

ETHNOPHAULISMS IN OUR MULTI-RACIAL SRI LANKAN SOCIETY

S. Sri Kantha

(Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya)

In Sri Lanka, apart from the indigenous Veddahs, four ethnic groups are present, namely Sinhalese, Tamils (Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils), Moors-Malays and Burghers. Though social mixing among the ethnic groups occur at every strata, the use of ethnophaulism is also not very uncommon.

This analysis of the existing vocabulary of derogatory language, attempts to discover patterns and generalisations that may make the sources and functions of ethnophaulisms understandable. In accordance with Palmore (1962), the following generalisations may be made.

- (1) All racial and ethnic groups use ethnophaulisms to refer to other groups.
- (2) When the out-group is a different race with distinct anthropological features, most ethnophaulisms express stereo-typed physical differences; the most common, being the skin colour. Other physical ethnophaulisms refer to the feature of the head; mainly eye and nose.
- (3) When the out-group is of the same general racial type, most ethnophaulisms express stereo-types of highly visible cultural differences. For e.g.: in (a) food. (b) cloth. (c) language and accent. (d) common first names and common occupations.

References:

1. Palmore, E. (1962)—*Amer. J. of Sociol.* (Jan. '62), 67 442.
2. Rose, P. (1974)—*They and We (Racial and Ethnic Relations in the United States)* Random House, New York. 2nd ed.