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Ethnic diversity as revealed from the language used in Inscriptions

(3rd B.C. to 10th A.D.)

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Language is the main communication media among the human and also it is an identifying symbol of a nation. So a nation can be identified by using their language. At present, there are over 6900 spoken languages in the world. These languages belong to 94 different language families, that is, groups of languages whose share their origins. Some of the main language families are as follows: Afro-Asiatic, Indo-European, Niger-Congo, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan and Austronesia etc. Indo-European languages are the most widely spoken languages: 44% of the world population, or 2.5 billion people, speak a language in the Indo-European family.

Sri Lanka has been a multi ethnic country since proto historic period. Literary sources indicate that various ethnic groups and cast arrived in the country as invaders or travelers from early B.C. periods. Inscriptions can be used to study the above phenomenon and one of the most reliable sources for the periods. There is an immense interest on inscriptions as they are a source for understanding ancient society of the world.

The main aim of this research paper is to examine the usage of inscriptions to identify different ethnic groups in ancient society.

Key words: *Ethnic diversity, Language, Inscriptions, Ancient society*