in Thomas's language purification process. The word "*mīyäsiya*" found in the book title is one such replacement. Cumaratunga coined the term as an alternative for *sangīta*, the Sanskrit word for "music." *Mi-* means sweet or pleasant and *-äsiya* denotes something heard, thus *mīyäsiya* literally means "sweet sound" (Aravinda 2004, 420; M. Cumaratunga [1942] 1999, 5).

In his introduction to *Heḷa mīyäsiya*, Cumaratunga ridiculed the Sinhalese composers who studied classical music in North India and thought little of Sinhala music traditions:

> When you mention "Heḷa music," a large group gathers around. These are the people who have studied singing and instrumental music in North India. They scoff, "What vocal music do the Sinhalese have? What instrumental music? Sinhalese singing is like the lament we hear at funerals. What is Sinhalese instrumental music except the unpleasant thunderous sound of the bera drum

[the traditional Sinhalese double-headed drum] that should be removed from the temple on Poya [the Buddhist holidays that occur on a full moon day] and even from hell itself!" (M. Cumaratunga [1942] 1999, 5)

Cumaratunga also criticized composers who imitated the style of the first Asian Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore: "Another shameful thing they do is to compose songs in the style of people like Rabindranath Tagore. What do our composers do? They listen to this type of song and imitate its meter and words and then trick all the foolish people who swoon" (8).

Because Cumaratunga desired to free Sri Lanka from Indian cultural influence, he bestowed new Sinhala-language names onto the standard Indian terms for musical notes (*sa*, *re*, *ga*, *ma*, *pa*, *da*, *ni*). He designated the seven natural notes as *si*, *ri*, *gi*, *mi*, *pi*, *di*, *ni*; the sharp fourth as *mu*; and used his favorite letter the *ä-kāraya* to name the flat second, third, sixth, and seventh as *rä*, *gä*, *dä*, and *nä* (M. Cumaratunga [1942] 1999, 9).

Cumaratunga's critique of Sinhalese composers who believed in the superiority of North Indian music was connected to his attempt to reinterpret the *Mahāvaṃsa*, which claimed that the Sinhalese were originally from North India. As stated above, according to the chronicle, the Sinhalese had descended from the North Indian Prince Vijaya in the fifth century BCE. Cumaratunga argued that the real roots of the Sinhalese were with the "Heḷas," the indigenous islanders whom Vijaya conquered. Yet Cumaratunga also looked to the *Mahāvaṃsa* chronicle for evidence of an ancient Sinhalese musical tradition untouched by India. He wrote this in the introduction to *Heḷa mūyäsiya*:

> After covering the Heḷa girl traitor named Kuveni with a cloth, Vijaya, the leader of the thieves, crept closer to the Heḷa abode. What were the Heḷas doing? They were pleasing their minds with singing, playing, and dancing. One would think Vijaya's heart softened from hearing such sweetness. But the Heḷas danced, sang, and played instruments not knowing that Vijaya would soon murder them. (6)

Cumaratunga here referred to an episode narrated in the *Mahāvaṃsa*: Prince Vijaya could conquer the indigenous islanders because Kuveni the Hela queen betrayed her own kin, the "Heḷas." After spending a night with Kuveni, Vijaya heard sounds of music and singing that were foreign to him. He asked, "What does this noise mean?" Kuveni replied that the music was for a seven-day Heḷa wedding festival taking place in the city Sirisavatthu (Geiger [1912] 2003, 57). Vijaya and his retinue then went to Sirisavatthu, vanquished the Heḷas, and began to rule ancient Lanka. Cumaratunga believed that this very story in the *Mahāvaṃsa* gave evidence of an indigenous Sinhalese musical tradition.

Many of Cumaratunga's lyrics contained Heḷa Havula ideology. For example, this song lyric championed Cumaratunga's "triple gem" slogan that valorized the Sinhala language, nation, and country:

> For any nation, except my nation, the Heḷa nation
> For any land, except my land, the Heḷa land

> For any language, except my language, the Heḷa language
> I will never bow my head (M. Cumaratunga [1942] 1999, 63)

In the early twentieth century, the motto of Arya-Sinhala nationalism had been "country, nation, and *religion*." Cumaratunga replaced religion with *language*. Sandagomi Coperahewa (2011, 883) writes that this replacement "reflects the growing importance of the language factor in Sinhala nationalism and politics in the late 1930s." Indeed, between 1932 and 1942 Sinhalese politicians presented resolutions to the State Council to use Sinhala and Tamil, rather than English, in debates of the council and in the administration of justice.

CONCLUSION: PARALLELS IN SOUTH INDIA

Both De Silva and Cumaratunga created vernacular works in the sense that De Silva's musicals and Cumaratunga's musicological treatise were to be consumed locally. Largely due to Sri Lanka's proximity to the Indian subcontinent, however, the conditions of possibility for these musicals and musicological treatise existed beyond the national border and within a larger South Asian cultural realm deeply affected by the Parsi theater dramatic form and the surge of linguistic nationalist movements.

Although Cumaratunga had no contact with the reformers of music and language in Tamil Nadu, his interpretation of Sinhalese origins, ideologies of linguistic purism, and musicological treatise paralleled the contemporaneous language and music movements in Tamil Nadu. Cumaratunga's conviction that the Sinhalese were not descendants of North Indians but originally indigenous islanders of Lanka inspired him to rename the Indian musical tones with Sinhala note names. Similarly, a pioneer of the Tamil music movement, Abraham Pandithar (1859–1919), created a body of exclusively Tamil music theory. Pandithar's music theory was based on his belief in the existence of the lost continent of Lemuria, wherefrom all Tamil speakers were said to have originated (Weidman 2006, 169).

Further, both Cumaratunga and the founder of the Tamil purist movement, Maraimalai Adigal (1876–1950), rejected their respective ethnic groups' putative Aryan roots. They based this refutation on what they believed to be the inherent uniqueness of the Tamil and Sinhala languages and each language's autonomy from Sanskrit. Both Cumaratunga and Adigal were not of high caste. One may infer that their positions as rural elites and to some degree "subalterns" in relation to the high castes affected their outlook in some way. Cumaratunga, however, did not publicly seek to empower the lower castes as Adigal did in his "Non-Brahmin Manifesto" (Kailasapathy 1979).

Despite these commonalities between music and language reform in Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu, the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan-Tamils became increasingly polarized within Sri Lanka in the 1940s. Tamil culture had deeply influenced early twentieth-century Sinhala gramophone music, nineteenth-century Sinhala drama (*nāḍagam*), and eighteenth-century Sinhala court song (*vannama*). Yet exclusory language policies in Sri Lanka in the 1940s created a conspicuous lack of cultural dialogue between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka and India. In 1943, a year before Cumaratunga passed away, Sinhalese politicians enacted the first resolution to make Sinhala the only official

language of the state. This resolution excluded Tamil. One may ask whether Cumaratunga's purist ideologies or lyrics that extolled the beauty of the Sinhala language in *Heḷa mūyäsiya* tacitly advocated for language politics that gave preference to the majority.

From a wider vantage point, one might consider Cumaratunga's language loyalty as a Sri Lankan case of the large-scale shift in South Asia from language-as-medium to language-as-marker of ethnic identity. Sumathi Ramaswamy (1997) and Lisa Mitchell (2009) detail the way the Tamil and Telugu languages of South India came to constitute a defining characteristic of Tamil and Telugu individuals in the twentieth century. Like the Tamil and Telugu language reformers whose campaigns contributed to this shift, Cumaratunga created a unique inner domain of Sinhalese ethnic identity with the Sinhala language at its heart.

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