

ARABUTTAMIL/ARWI: THE IDENTITY OF THE TAMIL MUSLIMS

YUNUSH AHAMED MOHAMED SHERIF

Research Scholar, Department of Cultural Studies, The English and Foreign Languages University,
Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

It is claimed that the India Office Library, London has around 60 Arabuttamil/Arwi books in its possession. In India and Sri Lanka alone, around 2,000 books written in Arabuttamil/Arwi have been identified and it is still believed that many more books are yet to be discovered. Arabuttamil/Arwi was a unique language which is a mixture of both Arabic and Tamil languages, written in the Arabic script and following the Tamil grammatical pattern and was used by the Tamil Muslims for a long time. This article will focus on issue like, the relationship between Tamil language, Muslims and Arabuttamil/Arwi, the role played by Arabuttamil/Arwi among the Tamil Muslims and the reasons for its decline during the first half of the twentieth century. The Muslim Tamils who used Arabuttamil as their identity transformed into Tamil Muslims with Tamil as their identity in order to cope with the political and social changes that were taking place during that time. This paper will try to analyse this transformation of the Tamil Muslim identity with particular focus on the Arabuttamil/Arwi.

KEYWORDS: Sociolinguistics, Identity, Arabuttami/Arwi, Endangered Language