

## Estate Tamil: A New Variety of Tamil

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Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) was under the British empire for about 150 years. The British brought about many changes. Linguistically, they are responsible for two major issues: firstly, they introduced English to Sri Lanka, secondly, they paved the path for the introduction of "Indian Tamil", a variety of Tamil spoken in Tamil Nadu. In Sri Lanka, "Indian Tamil" has been spoken mainly by the labourers, brought to Sri Lanka by the British planters (or by their agents), and their descendents. This, variety of Tamil was also called "Coolie Tamil" (Tamil spoken by the Coolies/labourers) as the users were labourers paid on a daily basis (who were Indian migrants). It was also named as ©toottat tamilL©(Estate Tamil, hereafter ET) and 'malait tamil©(tea plantation Tamil).

In Sri Lanka, over several decades, ET evolved independently. Therefore, it differs from Sri Lankan Tamil (SLT), spoken in northern and eastern parts of the country, as well as Tamil spoken in (South) India. The differences occur at every level of the language: phonology, morphology and syntax. SLT differs from Tamil spoken in Tamil Nadu (Indian Tamil) as it has retained several archaic features. Hence, obviously, IT contrasts with SLT. Yet, until recently ET and Tamil spoken in India were considered to be the same. As a result, the differences between ET and Indian Tamil were not noticed. Therefore, some considered these two varieties as the same. This paper is an attempt to exhibit some distinctive features in ET and show that ET and Indian Tamil are not identical. It discusses two main aspects of ET. First, it elaborates the sociolinguistic facts that caused the independent evolution of ET. Second, it discusses the distinctiveness of ET.

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