

# ÖFFENTLICHER VORTRAG: WHAT DOES UNITE US?

YOUNG TAMILS CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON TRADITION  
AND BELONGING IN DENMARK

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*In Denmark we have around 9,000 Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus, most of which live in the area around the cities Herning and Holstebro in the Middle and West of Jutland. The first generation came to Denmark as de facto refugees starting in the late 1980s, but mostly in the 1990s and already in 1994 the first Sri Lankan Hindu temple was consecrated. The need for a religious, cultural and social meeting place was fulfilled. Today we have no more than three consecrated Srilankan Tamil Hindu temples with either weekly or daily pūjās.*

*The first generation seems to be generally happy having a place to meet and to worship as they did in Sri Lanka. The second generation though, who were either born in Denmark or came to Denmark as small children, do presumably not face the same needs as their parents, and their relation to the Sri Lankan Tamil tradition seems to change. They are, as well as their parents Tamils and Hindus in their self-understanding. But what they put into these categories differs.*

*While the first generation in many ways tries to keep up tradition as they knew it from Sri Lanka, the second generation does not. They reinterpret or take out elements from tradition, which from a theoretical perspective can be labeled the collective memory (Assmann, Hervieu-Léger), which both helps them engage in Danish society and bond them to the tradition they share with their parents. In other words tradition is negotiated between the society they are part of and the identity of being either a Tamil or a Hindu.*

*My talk, which is based on my own empirical research in Denmark, including around 50 semi-structured interviews with young Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus, reading and chatting on the internet with them, as well as analyzing articles from the Magazine called Brobyggen ("The Bridge builder) – a magazine made by and written to Tamil youngsters, will try to give some examples on how young Tamil Hindus' relation to cultural memory seems to differ in comparison with their parents.*

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**Organisation und Kontakt:**

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