

A Study on Sub-Culture among Estate-Tamil Communities in the Southern Province in Sri Lanka

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In Sri Lanka, Estate-Tamil Communities consist of people who are of Indian origin. They have migrated to Sri Lanka in the 19th century from South India, to work on the British plantations as labourers. The first group had come around 1823 from Tamil Nadu in India. They have worked on the tea, rubber and coconut plantations under the British under grueling and inhuman conditions. These Indian Tamil people are still toiling in tea plantation with the same facilities except the former rulers, and with a sub-culture of their own. According to the population reports there were 4.6% of Indian Tamil people in Sri Lanka in 2014. The main objective of the paper was to carry out a study of the sub-culture characteristics of Indian Tamil communities in Southern province in present Sri Lanka.

A cluster sample of 200 Estate-Tamil people was selected from Deniyaya and Handford Estates in the Southern Province and data was collected through in depth interviews and natural observation within the period 5th May 2016 to 5th August 2016.

Almost all Tamil people can speak both Tamil and Sinhala languages while 1% of the sample can speak English. They have been using special vocabulary for the common usages which are related to their work. Women wear colourful saris and traditional cheeththa redda (cloth) and hettaya (jacket) with lots of gold colour jewelry. *Jimikki* (ear stud) *maattal* (chain shaped jewel used to hook in the hair from the ear ring stud or nose stud) *thodu* (ear rings), *mookuthi* (nose stud) *thaali* (a necklace worn by the married women) *aaram* (A necklace) *metti* (Only married women wear this on the second finger from toe) are the most common jewelry among Estate-Tamil women. Majority of them wear a jasmine flower on the hair for especial occasions. They have special cuisine. *Aata roti* (A roasted pie made out of flour), foods made by urad dal (*dosa*, *urad wadei*, *sambaru*), *puri* (a food made of Ata flour) are the most popular food among them. They have special traditions in marriage and other special occasions in their lives. Education has not been considered as an essential thing and short-term hedonism could be recognized as a major characteristic which has been directly combined with the sub-culture.

The studies conclude that the Estate-Tamil people have values and norms that are distinct from those held by the majority. Although Tamil culture is rooted in the arts and ways of life of Tamils in India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and across the globe, Estate-Tamil people bear a sub-culture which is assorted with the Sri Lankan and Indian traditions.

Key Words: Estate Tamils, Tamil Cuisine, Norms and Values, Short term hedonism, Sub Culture