

PIKRIA APKHAIDZE

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND IN SRI LANKA

Sinhala is one of the two national languages of Sri Lanka, the other being Tamil, spoken in India as well. Sinhala was made the official national language of the country in 1956. As for the English, being the international language it has the status of the link language, which is obligatory second language studied in schools. It is widely used in official circles.

Sinhala is not a homogenous entity. On the basis of geographical, socio-linguistic and historical factors, it has several varieties. The main important divisions are **Spoken** and **Written**.

The two registers basically represent Spoken Sinhala: a. **Formal Standart**, Which has spoken as well as literary function, b. **Colloquial**.

Standart Sinhala is opposed to regional Spoken varieties, such as: **Nuvaryan** (Kandyan) Sinhala or so-called "Up Country Sinhala" and **Southern Sinhala** or "Low Country Sinhala."

The present paper discusses the details of socio-linguistic differences between the registers of spoken language. It also introduces the main periods in the evolution of Literary Sinhala as well as the brief history of the written traditions of the Sinhalese.