

# **An Anthropological Overview of Etymology, Cultural Interpretation and Usage of the Term *Parangi* with Special Reference to Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka**

**D. L. Perera**  
**PGIAR, University of Kelaniya**  
*danister@mobitelnet.lk*

The Sinhala word “*Parangi*” is a vernacular term specifically used to refer “Portuguese” or something related to them. This word has been culturally articulated for many centuries from 1505 AD and is contextualized in many classical and literary sources. It had also become an internationally accepted technical term in internal medicine and cited in many textbooks, journals and many other reference sources. The objective of this study is to collect literary data and find out the etymology of the word “*parangi*” and interpret the linguistic expressions of its usage to reflect cultural otherness in medical aspects. Subject-specific and evidence-based textual analysis was adopted to review and redefine the cultural interpretation of the term *Parangi* referred in indigenous medical literature sources in Sri Lanka. In verification of hypothetical overview baseline data were authenticated through a comparative and elective scrutinizing process in reference with western discourses.

As widely accepted, among the several scholarly opinions that appeared for the origin of the word *Parangi* and its literary interpretation are related to the Portuguese. *Farangi, firangfirangi, feringhi, feringhee* or *Parangi* with its derivatives and diverse pronunciations is a term for foreigners in the Persian language, with particular reference to westerners. It carries a disdainful and condescending meaning, and was originally used in a purely geographical sense particularly for Europeans, Caucasians and Westerners. The word in Arabic (*farangi* or *ferengi*) is similar and the word *farangi* also appears in Amharic, Urdu and Hindi in reference to western Europeans. Sometime later this may have been loaned by the Malayalam language possibly from Arab traders and later might be transferred to Sinhala for demarcating “otherness” of the Portuguese as foreigners. In this study the etymology, cultural interpretation and linguistic description of *Parangi* are explored, refined and redefined in an anthropological perspective.

**Key words:** *Etymology, Parangi, Foreigner, Cultural, Linguistic*