

## Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah



- Name: **Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah (LDA)** - لسان الدعوة العلوية (*Naskh Style*)
- Native to Region: Western India, Gujarat
- Ethnicity: [Alavi Bohras](#)
- Native Speakers: 8000 people
- Language Family: Indo-European→Indo-Iranian→Indo Aryan
- Dialects: Yemeni Arabic and Gujarati
- Writing System: Arabic (LDA Alphabets)

Different Periods in which Different People along with their Different Languages of Different Regions came in contact and formed Alavi Bohra language, which affected the Gujarati language spoken in Gujarat and some parts in Maharashtra. The Alavi Bohra language or **Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah** (the language of the mission) came into being through the contact, amalgamation and interaction of various languages. "Language contact occurs when two or more languages or varieties interact." (Appel and Muysken 1987).

[Gujarati language](#) is an [Indo-Aryan Language](#) and is a part of Proto-Indo European language family. Alavi Bohra language, a tribal language, is similar to Gujarati language and a person who speaks Alavi Bohra Language is known as Alavi Bohra. "A **tribal language is a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economical and religious or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader.**" Thus as per the definition, Alavi Bohra Language is a social division consisting of a community with common culture and dialect, and at present His Holiness Saiyedna wa Maulaana Abu Saeed il-Khayr [Haatim Zakiyuddin](#) saheb is the 45th Spiritual and Temporal head acting as [Da'i al-Mutlaq](#) of the Alavi Bohras in the line of succession of missionaries (*du'aat*) which began in Yemen (532 AH/1138 AD).

"**Lisaan**"-لسان means language, the medium of communication and expression. It is unique to [Alavi Bohras](#) who follows the Sh'ii-Isma'ili Faith<sup>[1]</sup> and the branch of Taiyebism. ad-Da'wat ul-Haadiyat ul-'Alaviyah الدعوة الهادية العلوية is the Divine Mission that began from Adam Safiyullaah, got its completeness by Mohammad and his progeny and in Ahmedabad, the 29th Alavi Missionary [الداعي المطلق Saiyedna Ali ibn Saiyedi Ibrahim](#) سيدنا علي بن سيدي ابراهيم consolidated it with Truthfulness by dying in 1046 AH/1637 AD. Arabic Language was the Official and Basic language of this Mission before 18th [Fatimid Caliph](#) Imam [Mustansir Billaah](#) (period of Caliphate 1036-1094 AD) in Cairo. But as soon as the [Isma'ili](#) Missionaries migrated to Hind-Sindh, locally Arabic got mixed up with Gujarati and the name was coined as [Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah](#) لسان الدعوة العلوية - An Arabicized Gujarati Language.

### Contents

1. [Origin](#)
2. [History](#)
  - a. [Language Contact of Arabic and Sanskrit](#)

- b. [Language Contact of Arabic, Sanskrit with Old Gujarati \(Gurjari\)](#)
  - c. [Language Contact of Arabic, Sanskrit, Gujarati with Persian and Urdu](#)
- 3. [3 Sound Change and Semantic Change](#)
  - a. [Sound Change/Phonological change](#)
  - b. [Semantic Change and Semantic borrowing](#)
  - c. [Some Observations](#)
  - d. [Some of the Gujarati Words never used in LDA](#)
- 4. [Recognition](#)
- 5. [Nomenclature](#)
- 6. [44 Alphabets \(letters\) :Listen](#)
- 7. [Journey to Gujarat \(Ahmedabad & Vadodara\) and present](#)
- 8. [Examples and specimen](#)
- 9. [Community background and the Efforts to maintain its Liveliness](#)
  - a. [Efforts for the Development of LDA carried out by Da'i al-Mutlaq](#)
- 10. [Today's scenario](#)
- 11. [References](#)
- 12. [Notes](#)
- 13. [External links](#)

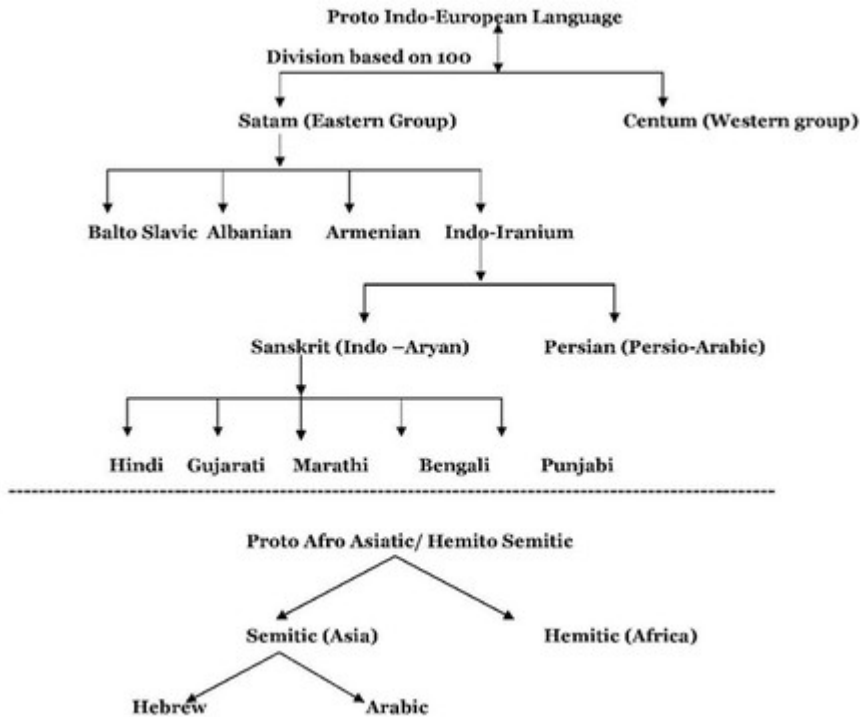
## Origin

The [Alavi Bohra](#) community are people who believes in Shi'a Isma'ili doctrine, beliefs and tenets. The 18th [Faatemi Imaam](#) Maulaana [Mustansir Billah](#) (478 AH/1094 AD), from the Aal-progeny [Mohammad ul-Mustafa](#), was holding the seat of the [Faatemi Empire](#) in Egypt. He was acting as the sole authority of the Shi'a Isma'ili branch of Islam. In his era, [Maulaai Ahmad مولائي احمد](#), on his royal decree, arrived at the coast of Gujarat (Khambhat) along with the group of traders. His responsibility was to spread the Message of the Divine Way of Life as prescribed by the Shi'i Islam in guise of doing trade. At that time Sidhraj Jaysingh<sup>[2]</sup> was ruling there in Patan-Sidhpur, and the Isma'ili community was already residing in Gujarat, albeit they were very few in numbers. Many such representatives of [Faatemi Imaam](#) were also present in Yemen. Every Isma'ili preacher who came to India after Maulaai <sup>[3]</sup> Ahmad, either from Egypt or from Yemen, had Arabic as his basic and main language. With the help of Gujarati Isma'ili traders they gradually learnt the local native language to propagate the teachings of the Divine Religion and its doctrines. It also happened that, in order to learn more about their religious teachings, many people from Gujarat migrated to the Da'i (representative of Imaam of Egypt) in Yemen. This took place in 10th century AH/16th century AD. This is the beginning where basic Arabic language of Faatemi Mission got mixed up with the local [Gujarati language](#) and it gave birth to a complete new form of language which got more correlative, complex and comprehensive with the passing time.

## History

***How Languages came into contact: Genealogical Classification of Languages:***

A genealogical classification of languages is a classification according to their development from common ancestors. A language family is a group of languages related through descent from a common ancestor, called the proto language of that family. Let's see the tree diagrams of the two major language families which will help us to establish the relation among the languages. The first is Proto Indo-European Language and the other is Proto Hemito-Semitic/Afro-Asiatic language families.



Classification of Language from where Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah emerged

### Language Contact of Arabic and Sanskrit

As from the tree diagram besides, it is clear that Arabic language is a daughter language of Proto Hemito-Semitic or Afro Asiatic Language family and [Sanskrit language](#) is a daughter language of Proto Indo-European Language family. Since both the language families prevailed at the same era so it was very obvious for the languages of these families to come into contact. So for Arabic and Sanskrit also it was obvious to come into contact.

Before the appearance of the Islam, major world religion, Arabic was a minor member of the Hemito-Semitic language family. Within a hundred years after the death of [Muhammad](#) (632 AD), Arabic became the official language of the Muslim world empire.

Within these hundred years Islam was spread by the missionaries. Around 1000 years ago approximately during the 11th and 12th century AD (475/1083), Maulaai Ahmad along with other missionaries from Egypt came to [Al-Hind](#) (old India) who brought [Arabic Language](#) with them. Maulaai Ahmad met two active boys Ramnath and Roopnath, who spoke Sanskrit language. Maulaai Ahmad himself learnt Sanskrit from them so that he could interact with the people. As days passed he found that these boys were staying with their uncle and aunt (mama-mami) and were not taken care for clothes, food etc. He took these boys to Egypt with the permission of their uncle and aunt. There these boys were taught Arabic culture and Islamic rules to make them strong missionaries. Keeping Arabic Culture into mind their names were

changed from 'Ramnath' to 'Abdullaah' and from 'Roopnath' to 'Nooruddin' preserving the original meaning of their names.

### **Sanskrit Meaning          Arabic          Meaning**

Ramnath    servant of God          'Abdullaah    servant of God

Roopnath    servant of Beauty    Nooruddin    Light of Religion

These were the two first semantic changes or similarity that prevailed between these two languages. Similarly there were also many other changes. This is how the two major world languages came into contact. During this epoch, people who followed Islam and were the followers of The Fatimid Imam [Al-Musta'ali](#) were called as Musta'alians or Musta'alavi Ismailis.

### **Language Contact of Arabic, Sanskrit with Old Gujarati (Gurjari)**

Later on Maulaai Ahmad, 'Abdullaah (Ramnath) and Nooruddin (Roopnath) along with other missionaries came again to Al-Hind (old India) to spread Islam where they met hundreds of Poojaris ([Brahmins](#)), Aghoris, Mahatmas, Viziers, Soldiers, Common people, etc., who spoke Gurjari which is now called Gujarati using the script of Sanskrit. Many of them embraced the religion of Islam and started speaking a language which was the amalgamation of Arabic, Sanskrit, and Gujarati. Maulaai Ahmad, 'Abdullaah (Ramnath) and Nooruddin (Roopnath) along with their missionaries and the converts resided in Al-Hind (old India). Gradually a small community of people speaking blended language of Arabic, Sanskrit and Gujarati came into being in Gujarat near Khambhat ([Gulf of Cambay](#)) and Patan. They used Arabic script for writing. This community came to be known as Bohras i.e. the people of trade and commerce with the distinct feature of making them accustomed with the local language and culture.

### **Language Contact of Arabic, Sanskrit, Gujarati with Persian and Urdu**

During the mid 16th century [Mughals](#) invaded India through the Gulf of Khambhat (Cambay), since Khambhat (Cambay) was the biggest port of India then. Mughals came from the land of Persia (Iran) and spoke [Persian](#) (Farsi) language. This was the period when Bohra missionaries practiced and preached their faith openly and the local people felt their presence in Ahmedabad. Thus the blend of Arabic, Sanskrit, Gujarati and Persian now was the language of the Bohras. Also Persian art and culture amalgamated with Indian art and culture.

Invasion of Mughals arose a need of trade and commerce. New trade routes were opened between India and Persia. Along this route, Turkish also started trade and commerce. They spoke Persio-Arabic language. The amalgamation of their language with the contemporary language of India gave rise to a new language rather a link language called Urdu due to the mingling of Persian and Hindi. Thus it is a [Pidgin language](#) and a part of [Proto Indo-European language](#) family. Also during this era in 1621 AD, in Ahmedabad due to the major schism of succession between the Bohras, A major group Dawoodis seceded from Alavi Bohras who believed in the Da'iship (leadership) of 29th [Da'i al-Mutlaq](#) Saiyedna Ali saheb, the Grandson of 28th Da'i . Thus Alavi Bohras maintained their own separate identity from other Bohra groups of Gujarat and Yemen. Thus Alavi Bohras is a separate community since then, but the basic language pattern of all the Bohra communities remained unchanged unlike the Sulaymani Bohras who deviated from the main course to embrace Urdu as their community language.

Thus due to these reasons and migration of Alavi Bohras from Ahmedabad to Vadodara speak a healthy blend of Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, and [Khojki](#). Khojki has an unnoticeable or minimal influence on the Alavi Bohra language and as days passed Sanskrit vocabulary also degraded due to Gujarati influence on this Language. Alavi Bohras read, write and speak an

Arabicized form (blended with Arabic vocabulary) of Gujarati language, called **Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah** i.e. the Language of the Truly Guided Mission of Ali (*Saiyedna and martyr*), which is an amalgamation of Arabic, Urdu and Persian words and written in Arabic script.

Today Alavi Bohras are settled in Baroda (Gujarat, INDIA) after the migration in 1110 AH and “**Ad-Dawat ul-Hadiyah ul-Alaviyah**” – the Rightly Guided Alavi Mission is the official headquarters of the 45th [Da'i ul-Mutlaq](#) (Spiritual and Temporal Head). “Thus language contact, brings sometimes nothing, sometimes new words into a language, sometimes new sounds and sentence structures spreads across many languages in a large geographical region; more rarely, entirely new languages arise in a contact situation.” (Appel and Muysken 1987). Hence, here it is observed that due to the language contact, **An entirely new language is born which is neither Arabic nor Persian nor Gujarati.**

See a couplet as an example:

1.

LDA	محبو عباد کرو صبح و شام					عبادة سی ملے فضیلتہ تمام				
Couplet	Mohibbo	TibAdat	Karo	Subah-o-shAm		'TbAdat	Si	Milse	Fazeelat	TamAm
Language	Arabic	Persian	Gujarati	Urdu		Persian	Gujarati	Gujarati	Arabic	Urdu
English	People	Worship	Do	Morning-evening		Worship	By	To get	Merits	All
Translation	O people of love! Worship (your Lord) in morning and evening					All merits you will get by worship				

2.

LDA	تمیں دنیا نی دولت چھو					تمیں عقبی نی عزت چھو				
Couplet	Tame	Duniya	Ni	Daulat	Cho	Tame	'UqbAA	Ni	'Izzat	Cho
Language	Gujarat	Urdu	Gujarat	Persia	Gujarat	Gujarat	Arabic	Gujarat	Urdu	Gujarat
English	You	World	The	Wealth	Are	You	Hereafte	The	Respec	Are
Translation	You are the wealth of the World					You are the respect of the Hereafter				

Thus from the above example of poetry written by 41st Da'i in Baroda in 1335 AH/1917 AD, it is to be observed that how Alavi Bohras use a strong blend of Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Gujarati. Thus it is rightly said that, “Alavi Bohras read, write and speak an Arabicized form (blended with Arabic vocabulary) of Gujarati language, called Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah, which is an amalgamation of Arabic, Urdu and Persian words and written in Arabic script”.

Also their bi-monthly newsletter “Mishkaat ul-Haadi” published by the Alavi Bohra Headquarters within the community members is in the language dealt above. They also have Arabic and Persian manuscripts, Urdu poetic composition in the Da'i saheb's personal library. Before the migration to Baroda their last Da'i i.e. 31st Da'i Saiyedna Badruddin Hasan of Ahmedabad has written a Poetic Composition named ‘Diwaan-e-Hasan’ in Arabic Language which proves that Arabic language has a larger impact on masses and it was largely accepted as a medium of expression and communication but blended with the local dialects. Their 41st Da'i (Spiritual head) Saiyedna Fakhruddin Jivabhai has written another Poetic Composition named ‘Diwaan-e-Haseen’ in which he wrote poetry in Arabicized Gujarati language on variety of

topics, which is in the language similar to the above examples. So these things prove that Alavi Bohras speak a healthy blend of Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Gujarati Languages.

### Sound Change and Semantic Change

In this section lets see the sound and semantic changes in a lexicon due to the language contact. There are also syntactical changes but due to the time constraints we are not dealing here.

### Sound Change/Phonological change

Sound change is the most studied area in Historical Linguistics. Sound tends to change over the time and due to contacts with other languages. Sound change also helps to determine whether the languages are related and also in other methods.

*Lets see some examples:*

Example	Standard Gujarati	LDA	Meaning
i.	pankho - પંખો	fankho پھنکھو	fan
ii.	aapo - આપો	aalo آلو	give

In the example i, as we can see the sound /p/ in ‘pankho’ meaning “fan” changes to sound /f/ in ‘fankho’ meaning “fan”. This change has come due to the interaction of Arabic and Persian, since both the languages don’t have sound /p/. Similar is the case with the example ii.

*Lets see the other examples:*

Example	Standard Gujarati	LDA	Meaning
iii.	vAL - વાલ	bAl - بال	hair
iv.	maL - મલ	mil - مل	meet
v.	vAdaL - વાદાલ	vAdal - وادل	cloud
vi.	kangAL - કંગાલ	kangAl - کنگل	poor
vii.	kAraN - કારણ	kAran - کارن	reason
viii.	AngaN - અંગણ	Angan - آنگن	courtyard
ix.	pahAD - પહાડ	pahAr - پہاڑ	mountain
x.	dahAD - દહાડ	dahAr - دھاڑ	lion roar
xi.	soDam - સોડમ	soram - سورم	smell
xii.	kadvAS - કડવાસ	kadvAs کڑواس	-bitterness
xiii.	mithAS - મિઠાસ	mithAs میٹاس	-sweetness
xiv.	Su - શું	su - سوں	what

In the example iii, the retroflex sound /L/ in vaL meaning “hair” changes to alveolar /l/ in bAl. Similar is the case in the iv, v and vi examples. In example vii, the retroflex sound /N/ in ‘kAraN’ meaning “reason” changes to alveolar sound /n/ in ‘kAran’. Similar is the case in example viii. In example ix, the retroflex sound /D/ in ‘pahAD’ meaning “mountain” changes to alveolar

sound /r/ in 'pahAr'. Similar is the case in examples x and xi. In example xii, the post alveolar sound /S/ in 'kadvAS' meaning "bitterness" changes to alveolar sound /s/ in 'kadvAs'. Similar is the case in example xiii and xiv.

From the above examples iii to xiv, it is observe that all the retroflex and post alveolar sounds in Standard Gujarati changes to alveolar sounds in Alavi Bohra Language. This change is again due to the contact of Arabic and Persian, as the later languages does not possess retroflex and post alveolar sounds, thus they are changed to alveolar sounds in LDA.

**Rule:** retroflex and post alveolar→alveolar/elsewhere

From example i to xiv, it can be observed, though they have borrowed words from Gujarati Language, the words are themselves blended with Arabic, Urdu and Persian. Thus, Alavi Bohras use Arabisized form of Gujarati Language.

*Lets see some more examples:*

Example	Standard Gujarati	LDA	Meaning
xv.	cap - કપ	cup - کپ	cup
xvi.	barAbar - બરાબર	barobar - برابر	proper
xvii.	hoshiyAr - હોશિયાર	hushiyAr - هشیار	clever
xviii.	khushbU - ખુશબુ	khushbo - خشبو	fragrance

In example xv, the mid vowel /a/ in 'cap' meaning "cup" changes to close-mid vowel /u/ in 'cup' meaning "cup" when followed by a stop. Similar example xvi. In example xvi, the open vowel /A/ in 'barAbar' meaning "proper" changes to close-mid vowel /o/ in 'barobar' when followed by a stop. The same is the case with example xvii & xviii where close-mid vowel of end vowel of /o/ changes to /u/. Means if the open and mid-vowels are followed by a stop/plosive sound, it changes to close-mid vowels.

**Rule:** open/mid-vowel →close-mid vowel/followed by a stop

*Lets consider some other examples:*

Example	Standard Gujarati	LDA	Meaning
xix.	kem - કેમ	kim - کیم	why
xx.	em - એમ	im - ایم	that's why
xxi.	namak - નામક	nimak - نمک	- salt
xxii.	gaL - ગાલ	gil - گل	swallow
xxiii.	ketla - કેટલા	kitla - کتلا	how many/much
xxiv.	etla - એટલા	itla - اتلا	this much
xxv.	jetla - જેટલા	jitla - جتلا	that much

In example xix, the close-mid vowel /e/ in 'kem' meaning "why" changes to close vowel /i/ in 'kim'. Similar is the case in the example xx, that close mid vowel changes to close vowel when followed by nasal sound /m/. In example xxi, mid vowel /a/ of 'namak' meaning "salt" changes to close vowel /i/ in 'nimak' when followed by the nasal sound /m/. Also in example xxii, mid vowel /a/ of 'gaL' meaning "swallow" changes to close vowel /i/ in 'gil' when followed by the

alveolar sound /l/. Means if the close-mid and mid vowels are followed by nasal sound /m/ and alveolar sound /l/, it changes to close vowels. Similarly in example xxiii, the close-mid vowel /e/ in 'ketla' meaning "how many/much" changes to close vowel /i/ in 'kitla'. Similar is the case in the example xxiv and xxv. Thus close-mid and mid vowel changes to close vowel when followed by nasal sound /m/ and alveolar sound /l/ and /t/.

**Rule:** close-mid vowel/mid vowel→close vowel/followed by /m/ and alveolar /l/ and /t/

Thus from example xv to xxv, we can observe that the open vowels tend to move towards the close vowels leaving an impact on the Gujarati lexicons.

*Lets see some more examples:*

Example	Standard Gujarati	LDA	Meaning
xxvi.	kyaare - ક્યારે	kiwaare کیوارے	- when
xxvii.	tyaare - ત્યારે	tiwaare - تیوارے	at this time/then
xxviii.	jyaare - જ્યારે	jiwaare - جیوارے	at that time/then

In the example xxvi, the consonant sounds /k/ and /y/ of 'kyaare' meaning "when" are separated by the vowel sound /i/ and consonant sound /v/ is also infixed in 'kiwaare'. Infixation is a morphological process whereby a bound morpheme attaches within a root or stem. The kind of affix involved in this process is called an infix. Infixation is a very common process in Arabic Language. Similar is the case in examples xxvii and xxviii.

A distinctive feature of the [Semitic languages](#) is trilateral or triconsonantal root, composed of three consonants separated by vowels. The basic meaning of a word is expressed by the [consonants](#), and different shades of this basic meaning are indicated by vowel changes. So may be this distinctive feature of Semitic languages is affecting the Gujarati words in example xv, xvi, and xix. Thus this distinctive feature may also be responsible for the vowel changes in examples xv to xix.

Hence from example i to xxviii, we can observe that although they have borrowed words from Gujarati language, there is an impact of Arabic, Persian and Urdu Language due to the [Language Contact](#). Also we can say that these language contacts are affecting the Gujarati Language internally.

### Semantic Change and Semantic borrowing

a) Semantic Change: Semantic change is a change in one of the meanings of a word. It is also a studied area in Historical Linguistics.

*Lets see an example:*

Ex	Standard Gujarati	Meaning	LDA	Meaning
i.	rasoi - રસોઈ	to cook	pakAvvu پکاؤ	- to cook/to ripen
	pakAvvu - પકાવવું	to ripen	pakAvvu پکاؤ	- to cook/to ripen

In the above example, in standard Gujarati 'rasoi' meaning "to cook" and 'pakavvu' means "to ripen" and in LDA Language they use 'pakavvu' in both the cases "to cook" and "to ripen". 'pakna' which means "to cook" as well as "to ripe" in Urdu language. Here the meaning of "to ripe" is extended metaphorically. Thus it is used metaphorically. Metaphor in semantic change involves extensions in the meaning of a word that suggest a semantic similarity or connection between the new sense and the original one. Thus due to the contact of Urdu language and

metaphorical extension they have dropped the word 'rasoi' meaning "to cook" and have adopted the word 'pakAvvu' meaning "to cook/to ripe" to explain both the senses cook and ripe.

*Similar is the case in the example below:*

Ex Standard Gujarati	Meaning	LDA	Meaning
ii. who (nominative) I (nominative)		me (nominative)	I (nominative)
me (ergative) I (ergative)		me (ergative) - میں	I (ergative)

In the example ii, like in example i, in Gujarati language 'who (nominative)' meaning "I" and 'me (ergative)' meaning "I" but in LDA, they use 'me' meaning "I" in both the cases. Also in Urdu Language "me" and in Persian Language "man" meaning "I" is used in both the cases. Thus due to the contact of Urdu and Persian language and metaphorical extension they have dropped the word 'who' meaning "I" and have adopted the word 'me' meaning "I" to explain both the senses I (nominative) and I (ergative). Thus from example i and ii, we can observe the impact of Urdu and Persian language on Gujarati Language through metaphorical extension.

b) Semantic borrowing:

Semantic borrowing is a process of borrowing the entire semantic meaning from a language. Means a word is borrowed from a language which is exactly similar in meaning. Semantic borrowing occurs when two or more languages come into contact.

*Lets see some of the examples of semantic borrowing:*

Ex Standard Gujarati	Borrowed Word in LDA	Meaning
i. bhikAri - ભીખારી	faqir (Urdu) - فقير	beggar
ii. ghar - ઘર	makAn (Arabic) - مکان	house
iii. sandeSo - સંદેશો	peghAm (Persian) - پیغام	message
vi. salAh - સલાહ	nasiHat (Arabic) - نصيحة	advice
v. icchA - ઇચ્છા	khwAhis (Persian) - خواهش	wish
vi. chopdi - ચોપડી	kitAb (Urdu) - کتاب	book

Thus from the above examples from i to vi, it is observed that Alavi Bohras speak the semantic borrowed words from the Arabic, Persian and Urdu Language. Hence they use a particular form of Gujarati language permeated with Arabic, some Persian words, and some Urdu words and write in the Arabic script called as **Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah**. So this unique language sets a recognition for Alavi Bohras and make them linguistically different from other Bohra sects.

### Some Observations

It has also been observed that how the language contact of different languages affects the Gujarati Language. Sometimes, rather in a very rarer case Gujarati Language affects the other three languages.

*Let us see the following examples:*

Ex Contact Language	Gujarati	Meaning
i. 'izzat - عزة (Arabic)	ijjat - ઈજ્જત	respect

- ii. lazzat - لاذ (Urdu) lijjat - લિજ્જત taste  
 iii. zil'a - ضلع jilla - જિલ્લા district  
 (Persian)

In above examples the sound alveolar sound /z/ changes to palatal sound /j/ in as Gujarati language does not have alveolar sound /z/, it only has palatal sound /j/ and /jh/ (aspirated). But Gujarati affects the other three languages minutely or very little. So we can also assume these effects as an exception. It is very obvious that when the languages come into contact, each language is affected, but here Gujarati is the most affected language in the formation of the Alavi Bohra Language.

There is also a religious factor which also leaves an impact of Gujarati Language. It is assumed in our society that Sanskrit is the language of Hindus and Arabic is the language of Islam (Muslims), so maybe they have retained the Arabic, Persian, Urdu rules and words affecting the Gujarati Language.

Thus it is observed that, “Indo-European and Afro-asiatic bear a stronger affinity, both in their phonological systems and in their vocabularies, then could possibly have been produced by accident – so strong, indeed, that no linguist could examine them without believing them to have sprung from a common source.” (Bomhard, Allan R.1984:2).

### Some of the Gujarati Words never used in LDA

There are words in Gujarati Language which are never in LDA usage but Alavi Bohras use its perfect equivalent borrowed from either Arabic, Persian or Urdu. This exercise and peculiarity gives LDA a special niche over different variants of Gujarati speaking people.

Gujarati	LDA	Borrowed from
અગણિત	લાતાઅદાદ - لا تعداد	Urdu
ભિખારી	સાઈલ - سائل	Arabic
પ્રયત્ન	કોશિશ - کوشش	Urdu
અડચણ	ખલલ - خلل	Urdu
નિંદા	ગીબત - غيبة	Arabic
દખલગીરી	દખલઅંદાઝી - دخل اندازي	Persian
શિખામણ	નસીહત - نصيحة	Arabic
સંદેશ	પૈગામ - پیغام	Persian
નોકર	ગુલામ - غلام	Persian
સૂચિ	ફહેરિસ્ત - فهرست	Urdu

### Recognition

After the 21st Faatemi Imaam Maulaana Taiyeb<sup>[4]</sup> who went into seclusion in 528 AH/1134 CE from Egypt, his deputy, legatee and vicegerent, who is called, the Da'i (a spiritual head or a

missionary working on the divine command of Imaam in seclusion), started a religious mission in the name of his Spiritual Master-Imaam Taiyeb for the purpose of self-searching and purity in every places and regions where Isma'ili-Taiyebi people were staying. This mission came to be known as “**ad-Da'wat ul-Haadiyat ut-Taiyebiyah**”<sup>[5]</sup> meaning “The Rightly Guided Mission of Imaam Taiyeb”. This religious mission continued in Yemen, between 532 -974 AH (1138-1567 AD), from the first Da'i Saiyedna Zoeb till the 24th Da'i Saiyedna Yusuf, and during this period, as the time demanded and need arose, many Waali-Mullas (the representatives of Da'i who in his absence is entitled to do all religious activities of a faithful) were appointed to teach in the Madrasah Taiyebiyah (taiyebi seminary) all aspects of the religious and social knowledge to the people. At each place where the Isma'ili-Taiyebi community resided, there used to be a learned and pious Mulla who conducted various classes of religious teachings in different groups of students by the direct guidance of Yemeni Da'i. As the Isma'ili-Taiyebis, residing in Gujarat and nearby areas were very enterprising, enthusiastic, progressive and soulfully involved in business and accordingly in their daily affairs and conduct, they were popularly and lovingly called as BOHRAS (excellent or unique community). Because of their lineage to their 21st Imaam Taiyeb, they came to be known as **Isma'ili Taiyebi Bohras**.<sup>[6]</sup> It is also to be noted that in the 9th and 10th century AH (the year after the [migration of Mohammad](#) from Mecca to Madina), from Yemen where Arabic language was in vogue, on the explicit order of the Da'i, a special delegation used to come to Gujarat, and teach the local Waali-Mulla by giving necessary instruction from Da'i, conduct examinations, inspect the Madrasahs, teach Arabic language to brilliant students, and if they deemed it right, then with the explicit permission of their parents, they used to send some of the deserving children to Yemen to acquire higher religious education under the respected inspection of Da'i himself. This way the trade and social relation between Yemen, Hind and Sindh <sup>[7]</sup> became stronger and the lingual expressions, dialects and accents of Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Gujarati got mixed in each other. Keeping the main structure of Gujarati language intact, normally used Arabic, Persian and Urdu words were inducted and introduced by the learned people and gradually community as a whole began using them in their daily and routine conversations.



## Nomenclature

LDA is basically inspired and based on the 28 letters-alphabets of Arabic Language i.e. ʾ-Alif to ʾ-Yaa. Because the missionaries had to deal with local people in Gujarat for the trade and religious affairs, they included other 16 letters of Gujarati Language for better communication

and expression. LDA totally managed to include in itself 44 letters. From these, 3 independent letters such as Pe-پ (پ), Che-چ (چ), and Ghaaf-گ (گ) are widely used to incorporate Gujarati, Persian as well as Urdu terminology that were not in Arabic Alphabets. Other 3 letters modified from Arabic that are used exclusively for Gujarati words are ڈ, ٹ and ڙ (ڙ, ڙ).

Other 13 letters are from the Haa-ه family. "Haa" is mixed with different letters to get alphabets of different languages. Such as baa-haa (ه, ب), baa-taa (ه, ت), baa-ṭaa (ه, ط), pe-haa (ه, پ), jeem-haa (ه, ج), che-haa (ه, چ), daal-haa (ه, د), d'aal-haa (ه, ڊ), kaaf-haa (ه, ک), and gaaf-haa (ه, گ).

#### 44 Alphabets (letters) :[Listen](#)

#### 28 Alphabets of [Arabic](#) used in LDA:

Sr. No.	LDA Alphabets	Transliteration	Example	Transliteration	Translation	Equivalent Alphabet in Gujarati	Equivalent Alphabet in English
1.	ا	Alif	الله	Allaah	The Almighty	અ	A
2.	ب	Baa (be)	باب	Baab	Door	બ	B
3.	ت	Taa (te)	تمام	Tamaam	Complete	ત	T
4.	ث	ṭhaa (se)	ثمر	ṭhamar	Fruit	ટ	ṭ
5.	ج	Jeem	جلال	Jalaal	Glory	જ	J
6.	ح	Ḥaa (he)	حسد	Ḥasad	Jealousy	હ	Ḥ
7.	خ	Khaa (khe)	خادم	Khaadim	Servant	ખ	kh
8.	د	Daal	دراز	Daraaz	Long	દ	D
9.	ذ	Ḍhaal (zaal)	ذخيره	Dhakheerah	Treasure	ઢ	Ḍh
10.	ر	Raa (re)	رحمة	Rahmat	Grace	ર	R
11.	ز	Zay (ze)	زمين	Zameen	Land	ઝ	Z
12.	س	Seen	سحر	Sahar	Morning	સ	S
13.	ش	Sheen	شكر	Shukr	Thanks-giving	શ	Sh
14.	ص	ṣaad (suad)	صبر	ṣabr	Patience	સ	ṣ
15.	ض	ẓaad (zuaad)	ضمانه	ẓamaanat	Security	ઝ	ẓ
16.	ط	Ṭoe	طاقة	Taaqat	Strength	ટ	Ṭ
17.	ظ	Ẓoe	ظالم	Ẓaalim	Tyrant	ઝ	Ẓ
18.	ع	‘Ain	عقل	‘Aql	Intellect	અ	‘A
19.	غ	Ghain	غلط	Ghalat	Wrong	ગ	Gh
20.	ف	Faa (fe)	فجر	Fajar	Dawn	ફ	F

21.	ق	Qaaf	قلم	Qalam	Pen	ફ	Q
22.	ك	Kaaf	كرم	Karam	Blessing	ક	K
23.	ل	Laam	لب	Lab	Lips	લ	L
24.	م	Meem	مال	Maal	Money	મ	M
25.	ن	Nun	نجم	Najm	Star	ન	N
26.	ه	Haa (he)	هفته	Haftah	Week	હે	H
27.	و	Waaw	وزن	Wazan	Weight	વ	W
28.	ي	Yaa (ye)	ياد	Yaad	Remembrance	યા	Y

### 6 Alphabets of Different Languages used in LDA:

Sr. No.	LDA Alphabets	Transliteration	Example	Transliteration	Translation	Equivalent Alphabet in Gujarati	Equivalent Alphabet in English
29.	ٹ	Ṭe	ٹامٹو	Ṭaameto	Tomato	ટ	Ṭ
30.	ڈ	Ḍaal	ڈاڑم	Ḍaaram	Pomegranate	ડ	Ḍ
31.	ڑ	Ṛaa	پھاڑ	Pahaar	Mountain	ર	Ṛ
32.	پ	Pe	پنکھو	Pankho	Fan	પ	P
33.	چ	Che	چکلی	Chakli	Sparrow	ચ	Ch
34.	گ	Gaaf	گای	Gaai	Cow	ગ	G

### 10 Alphabets of Gujarati Language derived from Haa () family used in LDA:

Sr. No.	LDA Alphabets	Transliteration	Example	Transliteration	Translation	Equivalent Alphabet in Gujarati	Equivalent Alphabet in English
35.	به	Bha	بهاري	Bhaari	Heavy	ભ	Bh
36.	ته	Tha	تهالي	Thaali	Plate	થ	Th
37.	ٹھ	Ṭha	ٹھوکر	Ṭhokar	Stumbling	ઠ	Ṭh
38.	پھ	Pha	پھول	Phool	Flower	ફ	Ph
39.	جه	Jha	جهنڈو	Jhando	Flag	ઝ	Jh
40.	چه	Cha	چهاتي	Chaati	Chest	છ	Ch
41.	ده	Dha	دهومو	Dhumo	Smoke	ધ	Dh
42.	ڈھ	Ḍha	ڈھکن	Ḍhakkan	Lid	ઢ	Ḍh
43.	که	Kha	کهیتر	Khaytar	Farm	ખ	Kh
44.	گھ	Gha	گھر	Ghar	House	ઘ	Gh

## Journey to Gujarat (Ahmedabad & Vadodara) and present

After the demise of 24th Da'i in Yemen, the seat or the centre of this religious mission, ad-Da'wat ul-Haadiyah ut-Taiyebiyah, in 975 AH/1567 AD was transferred to Ahmedabad. And from the time of 25th Da'i, Saiyedna Jalaal<sup>[8]</sup> when he took the reign of Da'wat (mission), the Arabicized Gujarati language took the forefront in recognizing the micro-minority community to the masses in Western India and it was exclusively spoken by the Isma'ili Taiyebi Bohras. This Arabic-blended fantastic offshoot of Gujarati Language survived and its vocabulary prospered because of an active involvement, direct patronage and encouragement from the Da'i. The sermons in Mosques and assemblies, discourses in religious gatherings, messages, communications, acquisition of knowledge and studies, matters and orders relating to the affairs with courtiers, matters with the persons leading in prayers and internal missionary communiqué was all conducted in Arabic language. But the affairs and relations with common people as well as general discussions, guidance, ceremonial proceedings, decrees and the preaching were done in the simple understandable Arabicized Gujarati language, which was named as "Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-Alaviyah" meaning The Language of the Alavi Mission, by the later preachers (da'is) of Vadodara.

It means that the voyage of the Lisaan ud-Da'wat il-Alaviyah (LDA) started from Egypt, then Yemen, then Ahmedabad and then it reached Vadodara at the time of the 32nd Da'i Saiyedna Ziyauddin Jivabhai (1110 AH/1699 AD), and from then it continued till to date in the present era of the 45th Da'i Saiyedna Haatim Zakiyuddin. This community is identified as the Alavi Bohras because of its 29th Da'i Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin,<sup>[9]</sup> who was martyred in Ahmedabad in 1046 AH/1637AD. Today they are around 8000 people worldwide. After the 32nd Da'i migrated to Vadodara from Ahmedabad in 1110 AH/1699 AD, Vadodara is the only place which is still the Centre of the Alavi Bohra community. The families who are settled elsewhere outside Vadodara, surely owns a house in Vadodara as this city has been coined as the Place of Peace and Prosperity by 32nd Da'i. The tradition of owning house in Vadodara is followed religiously. Today every household speaks LDA. This mother tongue is taught for six years in Madrasahs by the community teachers. Private tuitions and Online classes are also conducted to teach LDA to those residing outside Vadodara. Elders always insist their children to talk in this language at home and in social gatherings. The Da'i speaks and converse with community people in this language whenever someone comes to meet him with varied issues and asks for guidance or solution. Since last 14 years, the bi-monthly community newsletter "Mishkaat ul-Haadi" consisting of 16 pages is published in this language and distributed to every household. Keeping people's interest in mind and to make LDA more readable and vocal variety of articles pertaining to religious and general aspects has been written and occasionally it has been translated in English too to reach larger audiences by retaining certain LDA words.

## Examples and specimen

- . نوازش چھے۔ - Allaah Ta'aala no Tamaara Farzando par ghano Karam ane Nawaazish che. **Meaning:** There is grace and blessings of Allaah the Almighty on your Children. [Listen](#)
- . تمارا چاہوا سی کئی تھائی نہیں پن چ اللہ چاہسے تہ بہتر ہسے۔ - Tamaara chaahwa si kai nahi thaai, pan je Allaah Chaahse te Behtar thaase. **Meaning:** What you wish will never happen but What Allaah wishes is good for you. [Listen](#)
- . دنیا تو گذرگاہ چھے انے آخرہ ہمیشہ واسطے رھووالی چھے۔ تو کوشش کونے واسطے کروی آخرہ۔ - Duniyaa to Guzar-gaah che ane Aakherat hamesha waaste rehwaawaali che. To Koshish kone waaste karwi joiye, Duniyaa ke Aakherat. **Meaning:** This

Material World is a passing place but the Hereafter is a permanent place. So for what efforts should be made, for this World or Hereafter. [Listen](#)

### Community background and the Efforts to maintain its Liveliness

Although, presently many of the community members are residing in places like Mumbai, Bharuch, Navsari, Ankleshwar, Surat, Pune, Bangalore, Godhra, Nadiad, UK, US, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Canada, Australia etc. their language is not other than LDA. Every Alavi Bohra anywhere in the world has to owe his allegiance to his Mother Tongue. He should be proud of this unique language though not pure Gujarati or Urdu or Arabic or Persian, but a good mix of all these languages, whose scripting means the way of writing is in Arabic by using exclusively Urdu alphabets, but the dialect or speaking is in Gujarati. It has the freshness and sweetness of all the above-mentioned languages. Besides the vast numbers of Gujarati words, it also has the expressiveness and passionate eminence of Persian, Urdu and Arabic words.

The Alavi Bohras are mostly known as **Traders, Peace loving and soft-spoken people**. Because of their sweet spokenness they have earned a distinctive identity for themselves. As when selling something to a customer, when A Bohra Trader finds that the customer refuses to buy it for some reason or the other, he readily and politely say to him, do not worry, be seated, have something to drink, may be next time you may find something else more interesting. This way by polite and wise words, he succeeds in earning his affection and convinces the customer to buy not two but many other things in one go.

In order to establish the Excellence, Honour and Dignity, for the believers in the community, the former noble missionaries (du'aat) has organized the LDA (which is written in Arabic script and spoken in a Gujarati language by using Urdu alphabets). To speak clearly, truthfully with respect and sweetness is an integral part for the rightful person who is following Islamic principles, customs and etiquettes with complete sincerity and conviction. The bounty of LDA has been bestowed upon Alavi Bohras. The missionaries of India has embraced this script and language for sheer wisdom and convenience of commonalty, they have preserved it, and have taught the believers to write, talk and understand this language. Teaching small children in Madrasahs is another way of trying to keep this language alive as they will grow up to understand it more clearly.



Assembly (Majlis) of Lisan ud-Da'wat il-'Alaviyah at Devdi Mubaarak in the presence of Da'i e Mutlaq

### Efforts for the Development of LDA carried out by Da'i al-Mutlaq

- **Sermon:** Da'i al-Mutlaq sees to it that every [Sermon, Lecture or Religious Deliverance](#) is conducted in LDA. He himself practices what he preaches. He makes a point that his subjects understand well what he delivers and for that he uses varied shades of meaning and phrases to explain his stand on any topic. Privately or publicly he always emphasizes in using LDA.

- **Mobile App:** "Ahl uz Zikr" Mobile Application is proving a strong tool and wide platform to cater to the variety news and events involving each and every strata of society since 2016. All the messages are conveyed in LDA mixed with English. In this way the Gen X and Gen Y gets a chance to get adapted to their root language, the language of the womb, the language of the ancestors. This App is monitored, updated and propagated by the Office of Da'i al-Mutlaq.
- **Website:** The Community Website [www.alavibohra.org](http://www.alavibohra.org) is an open window to know each and every thing about Alavi Bohras. Since its launch in 2004, it is expanding and becoming a single stop to have an enthralling experience of the Language of Alavi Bohras. Its audio section has elaborate sections mapping the charming landscape of LDA. As its viewership is increasing day by day, the textual matter in English is intelligently blended with LDA to retain its original meaning and central idea. With such an effort the reader remains close to his mother tongue.
- **Newsletter:** Since 1425 AH/2004 AD, the 16 pages newsletter "[Mishkaat ul-Haadi](#)" - [مشكو الهادي](#) has been published in LDA, but in Gujarati Script. Regularly different chapters are published in Arabic Script, to make the readers aware of the way of writing LDA. It is distributed in the whole community and it covers the articles pertaining to all ages and interests.
- **Meeting:** Whenever a visitor comes to a Da'i for blessing or for some work, Da'i always interacts with him in LDA. Thereby it becomes mandatory for any Alavi Bohra to have working knowledge of LDA. Each and every office work and communication is done in LDA.
- **Madrasah:** In [Madrasah](#) named by the 44th Da'i as Madrasah Taiyebiyah, a separate course for 4 years of learning LDA right from the beginning is conducted. The course material has been designed in such a way that a student could read, comprehend and write with ease and after learning it he could converse and write in LDA. This way anyone could learn it either private tutor or in Madrasah.
- **Invitation Card:** Any function pertaining to Demise, Marriage, Birthday, Inauguration, [Bay'at \(Misaq\)](#), Sehra etc. when people are invited through invitation cards, it is printed in LDA. Specially the opening text of the card is to seek blessings from the Spiritual Personalities and Da'i al-Mutlaq that should be only in LDA.
- **Publications:** Da'i al-Mutlaq internally communicates with his close associates in LDA, issues circulars, prints literature and publishes books in the same language. LDA becomes the main medium of instruction in the [Publications](#) as the books are distributed in the whole community. These publications are meant for all age group, so through these publications efforts are been made to popularize LDA among community members.

### Today's scenario

This all task is taken to ensure that the Alavi Bohra remain steadfast in their religion, help in understanding of the principles and benefit from the writings and teachings of Allaah's chosen pure people i.e. Du'aat. With this unique and exemplary language, the believers get the blessings of the "Pure Arabic Language". The effects of this blessing should be reflected in the faithful's manners, his conduct and on every aspect of his life. For this reason, every Alavi Bohra deserves and desires to learn the language of his community -LDA.

It is to be noted that, in this world of internet and mobile the originality of the language is in danger. With the inclusion of words from other languages like English and Hindi, the sweetness

and subtleness of this language is diminishing. The young community members have started to type and talk in this adulterated language and it is feared that within short period of time, people would forget to write in this language. Because most of the time people are now typing the language rather than penning it down on the paper or writing it.

In a situation where the language is losing its originality, it is necessary that every community member should learn, speak, write and converse with the family in this language. It is regretting and shameful that when someone from the community is asked...

**Who are you?** He replies that, he is from the Alavi Bohra community.

**Then, if he is asked to what is his identity?**

He says in reply that, he knows his Da'i, his birthplace, his basics, his religion, his relations, his festivals, his dress and his language.

**Then, he is told that, he knows his Da'i very well, his whereabouts, his beliefs and practices, his family and relatives very well, his festivals are those which he celebrates along with the prayers in the mosque, his garments are those worn by the community members, but what about the language?**

**Then, he surprisingly enquires as to what do you mean? The questioner will then tell him, O Alavi Brother! Your living, dressing, manners, conduct, thoughts and etiquettes are all very much excellent, but you have not put much effort with your language.**

**On this comment, the Alavi Brother would exclaim: Oh! Do you mean my language? He then laughs it out.**

**He will be answered that, he only knows to talk his language which is very much beautiful, simple, comprehensive, plain and melodious. Brother, You only understand very little of the sermons and lessons that your Da'i, your religious priest teaches to you. Although this is your language, your mother tongue, but if you are asked to write it, then you are unable to do that, you cannot read what is written, so how do you call yourself to be an Alavi Bohra?**

**The questioner then adds saying that, if you are a member of a caring Alavi Bohra community, then you must learn your language. You must be able to read and write. This is not troublesome. You can learn this language from your Da'i, or from the teachers of the Madrasah. Books are available for its learning. To teach you properly and perfectly, the teachers and instructors are available. Your negligence in this matter is devoid of any argument or understanding.**

**O my Brother! If you can learn, understand and utilize your language, then you will be proud of yourself. You will feel confident that you can make the most of the language of the community to which you belong. A man is known by his language. The man is hidden beneath his tongue. The best of you is the one who safeguards his tongue.**

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### Notes

1. Belief in the Vicegerency-Deputyship of Ali ibn Abi Taalib, the Master of Faithful, after the death of the Islamic prophet, Mohammad. Then the belief in his progeny, the Sixth Imam Isma'ili ibn Imam Ja'far as-Saadiq.
2. He was the ruler of Gujarat State who secretly accepted Isma'ili Faith on the hands of Maulaai Ahmad and was buried privately where only his close associates knew his place of burial
3. It is the term used in Da'wah Hierarchy where a person acts as per the orders of Da'i
4. <http://alavibohra.org/imam%20taiyeb%20history.htm>
5. Rightly Guided Mission of the last Islamic Prophet Mohammad and his progeny till the present Da'i Saiyedna Haatim Zakiyuddin saheb
6. Belief in the 6th Imam Isma'ili, the son of 5th Fatemi Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq and 21st Imaam Taiyeb Abul Qasim and the Da'i in his seclusion
7. The representative of Imam, Da'i has these three Jazaa'ir-Islands in his command. He then sends his deputies to other places of the world to see community affairs
8. The first Da'i of India (Ahmedabad) and his period marked the last row of Waali-Mulla (Maulaai).
9. It is by him holy name that Alavi Bohras are today recognized. He was martyred in Ahmedabad in 1046 AD

### External links

- [Official Website of Alavi Bohras with all Community Events and Activities](#)
- [Old Gujarati language](#)