

## **Documenting cultural values of Sri Lankans Minorities with an Indian Origin; Pilot Study the Bharatha Community**

From over 23 minorities in Sri Lanka for my research I have chosen the “Bharata” community also known as “Parava” as a pilot study to document their inherent cultural characteristics and specific modes of communication within the community. According to records they are supposed to have come to Sri Lanka from about the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries because of their special skills in pearl fishery.

My research interest is motivated to document their cultural diversity with special focus on how they as Tamil Speakers were able to preserve their own cultural identity in the past 30 years and how the other communities are able to identify these unique aspects specific to them.

For this research I pinpoint certain difficulties faced by me during the pilot study.

1. A questionnaire is unable to capture the data in its complexity. I shall present this questionnaire for discussion.
2. The open interview is unable to capture the aspects, I wish to document.
3. The community is not homogeneous. The persons interviewed may not reflect the dominant discourses among the community and most Bharata now have assimilated as Tamil Christians.
4. When discussing delicate issues as to how they were able to maintain a specific ethnic identity, I have experienced certain barriers in communication.

I shall also demonstrate how I was able to overcome these difficulties by a participatory method and deviating from the structure of the interview planned. As there has been no data collected on the Bharata Community so far and no academic publication seem to even take notice of this community, I firmly feel that this pilot study will not only reveal information about the community but bring fourth more innovative methodology can be used.

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