

Tamil

1.

Origin of the system

The United Nations recommended system was approved in 1972 (II/11) and amended in 1977 (III/12), based on a report prepared by D. N. Sharma. The tables and their corrections were published in volume II of the conference reports¹.

2.

Implementation

There is no evidence of the use of the system either in India or in international cartographic products.

3.

Brief characterization

Tamil uses an alphasyllabic script whereby each character represents a syllable rather than one sound. Vowels and diphthongs are marked in two ways: as independent characters (used syllable-initially) and in an abbreviated form, to denote vowels after consonants. The romanization table is unambiguous. The system is on the whole reversible.

4.

Romanization

Independent vowel characters

அ a	இ i	உ u	எ ě	ஐ ai	ஔ o	ஃ ḥ ¹
ஆ ā	ஈ ī	ஊ ū	ஏ e	ஓ ǒ	ஔ au	

¹ absent in the original table

Abbreviated vowel characters (• stands for any consonant character)

• a	• i ²	• u ⁴	• ě	• ai ⁶	• o
• ā ¹	• ī ³	• ū ⁵	• e	• ǒ	• au

¹ exceptions in older and Classical literature: ன் னā, ர் ரā, ன் னā

² variation: ி ti

¹ *Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*. London, 10-31 May 1972. Vol. II. *Technical papers*. United Nations. New York 1974, pp. 153-154; *Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*. Athens, 17 August - 7 September 1977. Vol. II, *Technical papers*, pp. 393 etc.

³ variation: ஷ ṣī

⁴ variations: கு ku, ங ṅu, ச chu, சூ ṣū, டு ṭu, ணு ṇu, து tu, நு nu, பு pu, மு mu, யு yu, ரு ru, லு lu, etc.

⁵ variations: கூ kū, நூ ṅū, சூ chū, சூா ṅū, டூ ṭū, ணூ ṇū, தூ tū, நூ nū, பூ pū, மூ mū, etc.

⁶ exceptions in older and Classical literature: லை lai, லை லை, லை லை, லை லை

Other symbols and syllables

* ¹ ஸ்ரீ shrī

¹ pronunciation without a vowel: க் k

Consonant characters

க ka	ட ṭa	ப pa	ய ya	ழ ḷa	ஜ ja ¹	ஹ ha ¹
ங ṅa	ண ṇa	ம ma	ர ra	ள ḷa	ஷ sha ¹	க்ஷ kṣha
ச cha	த ta		ல la	ற ra	ஷ ṣha	(ற்ற rra)
சூ ṣa	ந na		வ va	ன ṇa	ஸ sa ¹	(னற nra)

¹ characters borrowed from the Grantha script

5.

Other systems of romanization

For differences between the UN system and the ISO transliteration draft ISO CD15919 see the section on the romanization of Hindi.