

# Islamic Cultural Values of *Arwi* Dialect

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## Introduction

The Arab Traders and the native Tamil Converts of Islam in Tamilnadu state of India and Srilanka were bound by a common religion, but separated by two different languages came into closer contact as a result of their commercial activities. They also felt the necessity for a link-language. This necessity made an interaction between Arabic and Tamil Languages. They started to write Tamil in an adapted Arabic script called Arwi. The Arwi script represents the Tamil language using an Arabic style of scripts. From eighth century to nineteenth century, this language enjoyed its popularity among Tamil speaking Muslims of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. The valuable and useful ideas of Tamil Muslim minds are conveyed in Arabicized Tamil called Arwi. It rendered a most useful service for the advancement and progress of Arab culture and Tamil culture. It transformed the Tamil Muslims society in the educational, cultural and religious grounds. It led to cultural and linguistic synthesis between the Arabs and Tamils. This paper aims to analyze the Islamic cultural values of Arwi dialect and its traditions.

## Place of origin

As far the place of origin is concerned, the language originated both in South-West Coast of Ceylon(Srilanka) as well as in the South- East Coast of India, more particularly in Kayalpatanam. This language was enriched, promoted and developed in Kayalpatanam. When the

Moors came and settled in South-West of Ceylon, more particularly in the places like Colombo, Galle, they transliterated the local Tamil into Arabic. Thus the Arabu-Tamil Language originated and developed in Kayalpatanam and Ceylon. The valuable and useful ideas of Tamil Muslim minds are conveyed in Arabicized Tamil called Arabu-Tamil. It rendered a most useful

service for the advancement and progress of Arab culture and Tamil culture.

## Necessity of Arwi

Arwi has safeguarded the interest of this community. It was fondly and reverently nurtured by noble savants. It rendered a most useful service for the advancement and progress of Arab and Tamil cultures.

## Status and recognition of Arwi

The UNO has accepted Arwi as one of the approved languages of the world. "The UNESCO COURIER" published by the UNESCO, in August – September 1981, has published an article on the life of the Holy prophet, written by Mohammed Yaasin.

## Development of Arwi Literature

Arwi became the mother tongue of the Muslim community. It is developed as the medium for their day-to-day affairs including business, property dealings, correspondence, and all other social transaction.

## Contribution of Arwi

Literature produced in prose and poetry in this unique language covers a vast field of subjects like

1. Architecture
2. Astronomy
3. Creed
4. Biography
5. Commentary on Quran
6. Dictionary
7. Elegy
8. Fiction
9. Islamic Jurisprudence
10. History
11. Horticulture
12. Logic
13. Medicine

14. Moral science
15. Satire
16. Sexology
17. Sports
18. Mysticism etc.

### Islamic Cultural Values of Arwi

1. Arwi usage is most common among Islamic knowledge specialists among the Muslims of the Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka.
2. Compositions of devotional songs used in certain Islamic ceremonies were originally written in Arwi by their authors. For instance, Thalāi Fathiha - a well known Arwi song is devotionally sung by women in ceremonies. It was read in South India, Sri Lanka and the Far East with great fervour and spirit at the end of the devotional meetings.
3. The strength of Arwi as a language is exemplified by its literature that has been produced in the fields of Jurisprudence, Sufism, Law, Medicine, and Poetry.
4. Arwi became the mother tongue of the Muslim community; it developed to be the medium for their day-to-day affairs including business, property dealings, correspondence, and all other social transaction.
5. Tamil language lacks the capacity to convey the full significance of the Islamic terms. But Arwi conveyed these words or terms with real sense.
6. Arwi literature helped the Muslim Tamils to know about their religion and culture.
7. The Muslim community of Sarandib (Sri Lanka) and Tamil Nadu were able to use this language as an effective shield for the preservation of their cultural identity. They were able to safeguard their culture without any sacrificing their religion.
8. Social customs of Muslim Tamil communities residing in Tamilnadu, Srilanka and other places in Asia are similar. The characteristics of these customs are common. It was made possible by Arwi.
9. The Arwi educated women were active participants in the social fabric of society playing vital roles in education, medicine and even politics.

10. Many authentic Hadith (the sayings of Holy Prophet Mohammed) manuscripts have been found in Arwi.
11. Most of the books in Jurisprudence, particularly those of Imaam Shaafi and Imaam Abu Hanifa have also been found in Arwi.
12. The Arwi contributed immensely to the education and progression of Muslim women in South India and Sri Lanka.
13. The religious revival of the Muslims was made possible, because of this voluminous literature in Arwi produced by the Muslim Savants.

### Conclusion

Thus the Arwi which originated in 8<sup>th</sup> is mostly of a religious character. Most of the Tamil scholars have contributed immensely to the development of this language and literature with their works. The religious revival of the Muslims was made possible, because of this voluminous literature in Arwi produced by the Muslim Savants.

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